



MERCURY LIVING PRESENCE



BACH
SUITES FOR SOLO CELLO
COMPLETE
SONATAS IN G & D MAJOR
FOR CELLO AND PIANO
GYORGY SEBOK, PIANIST
JANOS STARKER



SUPER AUDIO CD



Janos Starker
Photo: Mary Morris

BACH

SUITES FOR SOLO CELLO
COMPLETE

SONATAS IN G & D MAJOR
FOR CELLO AND PIANO

GYORGY SEBOK, PIANIST

JANOS STARKER

JANOS STARKER, Cellist

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

SIX SUITES FOR SOLO CELLO (complete)

DISC 1 (470 645-2): 69:08

Suite No. 1 in G Major

- 1 Praeludium 2:31
- 2 Allemande 4:28
- 3 Courante 2:24
- 4 Sarabande 3:21
- 5 Menuets 2:55
- 6 Gigue 1:38

Suite No. 2 in D Minor

- 7 Praeludium 3:15
- 8 Allemande 2:48
- 9 Courante 1:25
- 10 Sarabande 3:39
- 11 Menuets 2:34
- 12 Gigue 1:41

Suite No. 3 in C Major

- 13 Praeludium 4:13
- 14 Allemande 2:55
- 15 Courante 2:11

- 16 Sarabande 3:20
- 17 Bourrées 3:12
- 18 Gigue 2:11

Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major

- 19 Praeludium 4:04
- 20 Allemande 2:47
- 21 Courante 2:31
- 22 Sarabande 3:24
- 23 Bourrées 3:52
- 24 Gigue 1:38

DISC 1 (470 646-2): 70:28

Suite No. 5 in C Minor

- 1 Praeludium 6:50
- 2 Allemande 4:13
- 3 Courante 2:07
- 4 Sarabande 2:44
- 5 Gavottes 4:05
- 6 Gigue 2:35

Suite No. 6 in D Major

- | | | |
|----|------------------|------|
| 7 | Praeludium | 4:42 |
| 8 | Allemande | 4:33 |
| 9 | Courante | 2:35 |
| 10 | Sarabande | 3:22 |
| 11 | Gavottes | 3:36 |
| 12 | Gigue | 2:48 |

TWO SONATAS FOR CELLO AND PIANO, BWV 1027 and 1028

Gyorgy Sebok, Pianist

Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------|------|
| 13 | Adagio | 3:25 |
| 14 | Allegro ma non tanto ... | 3:19 |
| 15 | Andante | 2:21 |
| 16 | Allegro moderato | 2:53 |

Sonata in D Major, BWV 1028

- | | | |
|----|---------------|------|
| 17 | Adagio | 1:53 |
| 18 | Allegro | 3:43 |
| 19 | Andante | 4:46 |
| 20 | Allegro | 3:51 |

JANOS STARKER, Cellist
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)
SIX SUITES FOR SOLO CELLO (complete)

DSC 1 1470 645 31 69-08
Suite No. 1 in G Major
Production 2-31
Allotments 4-20

Recorded: Ballroom Studio A, Fine Recording, New York, 15 April 1963 (Suite No. 2), 15 & 17 April 1963 (Suite No. 5), 7 September 1965 (Suite No. 1), 7 & 8 September 1965 (Suite No. 6), 21 & 22 December 1965 (Suites Nos. 3 & 4); 16 April 1963 (Sonatas)

Recording equipment: 3-track, half-inch tape/three Telefunken 201 microphones
Original releases: SR90370 (Suites Nos. 2 & 5), SR3-9016 (Suites Nos. 1, 3, 4, & 6), SR90480 (Sonatas)

Recording director & Musical supervisor: Harold Lawrence

Recording engineer: Robert Eberenz

DSD transfer & 2-channel conversion: Andrew Wedman,
assisted by Andreas Brüning & Claudia Pohl

DSD transfer & 2-channel conversion at Emil Berliner Studios



Original CD transfer: produced, musically supervised & 2-channel conversion by
Wilma Cozart Fine

Original CD mastering engineer: Andrew Nicholas

Original liner note editor: Sedgwick Clark

We would like to thank Wilma Cozart Fine and Bob Eberenz for their advice in the preparation of these SACD transfers.

BACH: SIX SUITES FOR UNACCOMPANIED CELLO

SONATA IN G MAJOR FOR CELLO AND PIANO, BWV 1027

SONATA IN D MAJOR FOR CELLO AND PIANO, BWV 1028

The six years that Bach served as kapellmeister and director of chamber music at the court in Cöthen were extraordinarily fruitful ones. Between 1717 and 1723 he presented his royal employer, Prince Leopold, with one instrumental masterpiece after another: the *Orgelbüchlein*, the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the Two- and Three-Part Inventions, the English and French Suites for harpsichord, six Suites for Solo Cello, six Sonatas for Solo Violin, the Brandenburg Concertos, the four orchestral Suites, and a variety of chamber works including three Sonatas for Cello and Piano, BWV 1027-1029. Although the Cello Suites were probably completed in 1720, the exact year of composition as well as the circumstances that inspired Bach to this particular task remain a mystery. Some musicologists have advanced the theory that

we have Cöthen's prodigiously gifted cellist and gambist Christian Ferdinand Abel to thank for these Suites. Whether true or not, it is indeed certain that such a challenging assignment—overcoming the limitations imposed by a solo cello—must have immediately appealed to Bach.

Additional mysteries surround these Suites due to the fact that the original manuscript has been lost and most modern editions have been based on two facsimiles, one copied out by Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena, and the other by his pupil Kellner. These documents, however, contain, in addition to several very obvious mistakes, many important omissions regarding bowings, ornaments, tempo markings, dynamics, and the like, and present the performer with a good deal of editorial work. In fact, most cellists prepare their own performing editions of the Suites.

The suite has had a long and distinguished history. Along with the sonata, it was one of the first purely instrumental forms to be cultivated by composers. The origins of the suite date far back into the Middle Ages when lutenists took the popular dances of the day and fashioned a cycle from them. Gradually the dances lost their more obvious terpsichorean characteristics as musicians adapted them to an idiomatic instrumental style. By Bach's time the dances had become totally abstract and stylized; only the basic rhythms and formal structures were retained. What attracted Bach and his contemporaries to the suite and its dances were the possibilities they offered in contrasting mood, tempo, meter, and rhythm (not, however, tonality, which remained constant throughout).

The Cello Suites, unlike Bach's other works in this form, follow an unvarying six-movement pattern: 1) Prelude, 2) Allemande, 3) Courante, 4) Sarabande, 5) Menuet or Bourrée or

Gavotte, and 6) Gigue. All the dances are bipartite, each section being played twice. The Menuet, Bourrée, and Gavotte are double movements in the classical ABA form, i.e., Menuet I, Menuet II, Menuet I (a form that was carried directly over into the third movement of the classical symphony).

Prelude: The improvisatory nature of the Prelude—arpeggiated chords, scale passages, and free cadenzas—hearkens back to the medieval lutenists who, before embarking upon the individual dances, tested the tuning of their instrument with a similar fantasia-like improvisation.

Allemande: As its name suggests, the allemande has a German origin. It is a slow dance, generally in 4/4 meter and with a strikingly ornamental melodic line.

Courante: The French courante was originally a wooing dance performed in pantomime. It is in direct contrast to the allemande—light, rapid, and flowing (hence its name).

Sarabande: The origins of this dance are somewhat obscure, but the generally accepted theory states that the sarabande developed in Spain where it had been introduced early in the Seventeenth century by the Moors. Although the sarabande became the epitome of the refined and stately court dance, Padre Mariana (1536-1623) in his *Treatise Against Public Amusements* damned the dance with sentiments that have a familiar ring: "lascivious in words and ugly in movements ... enough to inflame even very modest people." Although the sarabande is usually followed by a set of "doubles" or variations on the original melody with extremely elaborate ornamentation, those in the Cello Suites are single movements.

Menuet (Suites 1 and 2): The name comes from the French *pas menu* meaning "small step," suggesting the graceful nature of this dance.

Bourrée (Suites 3 and 4): A rapid, *alla breve* dance, the bourrée (from the French *bourrir*, "to flap wings") still

retains, in its baroque dressing, the flavor of its rustic origins.

Gavotte (Suites 5 and 6): Another bright dance, the gavotte eventually evolved into one of the most popular and sophisticated of court dances. Musicologist Curt Sachs has traced the name back to the Gavots, inhabitants of Gapençais in Upper Dauphiné.

Gigue: This dance, in lively triplets, came from England where it was often seen at the court of Queen Elizabeth. The name may stem from the French *giguer*, "to dance," or from the German word *Geige*, meaning fiddle.

This particular order of dances is a most satisfactory one, providing an aesthetically pleasing group of contrasts and balances: the virtuosic brilliance of the Prelude is followed in turn by the reflective Allemande, the rapid Courante, the noble and harmonically intense Sarabande, the light and sprightly Menuet or Bourrée or Gavotte, and the vivacious Gigue, which provides the final flourish. And

although Bach probably did not intend the six Suites to be played consecutively at a single concert, the complete set, like the six separate dances, also has a definite sense of unity. Despite the great musical variety of the individual movements, each Suite has its own distinct character, well designed to contrast and complement its neighbor. The easygoing charm of *Suite No. 1* is countered by the introspection and pathos of *No. 2*; the complexity and bravura of *No. 3* contrast with the geniality of *No. 4*; and the tragic grandeur and richness of *No. 5* find their foil in the brilliant virtuoso excitement of *No. 6*.

SUITE NO. 1 IN G MAJOR

The pungent rich tone of the First Suite arises from Bach's exploitation of the instrument's open strings (C, G, D, and A). The Prelude, written in continuous sixteenth notes, betrays its improvisatory origins in running passage work and arpeggiated figures. After tense pedal points on the open A string and on the open D, the movement works up

to a dramatic climax. The sixteenth notes of the Prelude also dominate the Allemande, whose duple time suggests that it is to be taken rather faster than customary. The Courante is in the Italian style—again with busy sixteenth-note passages. Bach uses double and triple stops on the open strings to great effect in the Sarabande. Here both the harmonic bass movement and the contrapuntal intricacies of the solo line are more suggested than made explicit. Bach has written the lines so cannily that the listener instinctively fills in what the solo cello cannot supply. The two Menuets are extremely light in character, simple and charming. They prepare us for the Gigue, in 6/8 meter, whose outward simplicity disguises a wealth of rhythmic and harmonic subtleties. Part of the humor of the piece comes from occasional unexpected syncopations.

SUITE NO. 2 IN D MINOR

The Second Suite has more breadth than the First; the key of D Minor almost always evoked a pathetic and

noble *Innigkeit* from Bach. The Prelude, as in the First Suite, is constructed along the lines of a free fantasia, although the music here is more melodic and reflective. The Allemande is in 4/4 time and continues the note of pathos struck in the Prelude. Another Italian Courante follows, rapid and urgent. Again the Sarabande is harmonically very rich and full with multiple-stopped chords punctuating the harmonic pattern. The two Menuets are well contrasted: the first is harmonically thick textured and in the minor, the second is based primarily on scale passages and playful leaps and is in the tonic major. The concluding Gigue, while retaining its basic swinging triple pulse, is still rather sombre and in keeping with this Suite's dark colors.

SUITE NO. 3 IN C MAJOR

Even more than the *Suite in G Major, No. 3 in C Major* brings out the warm richness of the instrument by using the low open C string as a sonorous underpinning to the numerous four-

part chords. The Prelude is in a larger cast than its predecessors: a continual declamation of sixteenth notes, producing great waves of arpeggio and scale motifs. A vehement coda dotted with several powerful four-part chords brings the music to a conclusion. The figuration of the Allemande is more elaborate in this Suite and the movement takes on a new complexity in both its thematic and rhythmic development. By way of contrast, the Courante is a relatively modest study in arpeggios and scale fragments. As we have come to expect, the Sarabande offers the fullest harmonic texture. In the extended second section we are led to the far-off key of D Minor by means of some striking modulations. Relief from this drama comes from the two genial Bourrées, the second of which is in the tonic minor. The Suite ends with one of Bach's most sprightly and melodically inventive Giges.

SUITE NO. 4 IN E-FLAT MAJOR

The Fourth Suite offers us a moment of relaxation from the increasing intensity

and complexity experienced in the first three Suites—and prepares us for the mighty No. 5 and virtuosic No. 6. The first section of the Prelude consists of evenly flowing arpeggiated figures. After a short pause on a low C-sharp, a series of fantasia-like cadenzas take us with astonishing ease and naturalness through several unrelated tonalities before the concluding E-flat chord. The Allemande, an *alla breve* movement, owes its special charm to the juxtaposition of smooth scale fragments and unexpected leaps. The Courante offers a variety of rhythmic movement in alternating eighth notes, triplet eighths, and sixteenths. There is an actual bass line rather than an implied one in the Sarabande, for here Bach uses double and triple stops continuously. The first Bourrée is unusually elaborate and unusually developed while Bourrée No. 2, dominated by the staid quarter-note motion, is simplicity itself. The Gigue concludes with an infectious *perpetuum mobile*.

SUITE NO. 5 IN C MINOR

For the Fifth Suite Bach directs the player to tune his A string a full tone down to G. This retuning (*scordatura* is the technical term for it) enables the cellist to play certain chords that on a normally tuned instrument would be extremely awkward. The tone of the music is immediately set by the Prelude, which departs from the improvisatory style of the other five Suites and is cast in the form of a French Overture: a slow *alla breve* fantasia opening section followed by a rapid two-voiced fugue in 3/8 meter. Although the fugue is not as elaborately worked out as those in the solo violin sonatas, Bach's achievement here is an impressive example of implied counterpoint. The Allemande is not the type of gently flowing melody we have become accustomed to from the previous Suites; the scope is considerably enlarged, motivic germs are fully developed with extensive figuration, and dotted rhythms are prominent. The Italian Courante is here replaced by a French version of the dance: 3/2

meter instead of 3/4 and dotted rhythms instead of a steadily flowing melodic line. The Sarabande also differs from those heard earlier: it is quite short, and, although the harmonic tension is great, there are no double stops. Bach evidently did not want the Suite to become too top heavy. The two Gavottes are both in the minor mode, No. 1 featuring leaps and chords, No. 2 flowing triplet passages. The Gigue, its dotted 3/8 triplet rhythm reminiscent of the *siáliana*, ends the Suite on a melancholy tone.

SUITE NO. 6 IN D MAJOR

Bach wrote this Suite for a five-stringed cello, an instrument that included an E string tuned a fifth above the A string. This accounts for the high tessitura of the music. Since the Suite is most frequently played on an ordinary cello today, the music presents several unusual technical problems. The Prelude is a long one, in 12/8 meter, a *perpetuum mobile* movement that spans a wide range. In measure eighty-three the eighth-note triplets

double into sixteenths, providing the concluding measures with a brilliant cadenza. The Allemande is a slow, highly ornate version of the dance, extending into the upper reaches of the cello register and presenting a notable challenge to the cellist's skill in sustaining legato phrases. Extensive leaps and broken chords characterize the Courante, which is once more in the Italian style. The Sarabande is in 3/2 and the expansive chording gives the music a rather pompous personality. Both Gavottes are in the major mode and both are sunny, happy pieces, among Bach's most engaging and outgoing inspirations. A brilliant Gigue concludes the set on a sparkling note of triumph.

STARKER ON BACH

Janos Starker completed recording the six Cello Suites just before Christmas 1965 in New York City at Fine Recording's Studio A. Unless you have attended a recording session, it is difficult to appreciate the rather terrifying loneliness that surrounds an artist in a

project of this sort—a lone cellist facing the microphones with only his cello and Bach for company. The hard work that went into the making of these records was not without its compensating lighter moments, however. After successfully completing a perfect take of the Fourth Suite's Courante, Starker celebrated by giving an impromptu performance of the same Courante complete with ultra-romantic rubato, a vibrato that verged upon a constant chain of trills, and several syrupy glissandos. Recording director Harold Lawrence felt this was too good to miss and immediately set the tape recorders in motion to catch a never-to-be-released collector's item.

This little demonstration brought up the knotty problem of Bach style. Like most cellists, Mr. Starker has studied and performed Bach's Suites since boyhood. Because of the lack of a definitive manuscript giving all of Bach's specific performing instructions, every cellist must in a sense be his or her own stylistic editor, and on this

subject Mr. Starker makes his position quite clear. "An excessive amount of literature has been produced about the Bach style, based on much research into the Eighteenth century's musical performing art. It should be evident, therefore, that whatever source of information one takes as a leading principle, the results can be greatly varied. The 'tradition' started almost 200 years after the works were conceived (by Pablo Casals, who is almost solely responsible for introducing these Suites to the concert public of our century), and one can trace its origin to the artistic trend of the turn of the Twentieth century and thereafter.

"Any attempt to classify a performance of this music as a truly Bach presentation is futile and baseless. The equipment of the contemporaneous cello is quite different from that of those used in Bach's time. The very fact that these works are performed today in a concert hall makes necessary completely different solutions. The changes in our mentality since the Eighteenth century excludes the possibili-

ty of adopting the artistic motivations suggested by or assigned to Bach and his instrumentalists.

"So all the observable changes, whether they involve notes, ornaments, phrases, dynamics, or tempi, should be attributed to the personal expressive desire of each player, and the validity of each approach will rest solely on the communicative power of its deliverer. No tradition or truth can be invoked to justify any attempt which does not satisfy the needs and requirements of the already accepted standards of instrumental playing of our time, and does not satisfy the needs of our present-day concert halls. The continuous change in both will sometimes bring seemingly radical new approaches, but this should only enrich our experience and enjoyment of these works. As the organist Widor said: 'What speaks through Bach's music is pure and religious emotion, and this is one and the same in all men in spite of national and religious differences. It is the emotion of the infinite and the exalted

for which words are always inadequate expression, and which can find proper utterance only in art.... We are made one by what we admire in common and comprehend in common.'"



By 1717, when Bach left the court of Weimar, most of his greatest organ works had already been written. His choral writings were to come later, at Leipzig, between 1723 and his death in 1750. But a large share of his instrumental music emanated from the short but prolific span between 1717 and 1723 spent at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. Bach's concentration on instrumental writing at this time was due more to circumstances than inspiration. Cöthen had no outstanding organ to compose for, and it was a Calvinistic or "reformed" city in which religious practices forbade the use of art music in church. Although Bach scholars will hasten to point out that the *St. John Passion* was composed while Bach was still at

Cöthen, it should be noted that the Passion is more properly part of the composer's Leipzig period, since it was written, during Bach's last weeks at Cöthen, as a kind of "audition" for his Leipzig post.

Despite its limitations, Cöthen did provide Bach with a unique creative environment. His employer was a musical devotee who could truly appreciate Bach's accomplishments. Prince Leopold gave Bach the freedom to choose his own instruments and forms and permitted him to accept additional commissions from patrons outside the city. Since the prince himself played several instruments quite well, he took a personal interest in his court musicians and provided well for them.

It seems likely that Bach's entire career might have taken a different turn—that he might have stayed longer at Cöthen—had not the prince decided to marry a woman who deplored music. Leopold grew so distracted by his wife's extravagant social whims that he became increasingly disassociated

from the musical life at court. Bach, who had lost his own wife and remarried while at Cöthen, grew professionally restless and sought employment elsewhere. When Leopold's wife died in 1723, the composer had already determined to leave for Leipzig, where he had been offered a post only after it was refused by two other contenders (one of whom was G. P. Telemann).

Among the instruments at which the Cöthen prince was most accomplished were the viola da gamba and several of the clavier family, and it was with Leopold's capacities in mind that Bach scored the three sonatas, the first two of which are heard here. The clavier he intended was the cembalo, a precursor of the harpsichord, named for its bell-like tone. The viola da gamba, which had a register somewhere between those of the present-day viola and the cello, was already becoming obsolete when the sonatas were composed, and at this time there was a rivalry between instruments of the violin family, then rapidly developing in

Italy, and those of the disappearing viol family. Bach's sonatas are historically significant in that they are among the few pieces in the Eighteenth-century literature known to have been scored for viola da gamba and cembalo as solo instruments. (This combination, of course, was frequently employed as the *continuo* of a larger chamber group.) In this connection, it is interesting that Bach evidently initially conceived of the first sonata (BWV 1027) as a work for two flutes with clavier and then rescored it, probably in deference to his patron's preference. As in duo sonatas of the later Classical period, the keyboard instrument in the three gamba sonatas is not relegated to a mere accompanying role but is an active participant with a melodic and harmonic, as well as contrapuntal, function.

Both Bach and Telemann continued to make use of the viola da gamba's reedy tonal clarity well after the emergence of the violin family. The Italian composer Benedetto Marcello, among

others, realized the similarity in character between the older instrument and the new cello, and he scored some of his sonatas for "violincello o viole di gamba" [sic], making the two practically interchangeable as solo instruments.

It should be mentioned, though, that the viola da gamba was actually in several essential ways quite different from the cello. It generally featured six strings, and these were lighter, longer, and less tense than those of the violin family. Its bridge was much less arched, its neck and body thinner and less sturdy. It retained the gut frets and C-shaped sound holes of early instruments and was still played with a highly curved bow. Played "at the leg," as its name suggests, the viola da gamba was more difficult to control than the cello and could not produce the sharp accents characteristic of cello music. It is peculiar that in spite of similarities in register and tone, the viola da gamba and the cello are not directly related: the double bass, not

the cello, is said to have derived from the viola da gamba. The ancestry of the cello, on the other hand, has been traced to a different branch of the viol family—the viola da braccio, played “on the arm.”

Nevertheless, today Bach’s gamba sonatas are usually played on the cello, occasionally on the viola. The magnificence and accessibility of some of Bach’s better-known chamber pieces have tended to minimize the exposure of these sonatas. But they have been acknowledged in their own right as examples of Bach’s finest writing, graceful and eloquent and ingratiating.

• *Notes by Peter G. Davis (Suites) and Carol Frances Brown*

ABOUT JANOS STARKER

[When preparing a biographical sketch of Janos Starker, we decided that Martin Mayer’s colorful profile—which graced the 1963 Schumann/Lalo concerto liner on LP (SR90347)—was too good to lose. It is reprinted here in its original form, with a postscript to update the cellist’s distinguished career.—Ed.]

Janos Starker, who began to play the cello in Budapest in 1933, at the age of nine, first appeared on the musical horizons of a *New Yorker* in 1949, when he moved from Dallas to be the first cello of the Metropolitan Opera. The Met Orchestra was then being beefed up, smoothed down, and licked (not to say whipped) into shape by the remarkable combination of Fritz Reiner and George Szell (both Hungarians); it had never played so well before, and it hasn’t played so well since. By common consent, the most improved section was the cellos, and the credit went, quite legitimately, to the 25-year-old new section leader. Starker

was already an experienced man—he had been first cello of the Budapest Opera four years before.

By 1949, Starker spoke a recognizable English, somewhat distorted by his year of “priding myself on my ability to interpret Texan,” and people outside the Hungarian community of musicians had got to know him. He was already a pretty fierce specimen—a muscular, terrifyingly bright young man, with black eyes staring out below black eyebrows and an almost bald head. If there had been no Yul Brynner, Starker could have invented one. Technically, he was a cellist of almost unbelievable skill, who had developed personal techniques of both bowing and fingering; musically, his taste was severe, as befitted a man brought up on Bach and Bartók. He could play loud and soft, *legato*, *staccato*, and *molto agitato*, with that angry, biting attack which is so much more convincing on the cello than on the other strings. He always made musical sense as well as musical sounds. Fritz Reiner thought he was

phenomenal, and when Reiner left to become conductor of the Chicago Symphony, he took Starker with him.

Apart from a few months in a string quartet on the Riviera, Starker had spent 1946 and 1947 in Paris, thinking about what he wanted to do, and not playing much. He had decided a long time before—he says, when he was nine—on a career as a solo cellist. When Antal Dorati (another Hungarian) brought him from Paris to Dallas in 1948, he determined to make his career from an American base. Leaving the Met in 1952, he planned on five years with Reiner in Chicago—he was already a family man, with a four-year-old daughter, and he had to get established. World events disrupted his planning; his parents escaped from Budapest in the aftermath of the abortive revolution, and he served another year in the relative anonymity of the orchestra to bring them to America.

Starker has never regretted his time in Chicago. “Playing with Reiner,” he

once said, "you learn something new at every rehearsal." He still wears as a souvenir of Chicago days a tiepin given to him by the members of his section to commemorate an event of the last season. Reiner, who had been as close to Starker as he ever permits himself to be with an employee, had paid public tribute to his retiring first cellist shortly before a performance of the Verdi *Requiem*. At the final rehearsal, however, Starker forgot to count during a passage for unaccompanied sopranos, and came in, loudly, a bar too soon. Reiner gave him an infuriated look and threw his baton violently to the ground, where it snapped. Some time passed before the two men made it up, and in the interim the section bought Starker a gold tiepin in the shape of a broken baton.

As part of his campaign for solo status, Starker, while still at the Met, began making records, first for Period, a little company owned by another Hungarian. Later he moved his alle-

giance to Angel, where he worked for Walter Legge, who is English but easily recognizable to a Hungarian as a character out of a Molnar play. His first contact with any American lady in any business, however, had been with Wilma Cozart of Mercury, to whom Dorati had introduced him as he arrived in Dallas. "I understood no more than ten percent of what she said," Starker recalls. (This was not too bad an average: Miss Cozart is a flower of Southern femininity, whose native tongue is not always recognized as English by those brought up outside the Confederate States.) "But it was charming." There is a kind of pleasant justice in the idea that Starker, now thoroughly American and independent, with all the Hungarian leading strings cut, should wind up on the Mercury label.

Like all string players, Starker has a deep love for chamber music, which he played virtually on a non-stop basis while at the Budapest Conservatory ("with professionals, with other stu-

dents, with amateurs—doctors and such”). He does not refer to an “accompanist”; instead, he says he has “formed a duo” with the pianist Gyorgy Sebok, an old friend from Conservatory days and a *grand prix* winner on his own. Starker also has an interest in teaching, which he does in the summer at Indiana University, where he makes his home. A few years ago, he helped the composer Roy Harris, whose new cello concerto he commissioned on a Ford grant, to lay out the plans for the first International String Congress. And he writes, not always for a professional audience—this year he had an article in *Mademoiselle*. “I have gone into competition with you,” he told a writer recently, “but only because I found I could get paid for it.” Ahem.

In common with other modern cellists, Starker has an interesting love-hate relationship with Casals, the idol of his youth, who virtually re-invented the instrument and introduced a generation to the remarkable music written for

it. But Starker feels strongly that both the technique of the instrument and the interpretation of cello pieces have advanced beyond what Casals did. “Once I played Bach like Casals,” Starker says, “but I have learned better. Students must learn the modern approach to the instrument.”

Partly because of Casals’ great success in its early years, this century has been big for cellists. Composers as different from each other as Hindemith, Walton, Bloch, Virgil Thomson, Shostakovich, Britten, Samuel Barber, Kodály, and Elliott Carter have written major works for the instrument. Competition has been heavy, too. Without thinking about it, anybody who keeps in touch can reel off the names of half a dozen good cellists—Piatigorsky, Rose, Schuster, Fournier, Garbousova, Silva, Janigro, Greenhouse, Rostropovich, as well as Starker. Starker this year has more major solo dates than any of the others. That he has risen to the top of such company is a great tribute to his technique, his musical perceptions,

and his tough intelligence. It is also a tribute to the taste of the people who hand out the rewards in the musical world, because Starker has not pandered to the big audience in program or personality.

He is a serious man, a major figure on the musical scene. The next generation of cellists may well be rebelling against Starker's dominance and authority just the way he rebels today against Casals.

Notes by Martin Mayer

POSTSCRIPT: In the years since his Mercury recordings, Janos Starker's career has taken one brilliant turn after another. He has devoted much attention to modern music, the composers who have been inspired to write concertos for him including David Baker, Antal Dorati, Bernard Heiden, Jean Martinon, Miklós Rózsa and Robert Starer. He has also given the first performances of works by Messiaen, Peter Mennin and Chou Wen-chung, amongst others. Appearing in recital on every continent, he has performed with nearly all the world's major

orchestras, receiving the prestigious Grammy Award in 1997. As a much-honoured Distinguished Professor on the faculty of the School of Music at Indiana University in Bloomington, he still maintains a full teaching schedule, his classes attracting talented string players from around the world. Elsewhere his famous master classes, string seminars, and lecture/demonstrations are an eagerly anticipated adjunct to his concert tours. In addition to his concert, recording, and teaching activities, Starker has edited a number of editions of cello music by Bach, Schubert, Bottermund, Dvořák, Beethoven and others; published an edition of his own cadenzas; and contributed several articles on musical and humorous subjects to educational and popular periodicals. He is the author of *Organized Method of String Playing for Cello* (and one for the double bass), which he developed from his own lifelong search for the most efficient and effective way to play the cello. Five honorary doctorates and numerous honours and awards (including that of Honorary Citizen, State of Texas) cap a career that now spans more than six decades — undoubtedly one of the great musical careers of our time.

MERCURY LIVING PRESENCE ON SUPER AUDIO CD

In the early 1990s these legendary recordings were successfully transferred to the digital medium of Compact Disc, making the famous Mercury Living Presence catalogue available once again. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, these recordings are being made further available through the new high-resolution digital medium of Super Audio CD.

But the aim of the engineering team has remained the same – to capture as accurately and completely as possible the true sound of the original tapes and film masters. In this, they are assisted by the greatly increased resolution, frequency response and dynamic range offered by SACD's DSD (Direct Stream Digital) technology. Even more dramatically, the multi-channel capability of SACD allows, for the first time, the listener to experience these recordings in their original three-channel format.

As with the CD transfers in the 1990s, only original masters were used for these new SACD releases. For the transfers themselves, Saki Magnetics three-channel heads (specially built for this series) were mounted on a Studer A80R ½" or Studer A820 1" recorder. Both machines

were substantially modified to optimise tape reproduction. Playback equalisation was adjusted to provide an NAB characteristic of that used for the original recording, and the analogue-to-digital conversion was done exclusively via DSD, using dCS equipment. This combination of superior head construction, high quality electronics and transport, and direct-to-DSD conversion, results in a very high quality transfer: there is less risk of wow and flutter, a better signal-to-noise ratio, and because the signal path incorporates no transformers, there is less possibility of distortion.

Throughout the entire process, repeated comparisons were made both to a playback of the original masters on an Ampex 300 machine previously belonging to Wilma Cozart Fine and to the original CD transfers which she herself prepared.

Because of the historical significance of the Mercury Living Presence recordings, it was decided to retain (as with the previous CD releases) the original LP covers and liner notes, as well as the original CD stereo mix prepared by Wilma Cozart Fine in the 1990s.

WARNING: All rights reserved. Unauthorised copying, reproduction, hiring, lending, public performance and broadcasting prohibited. Licences for public performance or broadcasting may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd., 1 Upper James Street, London W1F 9DE. In the United States of America unauthorised reproduction of this recording is prohibited by Federal law and subject to criminal prosecution.



**MERCURY
LIVING PRESENCE**



THESE DISCS PLAY ON ALL CD PLAYERS

These Mercury Living Presence SACDs of Bach's great Cello Suites present, for the first time, Janos Starker's distinguished interpretations in their original 3-channel (left, right & centre) versions. In addition to this direct-to-DSD 3-channel stereo, the disc includes a new DSD stereo, plus the original CD transfer.

JANOS STARKER, Cello

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Six Suites for Solo Cello (complete)

Two Sonatas for Cello and Piano, BWV 1027 and 1028

DISC 1

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1-6 | Suite No. 1 in G Major | 17:23 |
| 7-12 | Suite No. 2 in D Minor | 15:24 |
| 13-18 | Suite No. 3 in C Major | 18:04 |
| 19-24 | Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major | 18:17 |

DISC 2

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1-6 | Suite No. 5 in C Minor | 22:36 |
| 7-12 | Suite No. 6 in D Major | 19:42 |
| 13-16 | Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027 | 13:58 |
| 17-20 | Sonata in D Major, BWV 1028 | 14:12 |
- Gyorgy Sebok, Piano

470 644-2 **M|S|A|Z**

© 2004 Decca Music Group Limited
 © 2004 Decca Music Group Limited
 SACD is made in Hong Kong
 Printed in Germany/Imprimé en Allemagne.
 Made in Germany
 Cover photo: Bob Elmore
 Booklet enclosed

Total timing: 139:36

www.universalclassics.com
www.deccaclassics.com/sacd

SACD 3-Channel Stereo requires multi-channel SACD player & compatible surround sound system

SACD Stereo requires SACD player. CD Audio can be played on standard CD players

A 3-channel direct-to-DSD transfer from original analogue masters

Super Audio CD, SACD, DSD and their logos are trademarks of Sony

SACD 3-Channel Stereo SACD Stereo CD Audio

