

JS Bach

Prelude from Cello Suite No.1



This month our classical maestro **Bridget Mermikides** transcribes a much loved piece by the one of the greatest and most influential composers of all time.

ABILITY RATING

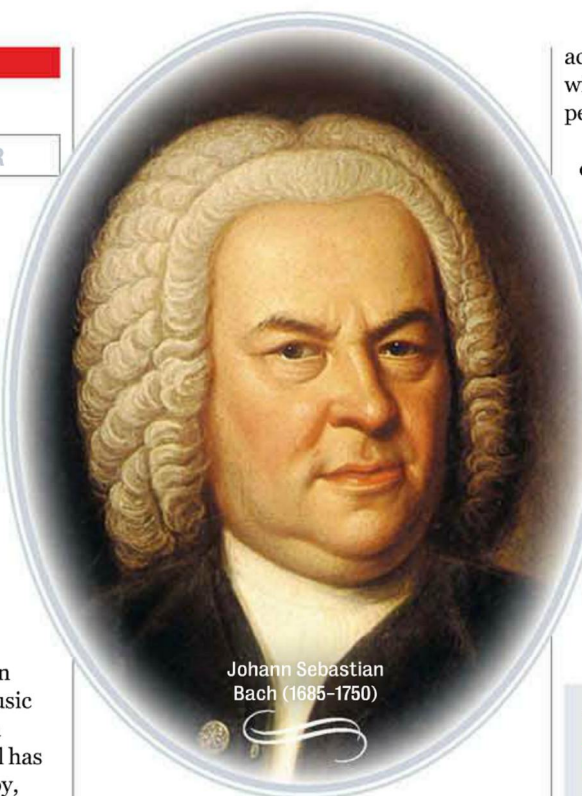
● ● ● ● ● Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arpeggios
TEMPO: 65 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fretting hand slurs
CD: Track 21	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Baroque repertoire

IN THIS ISSUE'S classical column we return to the work of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), without doubt one of the greatest composers of all time. Bach was a multi-instrumentalist and hugely prolific composer, who left us a legacy of hundreds of astonishingly beautiful works. His command of counterpoint, harmony and melody was utterly masterful, and the compositional skills he employed in creating what seem like absolutely perfect works has had a huge influence on the development of Western classical music - and indeed Western music of all kinds. An unbelievable quarter of a millennium after his death, his work still has an influence on, and is hugely admired by, musicians from practically every style, from jazz to electronica to metal.

Every one of Bach's works is of the absolute highest quality, but several have also found their way into the mainstream and are widely recognised. One such piece, which I

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

have arranged here, is his ever-popular Prelude from Cello Suite No.1. Part of a series of works he composed for unaccompanied cello, they were likely to have been written some time between 1717 and 1723, during one of Bach's happiest and most productive periods under the supportive patronship of Prince Leopold in Köthen.

The Prelude from Cello Suite No.1 is a hugely popular cello work but, as is the case with much of Bach's music, has been adapted with great success to other instruments including piano, trumpet, violin and both

acoustic and electric bass. However this piece with its slurs and ringing arpeggios seems perfectly suited for the guitar.

I've transposed the piece from the originally key of G major to the much more guitar-friendly D major (also using drop D tuning) and, as is popular with guitar arrangements, added some bass notes to the original cello composition.

In case you are in any doubt this piece, as is the case with all of Bach's works, is absolutely exquisite and a masterpiece of compositional technique and musical expression. So bear in mind that any work you put in now will be rewarded indefinitely as, once learned, you will never tire of playing this masterpiece.

Read the tab captions for the trickier sections, enjoy learning the tune and see you next time when we'll be going through another great classical work.

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

PICKING HAND TECHNIQUE

The technique for a classical guitarist's picking hand uses the first three fingers and the thumb. As a general rule, the fingers play the treble or melody notes and the thumb takes care of the bass notes. An important part of technique is to always alternate the fingers when plucking from one note to the next, in particular the first (i) and second (m) fingers, and this should become standard and automatic. When playing arpeggios (broken chords) where all three fingers are used, you should aim to play fingers i, m and a on the third, second and first strings respectively.



TRACK RECORD Mstislav Rostropovich's *Johann Sebastian Bach Cello Suites* (Supraphon 2011), is required listening in this 2-CD set of all the Bach Cello Suites. Also check out Edgar Meyer – *Bach Unaccompanied Cello Suites Performed on Double Bass* (Sony 2000) and Göran Söllscher's resonant 10-string guitar version on *JS Bach Transcriptions For Guitar Solo* (Deutsche Grammophon 1992).



MATS BACKER

Göran Söllscher
(here playing
an 11-string)
performed this
great piece on
10-string guitar

PLAYING TIPS

[General] This Prelude is originally in the key of G but I've changed it to D and used drop D tuning (D A D G B E) for a lovely rich resonance on the guitar.

[Bars 1-4] The opening four bars are technically easy and include some picking hand fingering. Allow the notes to ring throughout these bars and in bar 3 fret across the top two strings together with the first finger.

[Bar 5] Stay with the first finger by the 2nd fret for the first three beats of bar 5

then switch to the 4th fret on the last beat. For the next couple of bars there is picking hand fingering indicated to help you achieve a fluid performance.

[Bar 7] The fretting hand fingering on the last beat of bar 7 frees the first finger to land smoothly on the first note B of bar 8. There are slurs (legato) included in many places and these are added as a matter of personal musical taste. The use of slurs in this piece is not fixed and can vary from player to player.

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PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 21

[Bar 9] More picking hand fingering is indicated in bar 9 and shows how much of classical guitar playing involves alternating the i and m fingers. This creates smooth fluidity and good technique – do not get into the bad habit of repeating the same finger over and over.

[Bar 11] On bar 11 a barre is needed at the 4th fret before a quick jump back to the first. From here on the fingering and technique continues in much the same way; always think about the picking hand fingering and work out what you are doing rather than leaving it to chance as this will help to develop good technique.

The musical score is presented in five systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar-specific staff below it. The guitar staff includes fret numbers (0-7) and picking hand fingering (i, m, a, p). Chord symbols are placed above the treble staff.

- System 1 (Bars 13-15):** Chords F#7, Bm, A7/C#. Fingering includes 'i m i m a m a m' and 'p'.
- System 2 (Bars 16-18):** Chords D7, G/D, A7/D. Fingering includes 'p i m a'.
- System 3 (Bars 19-21):** Chords D, E7/G#, A/G. Fingering includes 'p p a m i a m i' and 'p p p m i p m i'.
- System 4 (Bars 22-24):** Chords A, A7, A7b9, A7. Fingering includes '0 4 5', '2 4 5', '2 3 5', '2 3 5', '6 5 4 5 5 3 2 3 3 0', '2 0 2', '2 4 5'.
- System 5 (Bars 25-27):** Chords D/A, E7. Fingering includes '0 2 3 0 2', '2 0 4 0 2 4', '0 4 2', '0 4 2', '5 3 2 3 3 0', '1 4 2 1', '0 3', '4 5 4'.

PLAYING TIPS

[Bar 31] At bar 31 there is a two-part dialogue where the moving melody line is played with the thumb and the pedal repeated E note is played with the second

CD TRACK 21

finger. Follow the picking hand fingering at the beginning of bars 32, 33 and 35. I hope you have fun and enjoy learning this fantastic piece of music!

[illegible]