



Johann Bernhard Bach: **Orchestral Suites**

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[American Record Guide](#) (Peter Loewen - 01.02.2020)

The American Record Guide
These are the four orchestral suites of Johann Bernhard Bach (1676-1749), and we have his second cousin JS Bach to thank for having preserved and propagated them in Leipzig. Bernhard Bach was a keyboard musician at the court of Eisenach under Telemann. His suites reflect both French and Italian style—the so-called Gemischter Stil practiced by many German composers of the period. Overtures comport with the familiar “French Overture”: a majestic theme with dotted rhythms in the A section followed by an imitative, fugue-like B section. The movements that follow bear the titles of French theatrical dances, but their internal organization often reflects the ritornello form typical of contemporary Italian concertos. The effect is particularly clear in the first and fourth suites, with solo violin expertly performed by Gernot Süssmuth. The ‘Rondeau’ from the first suite is perhaps the perfect example, the way it alternates orchestral ritornellos with sequential solo violin episodes that bear the impress of Vivaldi’s concertos. The second and third suites are more French in style and use concertinos of mixed instrumentation—flutes, oboes, and string instruments. This is a lovely recording of music by a Bach family member whose lack of fame does not reflect the quality of his music.