

Jason Vieaux's  
Bach CD reviewed  
in Gramophone,  
May 2009

Jason Vieaux: flexibility  
and nuance in Bach



Guitar versions of Bach's  
lute and cello suites  
show the wisdom of the  
transcription process

## Bach

Suites – BWV995; BWV996; BWV997.

Prelude, Fugue and Allegro, BWV998

Jason Vieaux *gtr*

Azica © ACD71250 (70' • DDD)

Bach happily tweaked his music to suit the needs of eager instrumentalists, and players have followed suit ever since. Some of the arrangements may seem like sonic stretches (tubas playing the cello suites, for instance). Then again, what musician wouldn't want to be immersed in Bach's glorious creative world?

The situation for guitarists isn't nearly as extreme as it might be for colleagues. Since Bach wrote pieces specifically for lute, arranging them for the larger instrument isn't much of a challenge (though keys occasionally need to be transposed for purposes of player comfort). On his absorbing first disc devoted to Bach lute works, American guitarist Jason Vieaux shows the wisdom of the transcription process.

Not all of these scores were originally cast for lute. The Suite in G minor, BWV995, began life as the Fifth Cello Suite and later became the property of lutenists and others. Vieaux's ability to see the big architectural picture and to render the counterpoint with utmost clarity makes his account of this suite a special occasion. As in all

of the performances on this disc, the guitarist generally opts for stately tempi that allow lines to announce, emerge, depart and cross in crystalline fashion. Vieaux draws warm sonorities from the instrument, colouring with discreet use of vibrato and joining phrases as if they were in fact natural moments in a fascinating conversation.

No contrapuntal obstacle trips this agile, thoughtful guitarist. In the Suite in C minor, BWV997, each entry of the theme in the fugue has inevitable presence, and the subsequent interweaving of ideas benefits from Vieaux's flexibility and nuance. The Suite in E minor,

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BWV996, is a celebration of sonorous courtliness in his hands, while the Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in E flat major, BWV998, rounds out an aristocratic initial volume that whets the appetite for the next.

**Donald Rosenberg**