

Cello Suite IV, BWV 1010 by J. S. Bach

Arranged for 11 course lute by Clive Titmuss

Foreword:

This transcription of the fourth cello suites departs somewhat in texture from the others which I have undertaken. As with the first cello suite BWV 1007, the tonality has been altered according to the precedent set by Bach himself in the arrangement of the fifth cello suite for the lute, by transposition up a fifth. But rather than follow the usual procedure of adding bass notes in a tessitura more usual to the lute bass lines of the period, I have kept the texture in more close position, at the same time using the scordatura tuning which puts the tonic on the sixth string.

I feel that this approach has several advantages; it avoids placing an undue emphasis on a bass line which, for the most part, Bach did not compose; it gives more articulation to the bass in general; it provides greater agility and therefore flexibility of tempo; one may play the piece more quickly without the blurring of the harmony which can occur when bass lines are very low pitched.

This last point is ably demonstrated by the contemporaneous transcription into tablature of the BWV 995 (Bach's own arrangement) thought to arranged by the Falckenhagen. In this transcription, many of the basses are put down one octave from Bach's original, in many cases separating the 'soprano' and bass by a wide margin, and making it very difficult to play the piece at a musically satisfying tempo without creating a 'pedal cloud' of unwanted inharmonicity.

In my transcription of the fourth suite, many important step-progressions (for example in the opening page of the Prelude, and in the Allemande) can be given a longer run without transposition, which to my ear increases their forcefulness. By reserving the lowest bass notes for significant or crucial phrases, the music may assume a more dramatic character than if it is simply homogenized by over-using the lowest basses. Occasionally I have shown a B' flat on the 12 course at cadences as an alternative.

Since Bach wrote the piece well before the adoption of 13 course lute writing around 1719, we may also be reflecting the features of the style more accurately. The resulting pieces are closer to Bittner or Reusner in effect than the Italianate style of Weiss or the Galant style of Falckenhagen.

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