

WUSTL **MUSIC**

Sunday, February 4, 2024 - 7:00 P.M.
E. Desmond Lee Concert Hall, 560 Music Center

Great Artists Series:

Jeremy Denk, piano

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Opus 3 Artists
presents

Jeremy Denk, piano

Complete Partitas by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825 (1726)

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Menuett I
Menuett II
Gigue

Partita in C minor, BWV 826 (1726)

Sinfonia
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Rondeau
Capriccio

Partita in D Major, BWV 828 (1728)

Ouverture
Allemande
Courante
Aria
Sarabande
Menuett
Gigue

INTERMISSION

Partita in A minor, BWV 827 (1727)

Fantasia
Allemande
Corrente
Sarabande
Burlesca
Scherzo
Gigue

Partita in G Major, BWV 829 (1730)

Preambulum
Allemande
Corrente
Sarabande
Tempo di Minuetto
Passepied
Gigue

Partita in E minor, BWV 830 (1730)

Toccatà
Allemande
Corrente
Air
Sarabande
Tempo di Gavotta
Gigue

Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

A prolific German composer and organist, Johann Sebastian Bach is considered the preeminent musical figure of the Baroque era. Bach started his life in Eisenach, Germany, where he was raised in a household of established musicians. As a young child, his father—a celebrated violinist and music director in Eisenach—taught him the foundations of string playing. Following his parents' passing in 1695, Bach lived with his brother Johann Christoph in Ohrdruf. During this time, Bach received harpsichord and composition training from Christoph. After graduating from St. Michael's School in Lüneburg, the Church of Saint Michael in Lübeck hired him as an organist—a position that enabled him to study with Germany's leading composers like Georg Böhm and Dieterich Buxtehude.

In 1723, Bach moved to Leipzig where he was appointed cantor at St. Thomas Church and music director for the town's four principal churches. These positions were deemed the most important musical positions in Germany, which Bach retained for the remainder of his career. Prior to each Sunday service during his initial six years in Leipzig, Bach composed sacred chorale cantatas—compositions for voice and instrumental accompaniment that often feature a chorus and orchestra. In addition to his musical duties in the church, the Collegium Musicum (a German musical society where both sacred and secular music was composed and performed) hired him as their music director. It was there that he composed the pieces you will hear during tonight's concert.

Clavier-Übung I (1731)

Of the several keyboard genres within which Bach composed, the partita represents the culmination of the composer's keyboard output. The partita, which initially referred to variation, became synonymous with "suite" (a group of instrumental movements that generally vary in character and are in the same key) in the early 18th century and was the Baroque era's most popular harpsichord genre. Bach's partitas begin with an introductory movement followed by these shorter movements (with occasional deviation from this structure): allemande, courante or corrente, sarabande, one or more extra dances, and gigue. Each movement is built around a certain dance style with a specific national origin and musical traits. Allemandes (German) are generally performed at a moderate tempo and in quadruple meter. For the third movement, Bach either includes a corrente (Italian) or courante (French). Both are in triple meter—correntes are faster and less polyrhythmic than their French

counterpart. Sarabandes often involve a slow tempo and triple meter. Prior to the final movement, Bach includes one or more livelier dances called *galanteries* (usually a gavotte or minuet.) And lastly, the pieces conclude with a *gigue* (French), which is in compound meter and generally the most virtuosic.

This concert features each partita from Bach's *Clavier-Übung I*, a volume of six keyboard exercises for harpsichord. Published individually from 1726 to 1730, then together in 1731, these partitas are among the composer's final set of suites and considered the most technically demanding. Partita in B-flat Major, BWV 825 (1726) is the first piece and begins with a slow 21-measure *Prelude* movement that acquaints the listener with each scale degree in B-flat major. The ensuing *Allemande* movement offers a stark contrast, impressing the concertgoer with rushing sixteenth notes in the right hand. Rather than incorporating the French *courante*, Bach follows with the Italian *Corrente* that features the leaps and skips often found in *gigues*. The *Sarabande*, the piece's longest movement, is slow yet bright in tone. Following the *Sarabande* are two minuet movements that together create an ABA form whereby *Minuet I* (A) is followed by *Minuet II* (B) and returns without repeats. Lastly, the *Gigue* is the most virtuosic movement, involving a "three-hands" effect created as the performer constantly crosses hands.

Partita in C minor, BWV 826 (1726) begins with a *Sinfonia* that resembles a French overture due to its dotted eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythms. This movement consists of three parts: a grand opening, an extremely ornamented aria, and a fugue with an ascending motive that outlines a minor ninth interval. The *Allemande* is highly motivic (the sixteenth-note gesture in measures 1–2 repeats several times throughout the work) and emphasizes the lowest notes on Bach's harpsichord. A French *Courante* ensues that features the same four-note motif each measure as well as a hemiola that concludes each section. Slow and melancholy, the *Sarabande* is lyrical and consists of a 4 plus 4 phrase structure often found in these movements. The final two movements—the French *Rondeau* and Italian *Capriccio*—require the most dexterity and technical prowess, for they involve fast-moving leaps (some spanning a tenth interval). Although the *Rondeau* shares characteristics with the rondo in that the initial section is repeated after contrasting material (creating an A-B-A-C-A structure), the *Rondeau*—unlike the rondo—does not feature a key change from the A to B (and C) section. In Baroque works like this, *rondeau* simply implies a repeated statement after contrasting material. Substituting the *gigue* as the final movement, the *Capriccio* is *gigue*-esque in that it demands a high degree of virtuosity and is in binary form whereby the second section begins with an inversion of the first section's motif.

Partita in D Major, BWV 828 (1728) starts with the French *Ouverture* that consists of a slow introduction with dotted rhythms and a livelier and faster fugue-like second section. Slow and intense, the *Allemande* features a rhythmically varied melody in the right hand performed over a stream of eighth and sixteenth notes in the left hand. The following French *Courante* can be easily mistaken as its Italian counterpart, for the movement consists of the liveliness and energy that characterize the *corrente*. Bach situates the melancholy *Sarabande* between two galanteries: a moderately-paced and bright *Aria* and a fast *Menuett* that establishes the brilliant character and rhythms which permeate the ensuing *Gigue*. Deemed the most brilliant sounding final movement of the six partitas, the *Gigue* is in a fast 9/16 meter and contains an ascending subject that, unlike most *gigues*, is not inverted in the second section; rather, a new subject is introduced in the latter half and combined with the opening idea and serves as the work's countersubject.

Partita in A minor, BWV 827 (1727) begins with a *Fantasia*, a fast-paced movement in 3/8 meter that consists of a single motive that oscillates between the left and right hand throughout. The following *Allemande* involves two parts whereby the first part features a modulation from tonic to dominant, and a return to tonic in the second section. Fast and filled with dotted rhythms in each hand, the *Corrente* movement contains a thin two-voice texture and ascending motives that flows across the keyboard's range. A slow *Sarabande* ensues that is imbued with ornamentation like trills. Bach chooses the *Burlesca* and *Scherzo* (in 3/4 and 2/4 meter, respectively) for the galanteries, which are both fast movements that include minimal ornamentation and—like the *Corrente*—rising motives. The concluding movement is a typical *Gigue* in that it is fugue-like, features frequent dissonances and counterpoint, and inverts the theme in the second half.

Partita in G Major, BWV 829 (1730) opens with a virtuosic *Preambulum* movement that expeditiously glides across the keyboard's range with eighth- and sixteenth-note scalar (and broken scalar) passagework. Played at a moderate tempo, the *Allemande* maintains these scalar gestures, but Bach also interpolates chromaticism and triplet rhythms. In a fast 3/8 meter, the Italian *Corrente* features busy passagework in the right hand during the initial half and the left hand in the second half. The *Sarabande* is slow and largely unornamented, characteristics that reflect the sarabande's origins as a courtly (or noble) dance rather than a showpiece. Although in triple meter—the expected meter of minuetts—the *Tempo di Minuetta* emphasizes beats 1 and the end of 2, creating the illusion of being in 2/4 and having triplet rhythms. The *Passepied*—which originates from ballet theater—is jaunty and contains quick three-note ascending passages with subsequent leaps, creating a sense of rhythmic buoyancy. Like the previous partita, this work concludes with a *Gigue* consisting of a new second subject in the latter half.

The final—and ostensibly greatest—suite in *Clavier-Übung I* is Partita in E minor, BWV 830 (1730), which involves a higher level of technical and stylistic complexity than the previous partitas. This suite begins with a *Toccatà* (the longest movement in this volume of partitas) that establishes the serious tone which sets this partita apart from the others. The *Allemande* adapts and develops the main subject from Partita in A minor's *Allemande* as well as incorporates excessive ornamentation (rolling chords, grace notes, and trills) that obscures its 4/4 time signature. Also highly ornamented, the *Corrente* involves excessive chromaticism and is highly syncopated, thus yielding a neurotic and unruly sonic quality. Slow and scalar, the ensuing *Air* is a continuous stream of eighth notes that provides the performer a break between the rhythmically complex *Corrente* and emotional *Sarabande*. The following *Sarabande* movement—which is considered Bach's most powerful sarabande—becomes increasingly more complex as it progresses. Lastly, the suite concludes with two fast movements: the rhythmically energetic *Tempo di Gavotta* and the fugue-like *Gigue*. In both these movements, the left hand tends to play sixteenth and dotted notes while the right hand plays triplets. While some performers tend to sync the sixteenth notes with the triplets, others perform the piece as written and thus emphasize the rhythmic dissonance.

Bryce Noe, Ph.D. student in Musicology at Washington University in St. Louis

WUSTL MUSIC

*“Every Good Boy Does Fine:
A Love Story, in Music Lessons”*

→ a conversation with pianist
and author Jeremy Denk

✦ In conversation with Todd Decker, Paul
Tietjens Professor of Music. Light lunch
fare will be served. Free and open to the
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Biography



Jeremy Denk is one of America's foremost pianists, proclaimed by the *New York Times* 'a pianist you want to hear no matter what he performs.' Denk is also a *New York Times* bestselling author, winner of both the MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship and the Avery Fisher Prize, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In the 2023-24 season, Denk premieres a new concerto written for him by Anna Clyne, co-commissioned and performed by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra led by Fabio Luisi, the City of Birmingham Symphony led by Kazuki Yamada, and the New Jersey Symphony led by Markus Stenz. He also returns to London's Wigmore Hall for a three-concert residency, performing Bach's Solo Partitas, as well as collaborating with the Danish String Quartet, and performing works by Charles Ives with violinist Maria Wloszczowska. He further reunites with Krzysztof Urbanski to perform with the Antwerp Symphony and again with the Danish String Quartet in Copenhagen at their festival *Series of Four*.

In the U.S., he performs a program focusing on female composers, and continues his exploration of Bach with multiple performances of the Partitas. His collaborations include performances with violinist Maria Wloszczowska in Philadelphia and New York, and, in the Summer, returning to perform with his longtime collaborators Steven Isserlis and Joshua Bell. He closes the season with the San Diego Symphony and Rafael Payare with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4.

Denk is also known for his original and insightful writing on music, which Alex Ross praises for its "arresting sensitivity and wit." His *New York Times* Bestselling memoir *Every Good Boy Does Fine* was published to universal acclaim by Random House in 2022, with features on CBS Sunday Morning, NPR's Fresh Air, the *New York Times*, and *The Guardian*. Denk also wrote the libretto for a comic opera presented by Carnegie Hall, Cal Performances, and the Aspen Festival, and his writing has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, *The Guardian*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and on the front page of the *New York Times* Book Review.

Denk has performed multiple times at Carnegie Hall and in recent years has worked with such orchestras as Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Cleveland Orchestra. Further afield, he has performed multiple times at the BBC Proms and Klavierfestival Ruhr, and appeared in such halls as the Köln Philharmonie, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and Boulez Saal in Berlin. He has also performed

extensively across the U.K., including recently with the London Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and play-directing the Britten *Sinfonia*. Last season's highlights include his performance of the *Well-Tempered Klavier Book 1* at the Barbican in London, and performances of John Adams' "Must the Devil Have All The Great Tunes?" with the Cleveland Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Seattle Symphony, as well as a return to the San Francisco Symphony to perform Messiaen under Esa Pekka Salonen.

Denk's latest album of Mozart piano concertos was released in 2021 on Nonesuch Records. The album was deemed "urgent and essential" by BBC Radio 3. His recording of the *Goldberg Variations* for Nonesuch Records reached No. 1 on the Billboard Classical Charts, and his recording of Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 111 paired with Ligeti's *Études* was named one of the best discs of the year by the *New Yorker*, *NPR*, and the *Washington Post*, while his account of the Beethoven sonata was selected by BBC Radio 3's Building a Library as the best available version recorded on modern piano.

GREAT ARTISTS SERIES

2024

Jeremy Denk, piano

Sunday, February 4 @ 7 PM



Doos Trio

Kayhan Kalhor, kamancheh,
Wu Man, pipa, & Sandeep Das, tabla
Monday, February 19 @ 7:30 PM



Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra

Sunday, March 3 @ 7 PM



Joyce Yang, piano

Sunday, March 24 @ 7 PM



Christine Goerke, soprano
with Craig Terry, piano

Sunday, April 28 @ 7 PM

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