



**WASHINGTON BACH
CONSORT**

Dana Marsh, Artistic Director

VOCAL POLYPHONY HEINRICH SCHÜTZ & THE GERMAN MOTET

Friday, March 7, 2025 @ 7 pm

Live! at 10th & G

945 G Street NW, Washington, DC

Saturday, March 8, 2025 @ 7 pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

228 South Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA

BACH'S CELLO SUITES MEET WADE DAVIS

Friday, April 4, 2025 @ 7 pm

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VOCAL POLYPHONY

HEINRICH SCHÜTZ & THE GERMAN MOTET

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PROGRAM

Music of Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672)

Tröstet, tröstet, mein Volk, SWV 382 ^[4]

Unser Herr, Jesus Christus, SWV 423 ^[5]

Bone Jesu, verbum Patris, SWV 313 ^[3]

Katelyn Jackson, Susan Lewis Kavinsky, *sopranos*

Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat, SWV 63 ^[1]

Vulnerasti cor meum, SWV 64 (*secunda pars*) ^[1]

Die mit Tränen säen, SWV 378 ^[4]

Unser Wandel ist im Himmel, SWV 390 ^[4]

Toccatina in C, BWV 85

Heinrich Scheidemann (c.1595–1663)

Adam Pearl, *organ*

Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, SWV 426 ^[5]

Ein Kind ist uns geboren, SWV 384 ^[4]

O süß, O freundlicher, SWV 285 ^[2]

Margot Rood, *soprano*

Quid commisisti, O dulcissime puer? SWV 56 ^[1]

Ego sum tui plaga doloris, SWV 57 (*secunda pars*) ^[1]

Veni sancte spiritus, SWV 328 ^[3]

Katelyn Jackson, Susan Lewis Kavinsky, *sopranos*

Blake Beckemeyer, Matthew Smith, *tenors*

Selig sind die Toten, SWV 391 ^[4]

Hodie Christus natus est, SWV 456 ^[6]

Gene Stenger, Matthew Smith, *tenors*

PUBLISHED COLLECTIONS

[1] *Cantiones sacræ*, Op. 4 (1625)

[2] *Kleine gesitliche Concerte I*, Op. 8 (1636)

[3] *Kleine geistliche Concerte II*, Op. 9 (1639)

[4] *Geistliche Chor-music*, Op. 11 (1648)

[5] *Zwölff geistliche Gesänge*, Op. 13 (1657)

[6] Date unknown

Margarita Brose and Chuck Reifel & Janie Kinney, *underwriters*



MUSICIANS

Soprano

Katelyn Grace Jackson
Susan Lewis Kavinski
Margot Rood

Alto

Kristen Dubenion-Smith
Lucy McVeigh

Tenor

Blake Beckemeyer
Matthew Loyal Smith
Gene Stenger

Bass

Mark Duer
Ross Tamaccio

Organ

Adam Pearl

Violone

Jessica Powell Eig

Conductor

Dana Marsh



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Motets and Concertos from Printed Collections

by Daniel R. Melamed

Both Heinrich Schütz and modern listeners are fortunate that the composer lived precisely when he did and that he was employed first by the court at Kassel and then in Dresden at the seat of the Saxon Electorate. The positions were well earned as the fruits of his extraordinary abilities as a musician and his training both in Germany and in Italy (the source of new musical styles). But he was fortunate to work just at the time of the flowering of German music printing—the early years of the seventeenth century, when publishers produced a torrent of music prints in old styles and new ones, to satisfy a growing market for both church and secular music.

Schütz's almost ceaseless productivity, the wealth and generosity of employers and patrons, and the prestige for a composer (and those patrons) of seeing his music in print combined to guarantee the preservation of an enormous proportion of his music in reliable and beautifully produced publications overseen by the composer himself. That Schütz managed this even during the privations of the Thirty Years War is a testament to his place atop the hierarchy of German music, employed by the wealthiest and most powerful rulers and able to continue producing and performing music, even during the hardships of continuous war.

Almost all the music on this program comes from a few collections published between 1625 and 1648. By the start of this period, Schütz was fully established as the director of music at the Dresden court, and had behind him the first of his periods of study in Venice. (He was shortly to return for a second extended visit.) Two works are from a somewhat miscellaneous 1657 print spearheaded by its publisher, and one is transmitted only in manuscript.

In each of his prints, Schütz was at pains to demonstrate not just his mastery of various styles, but also to offer models to German composers both in technical matters and in the introduction of new (Italian) musical styles. This is not just modern speculation—Schütz says as much in several of the prefaces to these publications. Each of the prints almost certainly collects works he had composed for his duties, but also probably pieces written to round out a collection and to make it a (mostly) systematic and coherent representation of a particular kind of music.

It is worth mentioning that the publications sampled on this program represent only part of Schütz's printed legacy. His output includes collections of other kinds as well, including metrical psalms, grand Psalm settings for multiple choirs, Italian madrigals (secular poetic works in the sixteenth-century tradition), and narrative works for Christmas and Easter. These last two publications call for voices and instruments together, as do three additional volumes of concerted vocal-instrumental works in the Italian manner. The works heard here are from books that called only for voices—or for voices with *basso continuo*, a feature that proves to be of critical importance.

The *Cantiones sacræ* of 1625 is Schütz's demonstration of the continuing possibilities of the four-voice motet inherited from the sixteenth century. Its texts are all in Latin, drawing on scriptural texts (mostly Psalm verses, with one text from the *Song of Songs* and a few New Testament passages) and on Latin devotional prose largely adapted from patristic writers like Augustine. (We should remember that Dresden was biconfessional, so it has been speculated that the texts Schütz set might have been useful to both Lutherans and Catholics alike.)

The music of this collection is strictly contrapuntal, with four independent voices that are typically in imitation of each other. In the long tradition of motets, the composer treats each phrase of text before moving on to the next, resulting in a chain of sections that work their way through the words. The musical ideas that Schütz introduces for each segment tend to be short and motivic (in contrast to the longer-breathed lines typical of classical polyphony like that of Palestrina). And the mark of seventeenth-century style is clearly audible in the range of musical ideas he invents—not just the smooth, slow-moving, and relatively neutral subjects of older music, but ones in a large range of note values from the long and slow to the quick, those in rhythms of stylized speech, and many that respond to the meaning of their texts.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM (continued)

Almost all the works in this collection were designed to be performable by voices only. But in a preface, Schütz relates that his publisher talked him into providing a part for *basso continuo*, evidently because this new practice (that would have profound consequences in other kinds of music) had leaked into works for which it was not strictly necessary.

Also paying homage to the motet are the works in the **Geistliche Chor-Music** of 1648. All of its texts are in German, drawn mostly from the New Testament, with a few Hebrew Testament texts and several hymn verses. Its works call for five, six, or seven voices; this offers the composer some textures (alternating high and low groups of voices, for example) not easily achieved with just four.

The motets in this collection are even more varied and inventive in their musical material than those in the *Cantiones sacræ*, changing speed, musical meter, texture, and mood with each phrase of text. Schütz is much more willing to give up, temporarily, the independence of the musical lines, having them sometimes declaim text together. This contributes to a constantly changing (and engaging) musical texture that almost no other composer of the time was able to match (Schütz's friend Johann Hermann Schein is one of the few others).

The *Geistliche Chor-music* was issued with a *basso continuo* part, but Schütz stresses that this is music fundamentally conceived for voices without the need for a supporting instrumental bass. He pointedly says, in fact, that composers absolutely have to learn to compose this way before they venture into music in a more modern style that depends on *basso continuo*, learning to crack this "tough nut" first.

The music of the two parts of the **Kleine geistliche Concerte** (1636 and 1639) does take up the modern Italian concerted style. This kind of music sets one or more vocal lines against a supporting bass line. Works for a single voice typically invoke the dramatic style of the newly-invented operatic recitative, presenting musically heightened speech. Compositions for two or more voices behave like motets that have been compressed, often presenting imitation among the voices, passages of simultaneous declamation, and other textures that mimic the behavior of fully-scored motets, with the bass line and its improvised realization filling in for the "missing" voices.

The same formal organization applies as in motets, with successive text phrases each receiving their own musical treatment. And the variety of kinds of declamation are present, as well, from slow-moving openings that echo the typical start of motets, to speech-like rhythms, to passages that suggest florid and ornamental writing for instruments. The texts in the first of the two books are drawn largely from scripture (mostly Psalm verses), with some hymn stanzas and a few patristic texts, all in German. The second book uses similar texts, mixing German and Latin. In each of these works, the *basso continuo* holds the composition together; the composer is freed from having to maintain a constant presence of four or five voices to give continuity.

Two works on the program are drawn from the 1757 **Zwölf geistliche Gesänge**. This was not one of Schütz's regular collections; it appears to have been instigated by a publisher, though the composer did take part in its preparation. Its contents are all liturgical, and the settings are not as ambitious as those in the other collections. The limitation to four voices and the predominance of simultaneous declamation may point to an instructional purpose.

One work here is not from a print, known only from its manuscript transmission: *Hodie Christus natus est*, SWV 456. It would not have fit directly into any of the published collections sampled here. Its use of *basso continuo* and verses featuring concerted voices aligns it with the *Kleine Geistliche Concerte*. Its luxurious use of six voices matches the scoring of the richest pieces in the *Geistliche Chor-Music*, as does its flexible responsiveness to its text. And its Latin words, with a textual and musical refrain ("Alleluia") recall the works that make up the *Cantiones sacræ*.

Daniel R. Melamed

Daniel R. Melamed is professor emeritus of musicology at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. His book *Hearing Bach's Passions* (Oxford University Press) now in an updated paperback edition, is designed for general readers and discusses Bach's passions today against the background of their presentations in the eighteenth century. His most recent book, *Listening to Bach: The Mass in B Minor and the Christmas Oratorio* (Oxford), also for general readers, takes up issues of listening and is illustrated with many recorded examples.

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Tröstet, tröstet, mein Volk, redet mit Jerusalem freundlich, prediget ihr, dass ihre Ritterschaft ein Ende hat, denn ihre Missetat ist vergeben, denn sie hat zwiefältiges empfangen von der Hand des Herren um alle ihre Sünde. Es ist eine Stimme eines Predigers in der Wüste: Bereitet dem Herren den Weg, machet auf dem Gefilde ebene Bahn unserm Gott. Alle Tal soll erhöht werden und alle Berge und Hügel sollen erniedriget werden, und was ungleich ist, soll eben werden, und was höckerig ist, soll schlecht werden, denn die Herrlichkeit des Herren soll offenbar werden. Und alles Fleisch miteinander wird sehen, dass des Herren Mund redet.

Unser Herr, Jesus Christus in der Nacht, da er verraten ward, nahm er das Brot, danket und brach und gabs seinen Jüngern und sprach: Nehmet hin und esset: das ist mein Leib, der für euch gegeben wird. Solchs tut, zu meinem Gedächtnis. Desselbigen gleichen nahm er auch den Kelch, nach dem Abendmahl, danket und gab ihnen den und sprach: Nehmet, hin, und trinket alle daraus. Dieser Kelchwwh ist das neue Testament in meinem Blut, das für euch vergossen wird zur Vergebung der Sünden. Solchs tut, so oft ihrs trinkt, zu meinem Gedächtnis.

Bone Jesu, verbum Patris, splendor paternæ gloriæ, in quem desiderant angeli prospicere, doce me facere voluntatem tuam, ut a Spiritu tuo bono deductus ad beatam illam perveniam civitatem, ubi est dies æternus et unus omnium spiritus, ubi est certa securitas, et secunda æternitas, et æterna tranquillitas et tranquilla felicitas, et felix suavitas, et suavis jucunditas, ubi tu Deus cum Patre et Spiritu sancto vivis et regnas, per infinita seculorum secula. Amen.

Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat. Aperi mihi, soror mea, columba mea, immaculata mea, quia caput meum plenum est rore, et cincinni mei guttis noctium.

Vulnerasti cor meum, filia carissima, in uno oculorum tuorum, in uno crine colli tui.

Die mit Tränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten. Sie gehen hin und weinen und tragen edlen Samen und kommen mit Freuden und bringen ihre Garben.

Unser Wandel ist im Himmel, von dannen wir auch warten des Heilands, Jesu Christi, des Herren, welcher unsern nichtigen Leib verklären wird, dass er ähnlich werde seinem verklärten Leibe, nach der Wirkung, damit er kann auch alle Ding ihm untertänig machen.

Comfort, comfort, my people, speak kindly to Jerusalem; preach to her that her warfare is at an end, that her misdeed is forgiven, that she has received doubly from the hand of the Lord for all her sins. It is a voice of a preacher in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make a path for our God in the realm. Every valley will be exalted and every mountain and hill will be made low, and what is uneven will become level, and that which is rough will become smooth, for the glory of the Lord will be made evident. And all flesh together will see that the mouth of the Lord speaks.

(Isaiah 40:1-5)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples and said: Take and eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, Drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

(Liturgical)

Kind Jesus, word of the father, splendor of the father's glory, on whom the angels long to gaze, teach me to do your will, so that led by your kind spirit I might aspire to your blessed city, where there is everlasting day and one spirit for all, where there is certain assurance and an assured eternity, and eternal peace, and peaceful happiness, and happy sweetness, and certain delight, where you, God, with the father and the Holy Spirit live and reign through infinite ages of ages, Amen.

(after Augustine)

I slept, but my heart was awake. Open to me, my sister, my flawless one, for my head is drenched with dew, and my hair with the dampness of the night.

You have stolen my heart, my dearest daughter, in one glance of your eye, in one jewel of your necklace.

(Song of Songs 5:2, 4:9)

Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. They go forth and weep and carry precious seed, and come with joy and bring their sheaves.

(Psalm 126:5-6)

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also await the savior, Jesus Christ the Lord, who will transfigure our humble body, that it might become like his transfigured body.

(Philippians 3:20-21)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS (continued)

Meine Seele erhebt den Herren, und mein Geist freuet sich Gottes, meines Heilandes.

Denn er hat seine elende Magd angesehen: siehe, von nun an werden mich selig preisen alle Kindes Kind.

Denn er hat grosse Dinge an mir getan, der da mächtig ist, und des Name heilig ist.

Und seine Barmherzigkeit währet immer für und für bei denen, die ihn fürchten.

Er übet Gewalt mit seinem Arm, er zerstreuet, die hoffärtig sind in ihres Herzens Sinn.

Er stösset die Gewaltigen vom Stuhl, und erhöht die Niedrigen; die Hungrigen füllet er mit Gütern und lässt die Reichen leer.

Er denket der Barmherzigkeit und hilft seinem Diener Israel auf, wie er geredt hat unsern Vätern, Abraham und seinem Samen ewiglich.

Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn und auch dem Heiligen Geiste, wie es war im Anfang, jetzt und immerdar und von Ewigkeit zu Ewigkeit. Amen.

Ein Kind ist uns geboren, ein Sohn ist uns gegeben; welches Herrschaft ist auf seiner Schulter, und er heisset Wunderbar, Rat, Kraft, Held, Ewig-Vater, Friedefürst. Auf dass seine Herrschaft gross werde und des Friedes kein Ende auf dem Stuhle David und seinem Königreich, dass er's zurichte und stärke mit Gericht und Gerechtigkeit von nun an bis in Ewigkeit. Solches wird tun der Eifer des Herren Zebaoth.

O süsser, O freundlicher, o gütiger Herr Jesu Christe, wie hoch hast du uns elende Menschen geliebet, wie teuer hast du uns erlöset, wie lieblich hast du uns getröstet, wie herrlich hast du uns gemacht, wie gewaltig hast du uns erhoben, mein Heiland, wie erfreuet sich mein Herz, wenn ich daran gedenke, denn je mehr ich daran gedenke, je freundlicher du bist, je lieber ich dich habe. Mein Erlöser, wie herrlich sind deine Wohltaten, die du uns erzeiget hast, wie gross ist die Herrlichkeit, die du uns bereitet hast. O, wie verlangst meiner Seelen nach dir, wie sehne ich mich mit aller Macht aus diesem Elende nach dem himmlischen Vaterland. Mein Helfer, du hast mir mein Herz genommen mit deiner Liebe, dass ich mich ohn Unterlass nach dir sehne, ach, dass ich bald zu dir kommen und deine Herrlichkeit schauen sollte.

Quid commisisti, O dulcissime puer, ut sic iudicareris, quid commisisti, o amantissime iuvenis, ut adeo tractareris? Quod scelus tuum, quæ noxa tua, quæ causa mortis, quæ occasio tuæ damnationis?

Ego sum tui plaga doloris, tuæ culpa occisionis, ego tuæ mortis meritum, tuæ vindictæ flagitium, ego tuæ passionis livor, cruciatus tui labor.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my savior.

For he has regarded the lowliness of his maidservant; for behold, from henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him, forever.

He has dealt might with his arm; he has scattered the arrogant in the imagination of their heart.

He has put down the mighty from their seat, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has taken up his child/servant Israel, mindful of his mercy; as he has spoken to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and also to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, and is now, and always, and forever and ever. Amen.

(Luke 1:46b–55)

For unto us a child is born, a son is given to us: and sovereignty is on his shoulders, and he is called wonderful, counselor, power, hero, eternal father, prince of peace. That his sovereignty will become great and of peace no end upon the throne of David and his kingdom, that he will establish it and strengthen it with judgment and righteousness from now to eternity. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

(Isaiah 9:5–6)

O sweet, O kind, O good Lord Jesus Christ, how deeply you have loved us suffering humans, at what cost you have redeemed us, how lovingly you have comforted us, how glorious you have made us, how mightily you have raised us up; my savior, how my heart rejoices when I recall this, for the more I reflect on it, for the kinder you are, the more I love you. My redeemer, how glorious are the kindnesses that you have shown us, how great is the glory that you have prepared for us. O how my soul longs for you, how I yearn with all my strength to leave this exile and go to my heavenly fatherland! My helper, you have captured my heart with your love, so that I yearn for you without ceasing; ah, that I might come to you soon and behold your glory.

(Augustine/Martin Moller)

What did you commit, O sweetest boy, that you would be sentenced thus? What did you commit, O kindest youth, that you would be so badly treated? What is your crime, what is your offense, what is the cause of your death, what is the basis for your condemnation?

I am the wound of your pain, the fault of your killing. I am the merit of your death, the crime of your punishment. I am the injury of your suffering, the work of your torment.

(Augustine/Andreas Musculus)

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS *(continued)*

Veni sancte Spiritus, reple tuorum corda fidelium, et tui amoris in eis ignem accende, qui per diversitatem linguarum cunctarum gentes in unitate fidei congregasti. Alleluja.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and ignite in them a fire of love for you, you who across the diversity of all the tongues gathered the people in unity of faith. (Liturgical)

Selig sind die Toten, die in dem Herren sterben, von nun an. Ja der Geist spricht: Sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit, und ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yes, the spirit says: They rest from their labors, and their works follow after them. (Revelation 14:13)

Hodie Christus natus est, Hodie Salvator apparuit. Alleluia. Hodie in terra canunt angeli, laetantur archangeli. Alleluia. Hodie exultant justi dicentes: Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis. Alleluia.

Today Christ is born, today the savior has appeared. Hallelujah. Today the angels sing, the archangels rejoice; today the righteous exult, saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. (Liturgical)

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BACH'S CELLO SUITES

Friday, April 4, 2025, at 7:00 pm | Live! at 10th & G, Washington, DC
Saturday, April 5, 2025, at 7:00 pm | St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Alexandria, VA

PROGRAM

CELLO SUITES BY JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750) from *Six Suites for cello solo without bass*

Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007

- I. Prélude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Minuet I & II
- VI. Gigue

Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009

- I. Prélude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrée I & II
- VI. Gigue

Margaret Colgate Love, underwriter

ABOUT THE ARTIST

“World-renowned cellist” (CNN) **Wade Stewart Davis** is in high demand as a solo performer, educator, and chamber music collaborator. He regularly performs with the Washington Bach Consort, the Folger Consort, Cathedral Choral Society, as a guest with the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society, and his own baroque ensemble, *S’amusant*, co-founded with harpsichordist Patrick Merrill in 2013. Other appearances include the Piccolo Spoleto Early Music Festival (Charleston, South Carolina), Bach Ascending (Savannah, Georgia), Baroque & Beyond (North Carolina), Indianapolis Early Music Festival, The MOJA Festival (Charleston, SC), and The Spire Series (Baltimore). Known for a wide variety of styles and genres, he is also featured on popular music concert series, such as So Far Sounds (Baltimore), and has guested with the New York-based band Reserved for Rondee and the Baltimore-based band Outcalls. In addition, he is on the *Swans for Relief* project video, curated by Misty Copeland to raise funds for dancers whose companies had been affected by the 2020 pandemic shutdowns, which can be viewed on YouTube. Wade maintains a private studio of cello students and chamber music students on violin and viola in Baltimore and Washington, DC. He holds both a master’s degree in Baroque Cello Performance and a graduate performance degree in Historical Cello from Peabody Conservatory. wadedaviscello.weebly.com



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Six Suites for Solo Cello

by Daniel R. Melamed

1. Six . . .

Much of the best-known instrumental music of the early eighteenth century comes in sets of six. Among J.S. Bach's works there are the six suites for solo cello, the six sonatas and partitas for solo violin (three of each), six French suites, six English suites, six keyboard partitas, six Brandenburg concertos, six organ sonatas, and six chorale settings transcribed for organ ("*Schübler*"). Concertos by Antonio Vivaldi and George Frideric Handel, sonatas by Archangelo Corelli, and pretty much everything published by Georg Philipp Telemann was issued in groups of six or twelve.

A composer might compose the six pieces in a set to provide variety, or to survey a type or genre. The composer might order the pieces in a significant way, creating patterns of key, scoring, technique, or other musical parameters. This is a particularly interesting phenomenon because it is unlikely that the most common way of performing works from a collection was to play the entire set at one sitting; it is more probable that musicians used one at a time. The compilation of musical works into sets of six and their ordering in sometimes arcane ways was thus symbolic even apart from the effect of the works in performance. The context of an individual sonata or concerto in a collection or its place in the group is not necessarily audible from the performance of that work by itself; this is a way in which musical symbolism can paradoxically be distinct from the sound of a composition.

Part of the reason for the common grouping in sixes was commercial convention—purchasers in the ever-growing market for printed music expected to find six or twelve pieces, much as we expect to find a dozen eggs in a carton. (Or at least multiples of six; one occasionally sees packages of eight eggs, but they look slightly wrong.) Part of the reason was that a group of six pieces was more than a set—it was a *Work* ("*Opus*"), and the number six helped make it that. The word *opus* is significant because it came to signify a complete creation, and probably had connotations of the creation of the world, the greatest *Work* of all.

A set of six or twelve compositions of a particular type also puts a focus on the kind of music represented in the collection—not just on its pieces but also on their genre identity. A single suite is just a musical work, but a set of six suites helps define a genre. The group of six sets up and reinforces expectations and conventions, and the context of a work in a collection emphasizes the identity of the piece as an exemplar of a type—as an individual with a context. This can point, in turn, both to what a particular work shares with others in the collection (and outside it), and what makes it individual and distinct.

Musical thinkers and writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were obsessed with classification—with the creation of schemes of organization for types of music, a close parallel to the scientific pursuit of the cataloging of nature in the same period. Musical taxonomies were reinforced by the gathering and publishing of groups of pieces; each collection was a kind of reassurance that there were indeed definable and distinguishable types, and they came in groups of six. In this regard, Bach's six suites for cello have a clear context.

2. . . . Suites . . .

Each of Bach's six suites for solo cello is a fairly conventional set of dances of French courtly origin. At the core are the four dances of the standard German version of the suite: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue. Built into this grouping is variety of musical meter and of tempo. Allemandes are slow dances in duple meter; Courantes are fast triple-meter dances; Sarabandes are slow pieces in triple meter; and Giges are lively movements in

so-called compound meter—duple with a triple subdivision. Each of the dances unfolds in two sections, each repeated. The first section presents an idea and metaphorically travels somewhere with it, arriving at a resting point. The second returns home, usually with a sense of diversion to somewhere even more distant in harmony and expression along the way.

The convention, regularity, and uniformity of these dances, both in their rhythmic and metrical organization and in their form encourages a very particular kind of creativity on the part of the composer, who is inevitably following in the steps of hundreds of others and of thousands of suites. But—just as the point of all those still-life paintings is not just to have more pictures of fruit—a suite, even a conventional one, is more than just a predictable succession of dances. The interest lies in the kind of material a composer invents, the ways in which it is developed and manipulated, how it is adapted to the potential of an instrument, and so on.

Before the Gigue in each of the six cello suites, Bach inserts a pair of additional dances designed to be played *alternativement*—the first, then the second, then the first again, a typical disposition. In two of the suites, those additional movements are Minuets; in two they are Bourrées; and in two they are Gavottes. Those are the three principal other dances (besides the Allemande, etc.), making the six works even more representative of the genre of the suite. And the architecture of the dances in alteration, building a large-scale ABA organization, invites yet another level of listening.

Each of the six cello works opens with a prelude. These are of various types. Some, like the first and fourth, are the kind now known as “pattern preludes,” in which variants on a musical cell are repeated throughout the movement. Others, like the third, announce themselves as explorations of the instrument; this piece outlines the range of the cello from top to bottom in its first measure, then uses continuous fast motion as a vehicle for harmonic exploration. The fifth is cast in two sections: one slow and stately and featuring long-short rhythmic patterns, the other faster. This is the type known as an *ouverture*, frequently found as the first movement of keyboard and ensemble suites.

In all these features, Bach’s works have a clear context, as well, in German dance suites.

3. . . . for Solo Cello

To begin with, the identity of the “cello” is open to some interpretation. The sixth suite was composed for a five-string instrument, and the fifth calls for a re-tuned top string on a more conventional four-string instrument. It is even possible that some might have been played on a smaller cello—sometimes called a *violoncello piccolo*—that was worn strapped to the chest and played on the shoulder, like a large violin.

But in calling for a cello of any kind, Bach’s collection departs from norms. There was a small repertory for solo cello from Italy in the late seventeenth century, though it is not clear whether Bach might have known any of it. And the cello began to be used as a soloistic instrument in ensemble music in the early eighteenth century, including in vocal concertos (“*cantatas*”). But Bach’s six suites, for the instrument on its own, are believed to be without precedent in the German repertory and had no immediate successors—or even many imitators after the suites were published in 1824 and 1825.

The six solo suites represent Bach’s extension of the expectations of the cello as a solo vehicle. In writing these works, Bach puts the cello on a par with the violin (for which he wrote a set that mixes sonatas and suites), the transverse flute (for which he wrote one solo partita), the lute, and especially keyboard instruments (for which he wrote numerous sets). If modern listeners want to hear these works against an eighteenth-century backdrop, their context lies in music for other instruments.

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Founded in 1977 by Dr. J. Reilly Lewis and now led by Artistic Director Dr. Dana T. Marsh, the Washington Bach Consort shares the transformative power of music, with the works of Johann Sebastian Bach and other baroque composers at the core. Our professional artists inspire audiences with the highest levels of artistic excellence, enrich the cultural life through historically-informed performances, and provide educational programs in the Washington, DC community and beyond.

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Sunday, March 23, 2025, at 4:00 pm
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Mozart *Requiem* & Joseph Bologne Violin Concerto *Classics of Paris & Vienna*

Sunday, April 27, 2025, at 4:00 pm
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The Chamber Series

Vocal Polyphony: Heinrich Schütz & the German Motet

Friday, March 7, 2025 | Live! at 10th & G (DC) at 7:00 pm
Saturday, March 8, 2025 | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA) at 7:00 pm

Bach's Cello Suites: Meet Wade Davis

Friday, April 4, 2025 | Live! at 10th & G (DC) at 7:00 pm
Saturday, April 5, 2025 | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA) at 7:00 pm

A Song of Dedication: Baroque Splendor in Portuguese Jewish Amsterdam—350th Anniversary

Friday, May 2, 2025 | Live! at 10th & G (DC) at 7:00 pm
Saturday, May 3, 2025 | St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Alexandria, VA) at 7:00 pm

The Noontime Cantata Series

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ABOUT THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dr. Dana T. Marsh is the Artistic Director of the Washington Bach Consort. His musical training began as a boy chorister at St. Thomas Choir School in New York and at Salisbury Cathedral in England. He earned his undergraduate degree in organ performance from the Eastman School of Music, with later master's and doctoral degrees in historical musicology from the University of Oxford.

Commended as “an energetic and persuasive conductor” (*Los Angeles Times*), and as “a superb choral conductor, energetic and precise” (*The Washington Post*), Marsh has enjoyed fruitful collaborations with the London Mozart Players, *Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal*, the Lamèque International Baroque Music Festival, *Cappella Romana*, the choirs of St. Thomas Fifth Avenue and Trinity Wall Street with Trinity Baroque and New York Baroque Incorporated, Magnificat (UK), Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, among others. While living, studying, and working in the UK (1999–2010), he founded the British ensemble *Musica Humana Oxford* (2001–2008), which toured the US to

enthusiastic praise: “... pleasing to the ear and satisfying to the soul” (*LA Times*). Working as a vocal soloist and consort singer in the US and the UK for 16 years (1992–2008), he received critical acclaim: “Marsh gave object lessons in vocal ornamentation as a graceful countertenor” (*LA Times*), with further plaudits as “a powerful and expressive countertenor” (*New York Times*).

He undertook Bach aria study with the Dutch bass-baritone Max van Egmond in Amsterdam. He performed with the American Bach Soloists, Concert Royal, New York Collegium (under Gustav Leonhardt), Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, *A Cappella Portuguesa*, and the Brabant Ensemble. While pursuing doctoral research in the UK, Marsh sang for seven years as a soloist and regular member of the Choir of New College Oxford, joining in numerous collaborations with the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the European Union Baroque Orchestra; involved in some 25 concert tours, and recording 15 discs with New College Choir, one of which won the *Gramophone* Award for Early Music in 2008.

Dana Marsh is Professor of Music and Director of the Historical Performance Institute at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Previously, he taught early music history at both Oxford and Cambridge universities, additionally publishing original research and review articles through the scholarly presses of both institutions. Marsh is general editor of the Indiana University Press book series, *Historical Performance*, as well as an annual academic journal under the same name. He has written research and review articles for *Early Music* (OUP), *Early Music History*, and the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (CUP). He served as Assistant Director of Music and Director of Chapel Music at Girton College Cambridge, and more recently was Canon Organist and Director of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis. Marsh has also prepared ensembles of young singers for concert and recording engagements with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen and Antonio Pappano. He has recorded in various capacities for Acis, Sony, Universal, Avie, Decca, Erato, Koch International Classics, Signum, and Public Radio International.

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