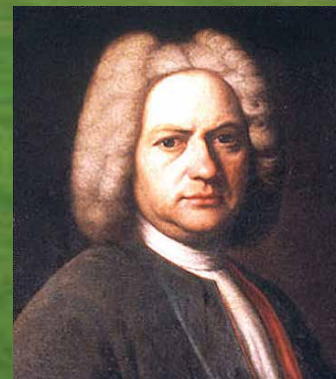
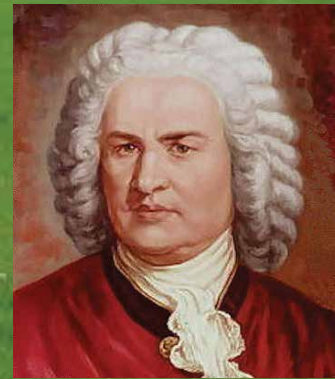
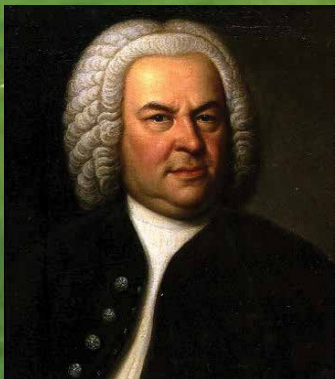


Six French Suites



Johann Sebastian Bach

Judith Lambden *piano*

CD1

1st Suite in D minor

BWV 812

- 1 Allemande 4'26"
- 2 Courante 2'32"
- 3 Sarabande 3'13"
- 4 Menuet I 1'18"
- 5 Menuet II 1'31"
- 6 Gigue 3'53"

Although Suites 1–4 are typically dated to 1722, it is possible that this suite was written somewhat earlier

2nd Suite in C minor

BWV 813

- 7 Allemande 3'21"
- 8 Courante 2'02"
- 9 Sarabande 3'29"
- 10 Air 1'36"
- 11 Menuet 1'31"
- 12 Gigue 2'50"

3rd Suite in B minor

BWV 814

- 13 Allemande 3'25"
- 14 Courante 2'34"
- 15 Sarabande 3'28"
- 16 Anglaise 1'43"
- 17 Menuet 1'23"
- 18 Trio 1'46"
- 19 Gigue 2'07"

"I can enjoy and appreciate Lambden's balanced J S Bach interpretations in a mood of relaxed, unperturbed concentration ... thoughtfully appealing, reliably judged."

Howard Smith, Music and Vision



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CD2

4th Suite in E flat major

BWV 815

- 1 Allemande 3'19"
- 2 Courante 2'01"
- 3 Sarabande 3'21"
- 4 Gavotte 1'33"
- 5 Menuet 1'03"
- 6 Air 1'59"
- 7 Gigue 2'33"

5th Suite in G major

BWV 816

- 8 Allemande 3'11"
- 9 Courante 1'40"
- 10 Sarabande 3'41"
- 11 Gavotte 1'19"
- 12 Bourée 1'35"
- 13 Loure 2'40"
- 14 Gigue 3'39"

6th Suite in E major

BWV 817

- 15 Allemande 3'11"
- 16 Courante 1'39"
- 17 Sarabande 3'29"
- 18 Gavotte 1'20"
- 19 Polonaise 1'18"
- 20 Bourée 1'30"
- 21 Menuet 1'33"
- 22 Gigue 2'21"



JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685–1750)

Six French Suites

BWV 812-817

Bach wrote the French Suites around the years 1722 to 1725.

From the age of ten when both his parents died, Bach was brought up and mentored by his elder brother Johann Christoph. Bach became a choir-boy, then organist while also playing violin in orchestras. His earlier works were for organ or choir in Lutheran Church services.

In 1707 Bach married his cousin, Maria Barbara Bach, then moved with his wife to Cöthen to become Kappellmeister. Here he was to enjoy the friendship and appreciation of his music by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. It was during this period (1717-1723) that Bach composed instrumental works: The six *Brandenburg Concerti* for orchestra, the first volume of the *48 Preludes and Fugues* and the *Six French Suites*. With three sons and a daughter (three other children died in infancy) Bach needed to take a more prestigious position to more ably support his family. Following Maria's sudden death in 1720, Bach moved to Leipzig to become Kantor at St. Thomas's Church in 1723. There he re-married a year later to Anna Magdalena; a singer, sixteen years his

junior. They had thirteen more children, five of whom survived childhood.

Because of Bach's devotion to his children and his concern for their musical education, around 1722, Bach assembled a *Clavierbuchlein* (little keyboard book) for his young son, Wilhelm Friedman. Bach also collected together a "note-book" for Anna Magdalena as she wanted to learn to play. This note-book contains some of the French suites, part of the 48, as well as Inventions and Chorales.

Unfortunately no definitive manuscript of the French suites survives. They were copied out, with differing placing of the ornaments. Although the suites were referred to as "French" by Frederick William Marpurg in 1762, this was only as a means of contrasting them with the so-called English Suites (whose title is likewise a later appellation).

The name *French suites* was also made popular by Bach's biographer, J.N. Forkel, who wrote "One usually calls them French because they are written in the French manner". This claim is inaccurate, however, as they follow (like the *English Suites* and *Partitas*) a mostly Italian convention, with some German predecessors and French influences.

John Gillespie in "Five Centuries of Keyboard music" says that the title *French Suites* may also have been applied either because the music has that incomparable

grace so often associated with the French, or because of the consistency of its fabric.

Certainly these Suites, or rather the dances contained therein, are most elegant. The melodic and rhythmic contrasts reveal a prodigious invention. Indeed there is something in these masterworks that brings Versailles to mind; distinction without affectation, lightness without frivolity. The *French Suites* are written in impeccable taste and are in many ways Bach's best examples of the Suite.

Bach's *French Suites* are set out in the following manner:

There are no Preludes, as there are in the *English Suites* and *Partitas*, therefore they are also shorter in length than these.

Each Suite begins with an Allemande and is followed by a Courante. These lively dances can be in the French or Italian style and, in the French suites, four are in the florid Italian style. Next comes the Sarabande; lyrical, sensuous and much ornamented. This is in slow triple time with the accent on the second beat.

Between the Sarabande and the end piece (Gigue) there are some lively, charming dances e.g. Minuets and Trios, or 2nd Minuets after which the 1st minuet is repeated.

Gavottes and 2nd Gavottes. the 2nd piece in the tonic minor or major is often called a Trio. There are single appearances of a Loure, and a Passepiéd (French

dances), also an Anglaise (English dance).

All the Suites end with a very fast, rollicking Gigue in compound time. Moreover, all pieces are in binary form, each half being repeated. In the repeat is scope for the player to use more ornamentation, or a contrasting quieter dynamic.

Judith Lambden

Judith Lambden

Judith was born in Creswick, Victoria in Australia. She graduated from the Melbourne University Conservatorium with a B.Mus(Hons) degree. While still in Melbourne for a further seven years, her teachers were Gordon McKeown for piano and John Ingram for theory and composition. She won many prizes and made national broadcast performances for ABC radio.

Having been awarded the Clarke Scholarship for three years of study at the Royal College of Music, Judith travelled to London. In her final year there, she won the Hopkinson Gold Medal and the Norris Prize. She then studied harpsichord in Siena, Italy, with Ruggiero Gerlin, who had been a pupil and associate of Wanda Landowska for twenty years.

Judith also studied under some of the great pianists and pedagogues of our



times, including Kendall Taylor, Lamar Crowson, Nadia Boulanger and Paul Badura-Skoda. Later she was awarded a grant by the Dutch Government for one year of study with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. Aided by an ability to play a substantial number of Bach's keyboard works and other repertoire from memory, Judith has given many recitals in England, where she lived for 23 years, and throughout Europe. She broadcast for the BBC and Radio Hilversum. Recital venues included the Universities of Oxford, Durham, Colchester, Leicester, Surrey and London. Judith played and recorded, as harpsichordist, with the Dolmetsch Ensemble.

Since her return to Australia, concerts have included a performance of the Schumann Piano Concerto with the Camberwell Camerata and several solo piano recitals including two at the Castlemaine Festival. As harpsichordist with the group 'Il Sole Barocco' there have been many tours and recitals including some at Monash University.

Judith taught at the Victorian College of the Arts and at other tertiary institutions, and became an AMEB examiner in 1985 as well as being an assessor for VCAA. She has adjudicated at more than sixty eisteddfodau throughout Australia.

Judith has recorded the Great B flat Sonata of Schubert, Bach's English and French Suites, the six Partitas, and is currently recording more J.S. Bach keyboard works, and other repertoire.



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Karl Mandl

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