

COMPACT
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DIGITAL AUDIO
PAKM 074

Alexander Borovsky

plays Bach: English & French Suites

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Borovsky Bach English Suites, The Gramophone, November 1954

It is many years since we last heard Borovsky—readers may remember some Liszt pieces by him for Decca before the war, and did he not win the Grand Prix du Disque in 1936?—but the loss has been ours, for this new issue (the first complete one of the English Suites) marks him at once as still an artist of the highest class. How old he was when he made these discs, I don't know, but as he is now 65 and this is obviously a new LP recording—and there is no mention in the Encyclopedia of an earlier SP version from which it might have been transferred—he must presumably have been over 60; yet his lucidity, rhythmic vitality, keyboard control and mastery of style may well be envied by many a younger and more publicised “star” of the piano. The whole thing sounds so effortless, relaxed and unaffected—which is always a sign of artistry. Borovsky uses scarcely any pedal for these Bach Suites (save, rather surprisingly, in the Prelude of the G minor), but doesn't seek to make the piano imitate the harpsichord or clavichord and doesn't allow the texture to become dry: his technique is quite flawless, and not only is every note (and every ornament) crystal clear, but the tonal gradations are so fine that, for example, imitative entries always stand out without ever being exaggerated; and there is almost no variation of standard throughout the six Suites. The numerous ornaments are perhaps less suited to the piano than to the clavichord, but Borovsky's playing of them is admirable—exact, unhurried and un-fussy—and he never allows them to obtrude in the melodic lines. In short, if Bach is to be played on the piano at all, this could well serve as an object lesson on how to do it: Grove certainly chose the right phrase in describing Borovsky as a “pianist of distinction”. It needs only to be added that Vox have secured extremely good piano tone and that the disc surfaces are absolutely quiet. Two stars at least, please, L.S.

Borovsky Bach French Suites, The Gramophone, May 1955

Borovsky's conception of these Suites is a fundamentally traditional one, although he is obviously not blind to certain up-to-date theories in the matter of interpreting *stile francese* correctly. He gives a most musicianly performance which is always vital and constantly engages our interest. The playing is not always impeccable, especially in rapid tempi where there are minor sins of omission; but these small blemishes are not a grave disadvantage in an otherwise very acceptable set.

The recording of the piano is very successful indeed, and evokes a sympathetic atmosphere in which the Suites sound at their best. D.S.



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J S BACH ENGLISH AND FRENCH SUITES (CD1 & CD2)
ALEXANDER BOROVSKY - PIANO

CD ONE

English Suite No. 1 in A major, BWV 806

- 1. Prelude (2:14)
- 2. Allemande (1:34)
- 3. Courante I (0:48)
- 4. Courante II (2:13)
- 5. Sarabande (1:34)
- 6. Bourée (3:10)
- 7. Gigue (1:12)

English Suite No. 2 in A minor, BWV 807

- 8. 1. Prelude (4:38)
- 9. 2. Allemande (1:26)
- 10. 3. Courante (0:58)
- 11. 4. Sarabande (2:44)
- 12. 5. Bourée (3:12)
- 13. 6. Gigue (1:16)

English Suite No. 3 in G major, BWV 808

- 14. 1. Prelude (2:58)
- 15. 2. Allemande (1:27)
- 16. 3. Courante (1:05)
- 17. 4. Sarabande (2:52)
- 18. 5. Gavotte (2:11)
- 19. 6. Gigue (1:29)

English Suite No. 4 in F major, BWV 809

- 20. 1. Prelude (4:02)
- 21. 2. Allemande (1:21)
- 22. 3. Courante (0:53)
- 23. 4. Sarabande (1:08)
- 24. 5. Menuet (3:17)
- 25. 6. Gigue (1:45)

CD TWO

English Suite No. 5 in E minor, BWV 810

- 1. Prelude (4:15)
- 2. Allemande (1:25)
- 3. Courante (1:07)
- 4. Sarabande (1:14)
- 5. Passepiéd (2:46)
- 6. Gigue (1:31)

English Suite No. 6 in D minor, BWV 811

- 7. 1. Prelude (7:20)
- 8. 2. Allemande (1:30)
- 9. 3. Courante (1:11)
- 10. 4. Sarabande (2:27)
- 11. 5. Gavotte (2:33)
- 12. 6. Gigue (2:01)

French Suite No. 1 in D minor, BWV 812

- 13. 1. Allemande (2:36)
- 14. 2. Courante (1:55)
- 15. 3. Sarabande (2:13)
- 16. 4. Menuet I (1:11)
- 17. 5. Menuet II (2:02)
- 18. 6. Gigue (3:07)

French Suite No. 2 in C minor, BWV 813

- 19. 1. Allemande (2:58)
- 20. 2. Courante (2:14)
- 21. 3. Sarabande (2:57)
- 22. 4. Air (1:27)
- 23. 5. Menuet (1:25)
- 24. 6. Gigue (2:41)

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XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on
a photograph of
Alexander Borovsky

J S BACH English Suites
Recorded 1952
Published 1953
Vox PL 7852

J S BACH French Suites
Recorded 1953
Published 1954
Vox PL 8192

Total duration:
2hr 46:17

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Alexander Borovsky *piano*

J S BACH ENGLISH AND FRENCH SUITES (CD1 & CD2)
ALEXANDER BOROVSKY - PIANO

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Mention the word 'Vox' and most seasoned collectors will answer 'box' - boxes of oeuvres completes with the likes of Alfred Brendel, Gyorgy Sandor, Gyorgy Pauk, Peter Frankl, Walter Klien and other musical luminaries doing the honours. Vox's UK track record is far from immaculate: distributors and license deals have come and gone, transfers from older recordings have tended to be unsatisfactory and some of the label's brightest gems have so far avoided CD representation. I'm thinking of Alexander Borovsky's Bach French and English Suites, Klemperer's French Brandenburg Concertos (so different to his EM! re-makes) and Gyorgy Sandor's Bartók solo piano recordings... Rob Cowan, *Gramophone*, May 2000

Meloclassic's trawl of pianists is highly impressive. I've long treasured Alexander Borovsky's recordings of Bach's French and English Suites, as well as his Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies... Rob Cowan, *Gramophone*, April 2014

Two of the few vinyl sets that I still treasure feature recordings from the 1950s of Bach's English and French Suites with the pianist Alexander Borovsky. I bought these years ago from 'Discurio' in London's Shepherd's Market where the proprietor described the playing as having a Rubinstein-like ease of manner and warmth of tone. And he wasn't wrong: here was Bach playing where elegance, tasteful phrasing and unforced liveliness guaranteed hours of pleasure... Rob Cowan, *Gramophone*, April 2018

Incidentally any chance of Alexander Borovsky's Bach English and French Suites (Vox)? Like Rubinstein playing Bach... Rob Cowan, *Rob's Retro Classical* blog, discussion posting, excerpt

Producer's Note

It was during a discussion on the merits and history of vinyl and shellac replay that Rob Cowan slipped in a short request (final quote, *above*) regarding Borovsky's recordings of the Bach *English and French Suites*, something for which he's apparently been quietly campaigning for several years now. I was able to track down near-mint copies of the original Vox vinyl pressings from an eBay seller in Israel, and so—at last—here they are. The piano tone and recordings are good for their era, and the vinyl is, for the most part, similarly well preserved. Some swish was evident on a couple of the sides, which I've been able to either remove or reduce, whilst the piano tone remains pretty much as found on the discs. The French Suites, recorded and issued a year after the English Suites, boast perhaps slightly improved sound at a time when recording technology was improving rapidly. Overall both are highly satisfactory from a technical point of view. Andrew Rose



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J S BACH ENGLISH AND FRENCH SUITES (CD3)
ALEXANDER BOROVSKY - PIANO

borovsky

j s bach english and french suites

CD THREE

French Suite No. 3 in B minor, BWV 814

1. Allemande (3:05)
2. Courante (2:04)
3. Sarabande (1:52)
4. Anglaise (0:57)
5. Menuet (1:22)
6. Trio (2:32)
7. Gigue (2:08)

French Suite No. 4 in E-flat major, BWV 815

8. 1. Allemande (2:06)
9. 2. Courante (1:50)
10. 3. Sarabande (2:39)
11. 4. Gavotte (1:15)
12. 5. Menuet (1:06)
13. 6. Air (1:58)
14. 7. Gigue (2:16)

French Suite No. 5 in G major, BWV 816

15. 1. Allemande (2:41)
16. 2. Courante (1:36)
17. 3. Sarabande (4:28)
18. 4. Gavotte (1:03)
19. 5. Bourrée (1:17)
20. 6. Loure (2:22)
21. 7. Gigue (3:23)

French Suite No. 6 in E major, BWV 817

22. 1. Allemande (2:24)
23. 2. Courante (1:30)
24. 3. Sarabande (2:51)
25. 4. Gavotte (1:11)
26. 5. Menuet (1:39)
27. 6. Bourrée (1:22)
28. 7. Gigue (3:46)

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