



Marc Moskovitz

and

"The Eyes of Bach"

Sunday, November 2, 2025

3:00 PM

GreenHill Center for NC Art

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

J. S. Bach stands as one of the most influential and most celebrated figures in Western music history. Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, into an extremely musical family. He was orphaned at the age of ten, and was raised by his older brother Johann Christoph.

Bach's career unfolded across several important time periods. While working in Weimar, Germany, he honed his skills as an organist and composer, producing many of his early cantatas and organ works. Moving to Cöthen marked a shift toward secular (non-religious) instrumental music, yielding masterpieces such as the "Brandenburg Concertos", "Well-Tempered Clavier", and the "Cello Suites". The Cello Suites are a prominent aspect of the storyline in "The Eyes of Bach", the latest novel by Marc Moskowitz. In our November 2 program, Marc will add to his discussion on the the novel by performing three movements from the Cello Suites.

Most of the novel is set in Leipzig, where Bach served as a cantor in St. Thomas Church from 1723 until his death in 1750. Bach composed some of his most profound sacred music, including the "St. Matthew Passion", "Mass in b minor", and numerous cantatas.

Throughout his life, Bach composed over 1,000 known works, making him one of the most prolific composers in history. Though underappreciated in his lifetime, the 19th-century Bach Revival—led by Felix Mendelssohn—secured his place as a monumental figure in classical music.



Suite No. 1 in G Major, Courante

The Courante is the third of six movements, or sections of a piece, in J.S. Bach's Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major. In the Courante, listeners can zone in on several musical features that highlight Bach's mastery of Baroque dance forms and counterpoint.

The Courante is a fast, flowing dance movement. While there are moments where the music relaxes a bit, the continuous fast notes create a sense of perpetual motion. The Courante is rooted in French dance tradition, making it less about strict rhythm and more about grace and flow.

Also notice how Bach crafts long, elegant melodic lines. The phrases often build and fall in sequences, giving a sense of forward momentum. Because of this, Bach is also able to create an implied counterpoint, where the various lines of music (we call them voices) almost converse and bounce off of each other.

Pay attention to how Moskovitz shapes these lines with dynamics and articulation.

Because Bach is so nuanced and detailed, you will be hard pressed to hear two interpretations that closely match... it's one of the beautiful things about Bach's music. Different performers prefer to bring out the rhythmic nuances of the Courante while others may prefer to emphasize the flowing melodic lines. See if you can hear which one Marc Moskovitz plays.

Suite No. 2 in d minor, Prelude

The Prelude of Bach's Suite No. 2 in d minor is the first of seven movements. The d minor key of the Prelude lends to a somber, reflective character. The movement opens with an introspective d minor arpeggio before moving onto a series of slightly faster notes that tend to push forward and then rest slightly. Because of this, the ebb and flow of this movement helps to create a sense of beautiful tension that grabs the audience's attention.

Bach uses broken chords to build harmonic progressions. This seemingly simple notion, paired with his extensive use of sequences, helps to build the drama within the movement. The movement itself is almost an arc form, where we begin and end with a quiet sense of reflection but have a more intense climax within the middle section.

Performers vary in how they shape the Prelude. Some emphasize its meditative quality, while others highlight its dramatic arc. Listen carefully to Moskovitz's interpretation. Will he perform emphasizing the emotion or the structure (or both!) of the Prelude?

Suite No. 4 in Eb Major, Gigue

The Gigue is the last of six movements in the Suite No. 4 in Eb Major. A gigue is a lively dance, typically in compound meter where the beat easily divides into three parts instead of two. [Click here](#) for a really short but great explanation of how this works! Listen for its infectious bounce and how the rhythm propels the music forward with joyful momentum. The movement itself is in binary form, or two larger repeated sections. Cellists will often find small and subtle ways to vary each repeated section, lending a little flair of ornamentation.

Eb major is a rather tricky key for many cellists, requiring a good deal of extensions and shifts. Extensions on the cello require the performer to very slightly drop or raise their hand and slightly stretch the fingers to be able to reach the notes. Shifts on the other hand, are when the cellist actually moves their hand up and down the fingerboard to a greater degree. (Cellists aren't the only ones who do this... all string players have to shift at some point!)

Because of this, however, those extensions and shifts can influence the sound that is actually produced by the cellist. Different cellists will have different preferences for which fingers to use to play certain passages.

Matt Wilson, Program Notes

Matt Wilson, the author of the program notes that you hopefully found illuminating and inspiring, is a violinist and violist from South Carolina. He received a Bachelor's in Music Education from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, before teaching in the North Carolina public schools for several years. He received a Master's in Music Education from UNC Greensboro and a Ph.D. in Music Education from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, KS. He is an active researcher, often focusing on issues of gender and sexuality in music education. Dr. Wilson is currently on the faculty at Penn-Griffin School for the Arts, where he teaches history, philosophy, music theory, and music appreciation.



Dr. Wilson has been an active member of the North Carolina and Kansas Music Educators Associations. He is a member of the National Association for Music Education and the American String Teachers Association (ASTA). He is currently on the ASTA's RIA committee, continuing to share in creating inclusion and diversity within music education.