

A Kalmus Classic Edition

Johann Sebastian

BACH

SIX FRENCH SUITES

AND TWO SUITES IN A MINOR AND E \flat MAJOR

Edited by

HANS BISCHOFF

FOR PIANO

CONTENTS

Suite No. 1 in D Minor	8
Suite No. 2 in C Minor	14
Suite No. 3 in B Minor	22
Suite No. 4 in E \flat Major	29
Suite No. 5 in G Major	36
Suite No. 6 in E Major	44
Suite in A Minor	52
Suite in E \flat Major	58

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PREFACE

Since I am issuing a new edition of the Bach Suites, may I first be permitted to express my gratitude to the libraries and individuals who have provided me with such a wealth of manuscript source-material, the extent of which has, in my opinion, never been available to any previous editor. It is a well-established fact that Bach had made many copies and recopies of his own works; the original form of the composition was frequently altered in these later copies. One can detect signs of the composer's indefatigable desire for improvement in almost all the movements of the French Suites. It is, therefore, not at all surprising to find two or more authentic documents contradicting each other. The intrinsic difficulty in editing lies in the necessity of establishing which of the various versions of a work, or portion of a work, represents Bach's ultimate intention, i.e. which version he would himself have chosen as the one best suited for publication. It is, therefore, exceedingly important to be familiar with the sequence in which various autographs of the same composition were written. Criticism of the text is made increasingly difficult by the fact that some of the corrections contained in a particular manuscript may be traced to an alien handwriting. One can readily perceive the importance of securing the most exhaustive collection of authoritative manuscripts for all the numerous works of Bach which did not appear in print during his own life-time. Conjectural criticism, which cannot be avoided entirely in instances of uncertain tradition, must be based on the exhaustive study of the most thorough source-material. Previously published editions of the French Suites, some of which were doubtless edited with care—the English Suites have not undergone as many transformations as the French Suites—all share a common limitation in that they faithfully follow only the one particular document in the possession of the editor. I could even cast a most serious aspersion upon the Bach-Gesellschaft edition, particularly because it has won such monumental acclaim through the work of the highly deserving Dr. W. Rust and other musicological leaders—in that the editing of the Suites by an unnamed person is as ill-befitting as the editing of the Inventions by Mr. C. F. Becker.

We possess the following works of Bach written in suite form: the three well-known collections of the six French Suites, the six English Suites, the six Partitas, the French Partita, a Suite in F major (See Spitta, Vol. 1, Page 428) the Suites in A minor, E flat major, E minor (see Spitta, Vol. 1, Page 768), also a few fragments.

For historical and pedagogical reasons it is best to consider the French Suites first. I believe it is proper, in a critical edition of the Suites, to include the ones in A Minor and E flat major (cited above) together with the group of French Suites—to which they belong not only because of their form, but also because of their appearance in the extremely important collections *C* and *D* (see below). I should like to add, in this connection, that I have no point of vantage from which to determine just when Bach selected the six familiar suites out of the entire group of suites written in the manner common to the French Suites. Nevertheless, I am certain that he did make the selection himself. I must also leave unanswered the question why the suites were called "French." Apropos the English Suites—Forkel states that they were composed for an eminent Englishman.

My manuscript source-material for the French Suites is as follows:

- A. The little "Klavierbüchlein" of Anna Magdalena Bach. (Royal Library in Berlin.)
- B. The large "Klavierbüchlein" of Anna Magdalena Bach. (Royal Library in Berlin.)
- C. The Rust-Wagner copy, derived from Friedmann Bach's legacy. (Royal Library in Berlin.)
Documents *A*, *B* and *C* are actual autographs.
- D. Gerber's copies. (Property of Dr. Erich Prieger, Berlin.)
- E. A copy of the C minor Suite, spuriously listed in the catalogue as an autograph. (Royal Library in Berlin—P. 274.)
- F. A copy of the first E flat major Suite. (Royal Library in Berlin—P. 289.)
- G. A fragment of the G major Suite. (Royal Library in Berlin—P. 212.)
- H. A copy of the French Suites originally owned by Kirnberger. (Amalien-library #76.)
- J. A complete, more recent copy. (Amalien-library #50.)
- K. A copy of the second E flat major Suite. (Amalien-library #552.)

The following analysis of the relative authoritativeness of these documents will serve to justify my

eclectic procedure in reconstructing the text. It will also serve to prove that a positive decision by the editor in certain instances could only be interpreted as an obviously arbitrary action. I sincerely hope that the performer will be interested in studying the different variants from the authentic manuscripts, so that he can make his own logical choice. Our text contains, to be sure, only thoroughly authenticated versions.

A contains the authoritativeness of an early manuscript. One may deviate from it if a later variant bears the stamp of proven authenticity. The little book, dating from 1722, contains twenty-five pages—not all of them in correct sequence. Fragments of the first three French Suites appear in it; the fourth and fifth Suites are complete. The original sequence appears to have been as follows: the third, fourth and fifth Suites were definitely in correct succession, the one in C minor probably preceded them, a fragment of the D minor Suite probably came at the beginning of the little book. I see no reason for assuming a different sequence for the Suites, particularly since the D minor Suite definitely comes first, and the C minor Suite is called the *second*—in *B*. In *A*, several short pieces are written after the G major Suite. They are of little consequence—excepting three Minuets, one belonging to the C minor Suite, another in B minor subsequently added to the Suite in the same key, and one in G major that was probably intended as a supplement to the G major Suite.

B dates from the year 1725. It contains, in addition to some compositions which we do not have to discuss at this point, the complete D minor Suite and the C minor Suite almost up to the end of the Sarabande. The manuscript contains several free variants; moreover, it is written in a very cursory manner. I counted over thirty careless errors in script.

C is an autograph which was passed on from Friedmann Bach to F. W. Rust, then to Dr. W. Rust. In 1844 the firm of Peters received it for the purpose of revising the text. It was then completely lost sight of for over twenty years until it was restored to its owner by Dr. Abraham. Later it was secured by Prof. Wagner in Marburg, who in turn passed it on to the Royal Library in Berlin. The contents of *C* include the Suites in D minor, C minor, B minor, A minor, the second E flat major Suite, and finally the fourth of the French Suites—i.e. the first Suite in E flat major. The works were written consecutively; only the second Allemande of the second E flat Suite was pasted in later, and the Minuet of the first E flat Suite is of earlier date. One's doubts are awakened by the numerous corrections, some of them made by erasure. The last lines of the Allemande and Courante from the C minor Suite actually appear on strips of paper that were pasted in subsequently. The extent to which these facts affect the authenticity of *C* may be determined by a comparison with *D*.

The *D* collection of manuscripts is of decisive significance in considering all important critical problems. Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber made these copies during the period of his study with Bach. Before me lie the copies of the French Suites (including the supplement), four English Suites, the Inventions and Symphonies, the beginning of the Well-Tempered Clavichord and several other items.

According to the testimony of his son, the lexicographer, Gerber went to Leipzig in May 1724 and became a pupil of Bach half a year later. After two years of study he returned to his home. During the period of his work with Bach he studied the Inventions, many of the Suites, the Well Tempered Clavichord, finally—thorough-bass. The manuscripts in my possession appear approximately in the above sequence; they belong, in all probability, to the year 1725.

The following succession of the French Suites in Gerber seems to me to be more or less haphazard: 1) D minor, 2) A minor, 3) the second E flat major Suite, 4) B minor, 5) C minor, 6) the first E flat major Suite, 7) missing, 8) G major. The title is merely: "Suite pour le Clavecin." It is uncertain just which Suite was intended as #7. It may, perhaps, have been the one in E minor.

Of the English Suites, the Gerber manuscripts contain the ones in A major, G minor, E minor and D minor. The particular value of these copies lies not only in the care and fidelity of the execution of the manuscripts, but also in the fact that they were made during the time of Gerber's actual work with Bach—for purposes of study.

E is a good old manuscript of the C minor Suite. Many of the variants are similar to *B*. It is not particularly authoritative.

F is a copy of the first E flat Suite in very peculiar form. It contains a Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gavotte, then another untraditional Gavotte of doubtful quality, finally an Aria. There is no Gigue. This manuscript is interesting in that it takes into consideration some of the doubtful corrections in *C*. But the whole form of the Suite is highly questionable.

In *G*, the Loure of the Fifth Suite is called a Bouree! The Allemande and Gigue are reversed, and written in a handwriting different from the rest of the manuscript. The authoritativeness of *G* is questionable.

H is a manuscript containing all six of the familiar French Suites. It is a good copy; but it is of importance only where the autographs are inadequate. The same can be said of the *J* manuscript. However, both *H* and *J* must be seriously considered in connection with any publication of the E major Suite.

K is a carefully prepared copy of the little E flat major Suite.

The first five French Suites were composed in 1722, the one in D minor may have been written even earlier. They were probably composed in the same succession as the sequence in which they have traditionally appeared in print. The autographs contain no preludes. In *D*, the E major Suite contains a Prelude; in *F*, the first E flat major Suite; in Peters, the A minor and E minor Suites—the latter also in *D*. The Minuets in the C minor and B minor Suites were written later.

Insofar as the English Suites are concerned, the province of criticism becomes a much easier field to traverse; for it is much simpler to trace the genesis of these works. The title, "English Suite," is an unimportant nickname. Forkel's explanation that these Suites were ordered by an eminent Englishman is supported by *C*; but the inscription appearing in this manuscript—"fait pour les Anglais" was inscribed on the title-page in a strange handwriting. The true title should be: "Suite avec prélude," i.e. "Suite with a Prelude."

I have utilized the following manuscripts:

- A. This is the autograph proper, belonging to Mr. Hauser in Karlsruhe. Spitta was not acquainted with this source. The ending of the first Suite appears in a strange handwriting.
- B. The Gerber copies of the Suites in A major, G minor, E minor and D minor. (Compare our discussion of the Gerber copies under *D* of the French Suites.)
- C. A manuscript in the possession of Mrs. Mendelssohn in Berlin. It is complete up to the F major Suite. The latter contains the signature: Jean Chrétien Bach. There is no proof that it was really finished by the latter. However, the whole manuscript gains in importance because it had been the property of Johann Christian Bach.
- D. A good, complete earlier copy—also belonging to Mrs. Mendelssohn.
- E. No. 489 in the Amalien-library. Good and complete.
- F. No. 50 in the Amalien-library. Somewhat later than *E*; equally complete and dependable.
- G. No. 291 of the Royal Library in Berlin. This is a complete copy.
Fragments of the Suite collections appear in the following:
- H. No. 56 in the Amalien-library.
- J. No. 212 in the Royal Library in Berlin.
- K. No. 218 in the Royal Library in Berlin.
- L. This is a collection of five Preludes from the English Suites (the first is omitted). Property of Dr. W. Rust—inherited from the legacy of F. W. Rust.

There are no difficulties in presenting the text. The autograph is a careful "fair copy"; the Gerber manuscripts follow the autograph very literally, even to the inclusion of errors in script. If the authenticity of *A* needed any confirmation, it could certainly be supplied by *B*. I believe it is highly probable that *B* was copied directly from *A*; the proof of this lies in the similarity of many of the errata. It is only in relation to these errata that our sources from *C* to *L* become important. There are very few deviations in the form of the Suites. In *A*, the continuity of the Suites is sustained. If *B* is a direct copy of *A*, then we are justified in believing that all the English Suites (including those not appearing in Gerber) were completed by 1725. One can be just as certain of the continuity of the six Suites as one is of the construction of the individual Suites. In the English Suites we have a collection which Bach himself put together; in the French Suites we assume that his final intention is the familiar traditional selection of six Suites.

As a final note I should like to mention that I have not always taken into consideration the extremely detailed indication of ties and dots in the autographs. The ties appearing in heavier type are traditional. All the ornaments appearing in the text, including the quick appoggiaturas indicated by little apostrophes, are authentic.


Berlin, 1881.

DR. HANS BISCHOFF.



TABLE OF EMBELLISHMENTS



For the uninitiated performer the following indications will suffice—in reference to this volume.

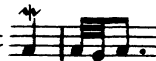

1) Grace notes, like all other embellishments, enter ON the beat—not before it. Unless indicated otherwise, they should be executed quickly.

2) The trill (tr or ) generally begins on the auxiliary note. There is usually an after-beat, unless this is replaced by one or more indicated notes. The after-beat is unnecessary before a descending second. The symbol for the trill with an up-


beat is  or . The trill starting on the lower note  and the one starting on the upper note 

usually both end with an after-beat. The following symbols may also be used to indicate the same:  and . The

short trill  is usually tied to the upper second preceding. Its symbol frequently takes the place of  and tr.

3) The mordent  or  often takes the tone a minor second lower as the auxiliary note, although the neighboring note is sometimes a major second lower. (Compare Türk, Ch. IV p. 61.)

4) The turn  placed over a note is executed , placed between two notes it is played 

In dotted rhythm, the turn proper ends on the dot 

5) The slurred note  is played 

6) Other embellishments are explained in the annotations.

DR. HANS BISCHOFF.

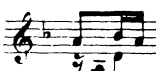


SIX FRENCH SUITES
and two suites in A minor and E \flat major

SUITE I.

D minor

ALLEMANDE.

Andantino. $\text{♩} = 72.$

- 1) Variant in B:  2) Variant in C:  , compare measure 7. 3) Variant in B:  , compare measure 5
- 4) Variant in B: 