

6 Suites for Violoncello BWV 1007-1012

The information below has been gleaned from the following resources:

NBA VI/2 and NBA KB VI/2 and VI/2 (Faksimile-Band) + NBA KB VI/1 (Works for Violin)

Sources

No Longer Existing Sources:

[F]: The autograph from which A. M. Bach prepared her copy. This autograph was probably already a clean copy. It is very likely that there were several autographs (composing, clean copy, and perhaps even another later clean copy).

The relationship of these autographs to the autograph(s) of the solo violin sonatas and partitas, BWV 1001-1006, is inferred by the autograph of the latter (Signatur: Mus. ms. Bach P 967), Bach's own title of which reads: *Sei Solo. / a / Violino / senza / Baſſo / accompagnato. / Libro Primo. / da / Joh: Seb: Bach. / ao. 1720*. Resulting from Bach's inclusion of *Libro Primo* in the title, the assumption is made that Bach intended to compose (or had already done so) a similar set of works for solo violoncello. The only supposed connection between these two sets of works for a solo instrument is based on a separate title page written circa 1730 or thereafter by Georg Heinrich Ludwig Schwanberg (1696-1774), musician at the court of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. His title reads:

Pars 1. / Violino Solo / Composée / par / Sr. Jean Seb: Bach. /

Pars 2. / Violoncello Solo. / Senza Basso. /

composée / par / Sr. J. S. Bach. / Maitre de la Chapelle / et / Directeur de la Musique / a / Leipsic. / écrite par Madame / Bachen. Son Epouse.

The watermark of the paper used by Schwanberg has been proven to being used by Bach as well for his manuscripts from Oct. 17, 1727 until Dec. 2, 1731. Schwanberg's presence in Leipzig is documented from late fall of 1727 to at least October 1728, but it has not been determined as yet just when he finally left Leipzig. Possibly he was still in Leipzig circa 1730 when he may have commissioned A. M. Bach to make these copies for him. It is unclear when Schwanberg separated the solo cello works from those for violin which he then kept for himself. Aside from circumstantial evidence, there is no way to know for sure whether J. S. Bach intended the solo cello suites to be the 2nd part of a set of works beginning with the solo violin sonatas and partitas or if Schwanberg coincidentally assigned them to function as a *Libro Secunda* continuation of the *Libro Primo* set of solo violin works.

Schwanberg also wrote the title for the solo violoncello suites [Source A below] which reads:

*6 / Suites a / Violoncello Solo / senza / Basso /
composées / par / Sr. J. S. Bach. / Maître de Chapelle.*

An additional descriptive title similar to this does not appear on A. M. Bach's copy (Mus. ms. Bach P 268) of the solo violin sonatas and partitas, thus leading to the reasonable assumption that Schwanberg, mainly known as a violinist, was more interested in the violin rather than the violoncello compositions. For this reason, he may have sold or given away A. M. Bach's copy of the cello suites, thereby necessitating a new title for them since they were no longer included in the double 'set' of compositions which he had originally acquired. [see: <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Topics/Hidden-Text.htm>]

[G]: The matrix for the sources C, D, E listed below. (This might be the source, a lost manuscript, used by Janet et Cotelle for a printed edition {see below} or this lost manuscript might even be based upon another, different source, but there is insufficient evidence to decide this one way or the other.)

Existing Sources:

A: Berliner Staatsbibliothek (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz) Signatur: Mus. ms. Bach P 269.

This is a copy prepared by Anna Magdalena Bach.

There are 6 existing facsimile editions of this source:

1. Edition Francis Salabert (editor: Diran Alexanian), Paris, 1927.
2. Verlag Ludwig Doblinger (editors: Paul Grümmer and Erich Hermann Müller von Asow), Vienna and Leipzig, 1944.
3. Edition Reinhardt (same as above but reduced in size), Munich and Basel, (no year given).
4. -----, (editor: Alexander Stogorsky) Moscow, 1957.
5. Polskie Wydawnictwo Myzyczne (editor: Kzimirz Wiłkomirski), Kraków, 1972.
6. Bärenreiter (NBA KB VI/2 Beiband) (editor: Hans Eppstein), Kassel, Basel, London, New York, 1991.

Based upon the dating of A. M. Bach's handwriting and of the watermarks in the paper used for this copy (between 1727 and 1731), A. M. Bach's copies of both the solo violin (P 268) and solo violoncello works (P 269) were completed circa 1730 (Preface to NBA KB VI/2 (Faksimile-Band), 1991), a decade later than J. S. Bach's clean copy of the solo violin sonatas and partitas [P 967] dated 1720.

Summary of the provenance of this source:

Hans-Joachim Schulze gave the following account in his *Studien zur Bach-Überlieferung im 18. Jahrhundert*, Leipzig/Dresden, 1984: J. S. Bach's autograph (composing score?, clean copy?) → copied

by A. M. Bach circa 1730 → G. H. L. Schwanberg → (a possible, unknown owner) → Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818) → Georg Poelchau (1773-1836) → (1814) BB (Staatsbibliothek Berlin).

B: Berliner Staatsbibliothek (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz) Signatur: Mus. ms. Bach P 804.

This source is a copy of the cello suites made by Johann Peter Kellner (1705-1772) circa 1726, approximately 4 years earlier than A. M. Bach's copy. It is the oldest surviving source for the solo cello suites. It is part (pp. 249-276) of a larger collection of Bach manuscripts described in great detail in Russell Stinson's doctoral dissertation, *The Bach Manuscripts of Johann Peter Kellner and his Circle*, The University of Chicago, June, 1985. The NBA KBs V/5, pp. 24-34 and V/1, pp. 16-19 also give a summary of this collection.

The title reads:

Sechs Suonaten / Pour le Viola de Basso. / par Jean Sebastian / Bach:

[at the lower right:] *pos. / Johann Peter Kellner.*

The conclusion reads: *Fine / Soli Deo Sit Gloria.*

Because the edges of the pages in this collection had been subsequently cut, some indications at the top (names of mvts., ornamentation) are missing entirely or are very difficult to decipher. Suite V is incomplete: the Sarabande has been left out and the Gigue has only the first 9 measures before it breaks off. Contrary to the other main sources, Suite V in this manuscript lacks any indication for scordatura. Those notes intended for the A-string are accordingly notated just the way they normally would sound. Likewise any indication that Suite VI should be played on a 5-string instrument is also missing (nevertheless the chords are essentially the same as those found in sources A and C). Kellner's handwriting is essentially the same as that found in his copy of the solo violin sonatas and partitas which he had dated: *Anno 1726*. According to Stinson, Kellner's copy of the cello suites was completed during the first half of 1726, but the title page as well as the final page of music was added in 1727 or a little later.

Kellner copied from a different source than A. M. Bach did. It has not yet been determined whether this source was a different J. S. Bach autograph (a composing score, a different clean copy) or a copy circulating among those more closely associated with J. S. Bach.

Summary of the provenance of this source:

J. S. Bach's original autograph (composing score?, clean copy? {not the same source used by A. M. Bach}, or possibly someone else's copy made from the former?) → copied by J. P. Kellner → Kellner's eldest son from his first marriage, Johann Christoph Kellner (very likely he was the one who had a bookbinder cut the edges of the manuscript collection) → Ferdinand August Roitzsch (1805-1889) {co-editor with F. C. Griepenkerl for C. F. Peters (Leipzig) of Bach's organ works} → BB (Staatsbibliothek Berlin) 1889 {donated to the BB by Max Abraham, music publisher}.

C: Berliner Staatsbibliothek (Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz) Signatur: Mus. ms. Bach P 289.

This is a copy from the 2nd half of the 18th century by two anonymous copyists.

It is found in a collection of Bach's instrumental compositions but the collection also contains a fugue by Karl Heinrich Graun.

Two different copyists prepared this copy with the first (Anonymous 402) finishing the first two suites completely and up to the Bourrée I of the 3rd suite m.12. This copyist has also copied other manuscripts found in the Amalienbibliothek while the 2nd copyist who completed this manuscript from the point where the first (Anon 402) left off is unique (no other music manuscripts have been identified as having been copied by the same individual).

The title, *Suiten und Preluden*, not written by either one of these copyists, was added later, probably during the 19th century.

Summary of the provenance of this source:

J. S. Bach's autograph composing score or one of his clean copies → probably an unknown intermediate copy of one of the previous possibilities → the two copyists of this source (C:) → Count Otto Karl Friedrich von Voß-Buch (1755-1823), a collector of music manuscripts → probably Johann Christoph Westphal (1773-1828) {listed in his estate, 1830, as "Bach, J. S., 6 Suites p. Violoncello solo. Geschr[rieben]" → donated to the BB (Staatsbibliothek Berlin) in 1851.

D: Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek), Vienna, Signatur: Mus. Hs. 5007.

This copy was prepared by an unknown copyist toward the end of the 18th century and has a title written by the copyist: *6. Suite | a | Violoncello solo. | Del Sigl: Joh: Seb: Bach*. Nothing is known about the origin of this copy other than that it was offered for sale in 1799 by Johann Traeg in Vienna. His catalogue lists it under the category, *Sonates à Violoncello solo*. The entry reads: *Bach (Seb.) 6 Suite à Violoncello solo g[eschrieben]*. Based upon the copyist's handwriting and the way the manuscript was set up, Yoshitake Kobayashi believes that Traeg probably had acquired this manuscript from North or Central Germany. It does not conform to the Viennese manuscript style.

Both sources, C: and D: go back to the same common source which is different from both A: and B:, both of which originate from different sources. It is probable than not that D: (as well as C: discussed earlier) was copied from an intermediate source (not one of J. S. Bach's composing or clean-copy autographs).

E: The earliest printed version of the cello suites appeared circa 1824 published in Paris by Janet et Cotelle.

The title reads:

Six Sonates ou Etudes Pour le Violoncelle Solo Composées PAR J. SEBASTIEN BACH. Oeuvre Posthume.

This early printed version is based upon the same source as C: and D:, yet there are sufficient differences from the latter two sources to warrant calling this an independent version.

For Comparison:

H: This is Bach's autograph of the Suite in G-minor for Lute, BWV 995, Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels. Signatur: II.4085 (=Fétis 2910).

This suite for lute is a transcription/arrangement of Suite V (BWV 1011) from the solo cello suites. The watermark in the paper is the same as that used in source A: and was used by Bach between 1727 and 1731, hence this autograph was completed around the same time (circa 1730) as A:.

Serious Transmission Problems

Concerning all of the five existing sources listed above and their relationship to each other, not one of them is either a direct or indirect copy of any of the others. All of them exhibit very obvious mistakes in separating and/or combining notes (articulation) and contain variants which the others do not have. This is the reason why the NBA has decided to provide facsimiles of the first four listed above.

A: The NBA KB VI/2 (p. 29) provides examples of A. M. Bach's rather sloppy markings of articulation. Since there is no original autograph of the cello suites for comparison, it became necessary to resort to the closest equivalent: a comparison of Bach's autograph of the solo violin works (P 967) with A. M. Bach's copy (P 268) made directly from the original. As evident from the latter copy made at the same time as the cello suites, the same casual treatment of articulation on A. M. Bach's part can be expected here as well.

Bachs Autograph der Violinsoli (P 967)

Anna Magdalena Bachs Kopie (P 268)

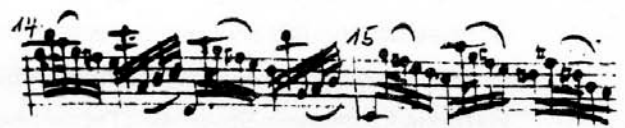
1) BWV 1001, Presto:



3) BWV 1002
Correnta:



4) BWV 1003, Allegro:



5) BWV 1004, Giga:



6) BWV 1004, Ciaccona:



8) BWV 1005, Allegro assai:



9) BWV 1006, Gavotte en Rondeaux:



B: Kellner's copy of the solo violin sonatas and partitas reveals even more carelessness than A. M. Bach's copy of this set does. While his indication of phrase markings is certainly wayward and imprecise, he even goes so far as to omit certain movements and to change their sequence. Sometimes certain passages are missing entirely. At least in his copy of the cello suites he does not change the sequence of movements nor does he shorten them. He merely omits the Sarabande from Suite V and breaks off copying the Gigue after a few bars. There are, however, numerous careless mistakes. The lack of any calligraphic intentions on Kellner's part seems to indicate that his copies were for private use only. Since he was not a cellist, he tried to cancel the scordatura and transpose the notes that were to be played on the highest string so that he might be able to play them on another instrument (possibly a keyboard instrument). His copy contains a few tempo indications and markings not available in the other sources: *presto* for the Prélude from Suite III and *adagio* for the Allemande from Suite VI among others.

C:, D:, E: reveal, as a group, differences in the ornamentation, articulation and slurs not available in A: and B:.

All in all, C:, D:, and E: (= [G:]) are closer to A: than to B:

The printed music of the cello suites as contained NBA VI/2 is given in two versions: 1) mainly based on A: with some help from B: and [G:] and 2) based on C:, D:, E (= [G:]). For anyone needing to make decisions regarding the articulation, the NBA KB VI/2 [Faksimile-Heft] is available for comparison of the key sources: A:, B:, C:, and D:.

Printed Early Versions of the Cello Suites

1. 1824 (see E: above) published by Janet et Cotelle, Paris.

From the *Avis des Editeurs* we learn:

«... mais cet oeuvre n'a jamais été gravé, il était même difficile de le découvrir. Après beaucoup de recherches en Allemagne, M. NORBLIN, de la musique du Roi, premier violoncelle de l'Académie royale de Musique, a enfin recueilli le fruit de sa persévérance, en faisant le découverte de ce précieux manuscrit.»

This "précieux manuscrit" upon which this first printed edition is based has obviously been lost. The discoverer of this manuscript is Louis Pierre Norblin (1781-1854) who held the position cited above from 1811-1841 and was a professor at the Conservatoire from 1826-1846.

2. March, 1825, published by H. A. Probst, Leipzig (no editor named).

This is based upon the Janet et Cotelle edition almost exclusively (even the title page is very similar).

3. April, 1826, ed. Justus Johann Friedrich Dotzauer (1783-1860), published by Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig.

Title page reads:

Six SOLOS ou Etudes pour le Violoncelle – Ouvrage Posthume de J. S. BACH. Avec le Doigter et les Coups d’Archet indiqués par J. J. F. DOTZAUER. A LEIPSIC Chez Breitkopf & Härtel. Pr. 1 Thlr.

First Dotzauer tried to copy the printed version of Janet et Cotelte, but then he began to make corrections to the plates probably based on source B:. He still used, however, the designation “Sonate” instead of “Suite” as the French version did.

4. December, 1879, Leipzig, the BG edition, Vol. 27, ed. Alfred Dörffel.

Dörffel based his edition on sources A: and B: as well as some of the printed editions (listed as 2. and 3. above. He also tried to use another printed edition published in 1864 by Gustav Heinze in Leipzig which had included revisions made by Robert Schumann of a manuscript from Berlin; however, Dörffel did not find this to be very helpful. He did not have access to source C: as well as D:, nor did he know about the French printed version, but the Probst edition had served him in obtaining needed information from the former source.

5. 1898, ed. Robert Hausmann, published by Steingräber, Leipzig.

Hausmann based his edition on sources A, B, and C

6. 1950, ed. August Wenzinger, published by Bärenreiter, Kassel.

Wenzinger based his version solely on A: (B: was not available at that time and C: and D: were unknown to him). He attempted to interpret A. M. Bach’s marks of articulation as being representative of performance practices in the 18th century.

7. 1964, ed. Dimitry Markevitch, published by Theodore Presser Company, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA.

Markevitch denied any preference for source A:, preferring rather sources B: and C:.

He states:

“The first edition is based on the manuscripts of Kellner [source B:] and Westphal [source C:] as well as that of Anna Magdalena Bach [source A:].”

Markevitch overrated Kellner's dependability and often did not make use of some of the more precise articulation given in source C:. Markevitch failed to give reasons for some of his choices and often did not indicate which source was being used. In his second edition (1985?), he attempted to correct some errors, but others still remained untouched. In his explanation of the provenance of source C:, he confuses one of the owners of this manuscript, Johann Christoph Westphal (1773-1828), the organist from Hamburg, with Johann Jacob Heinrich Westphal (1756-1825), a musician from Schwerin.

8. 1965, ed. Paul Rubardt, published by Edition Peters, Leipzig.

Rubardt put phrase markings above and below the notes, thus representing both sources A: and B:; however C: was not taken into account.

Other editions of the cello suites were examined by the NBA editors but were considered not important enough to be included in its discussion.

Other Topics of Possible Interest

In the following sections various hypotheses or speculative options based upon circumstantial or real evidence will be presented. No attempt is made here to list all possible or available hypotheses but rather to explore some possible answers to important questions that have been raised in the past and that today still occupy Bach experts, performers, connoisseurs, and those who are making their first acquaintance with these works.

When did Bach compose the Suites for Solo Violoncello?

Hypothesis #1: 1720

Perhaps the most common explanation, as given above, is this one. Here are the pros and cons:

Pro:

a) We have J. S. Bach's autograph of the solo violin sonatas and partitas which he personally dated: *ao. 1720*. The title also contains the words *Libro Primo* thus making this set of solo violin works the first part of a collection to be followed subsequently by another second part or *Libro Secunda*.

b) Circa 1730 Schwanberg wrote a separate title page for the combined solo violin and solo cello sets copied by Anna Magdalena Bach. This page indicates that the solo violin works constituted "Part 1" while the solo cello suites were to be considered as "Part 2".

c) Because Anna Magdalena Bach circa 1730 copied from J. S. Bach's clean copy of the solo violin works from 1720, it can be assumed that she likewise, at the same time, copied the cello suites from a then still existing clean-copy autograph that would have been considered by Bach as the 'second book' that was hinted at in Bach's title for the solo violin sonatas and partitas.

Con:

a) It cannot be corroborated by any other independent sources that J. S. Bach intended the solo cello suites to be the second installment of the ongoing series he had announced in the title of the solo violin works. Other options might be that Bach only intended a second part but never started or finished it, or that Bach had a different solo instrument in mind.

b) The linkage of Schwanberg's circa 1730 title page via A. M. Bach's titleless (having no indication by her that it is the second book or part) circa 1730 copy from the original source of the solo cello suites of which no autograph of any kind has survived is based on purely circumstantial evidence.

Hypothesis #2: Earlier than 1720, possibly Weimar Period

Pro:

a) based upon a stylistic analysis the solo violin works show a later stage of development, hence the cello suites must have been composed earlier --[This section is still incomplete]

Why did Bach compose the Suites for Solo Violoncello?

Hypothesis #1: Didactic

Assuming the 1720 hypothesis, one would place the solo violoncello suites in the Köthen period when many other didactic works for single instruments were being composed: BWV 1001-1006 (Three Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin); BWV 1013 (Solo Partita for Transverse Flute); BWV 846-869 (Well-Tempered Clavier, Pt. 1); BWV 772-801, 924-932, etc. (Das Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach); and BWV 812-816, BWV 573, BWV 728, BWV 841, BWV 991 (Das Klavierbüchlein für Anna Magdalena Bach {1722}).

Hypothesis #2: Musica da Chiesa

Johann Nikolaus Forkel (1749-1818), one of the earliest Bach biographers, indicates regarding the parallel set of compositions for solo violin (BWV 1001-1006) that

Zu Bachs Zeit wurde in der Kirche während der Communion gewöhnlich ein Concert oder Solo auf irgend einem Instrument gespielt. Solche Stücke setzte er häufig selbst, und richtete sie immer so ein, daß seine Spieler dadurch auf ihren Instrumenten weiter kommen konnten.¹

[During Bach's lifetime an instrumental concerto or a solo played on any given instrument was performed during church services while communion was taking place. Bach frequently composed such pieces himself and did this in such a way that his performers would continue to improve in their ability to master their instruments.]

Philipp Spitta (1841-1894) discusses the solo violin sonatas and partitas as well as the solo violoncello suites in context of the historical development of violin and cello techniques and the musical forms (suites, partitas, and sonatas) that Bach used in their composition. In tracing the influence upon Bach of

¹ J. N. Forkel, *Über Johann Sebastian Bachs Leben, Kunst und Kunstwerke* (Leipzig, 1802), ed. Josef Müller-Blattau, Kassel, 1950, p. 83

Giovanni Gabrieli's (1555-1612) and Arcangelo Corelli's (1653-1713) sonatas, Spitta comments as follows on the appearance of the *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata), the chief characteristic of which is the sequence of slow/fast sequences of music:

When, in the second half of the century, chamber music and solo violin-playing made such gigantic strides in Italy, Corelli adopted the form [sonata is a form contemporary with the suite – it does not entirely dispense with dance forms, but never consists of them alone] in two movements, and by freely combining two such pairs of movements, made up a whole constituting a three-part *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata), which he transferred from chamber music back to sacred music, and in its new form it was accompanied on the organ. When it was not intended for church performances dances might be inserted....

Sebastian Bach's three sonatas for violin solo display the [sonata] form in its strictest and purest development. All are in four movements. But, inasmuch as the second slow movement is in another though nearly allied key, while the rest keep to the original key, the fundamental scheme is still in three movements....²

Spitta, for the first time as far as I know, identifies correctly the fugal subject of BWV 1005/2 as being derived from the incipit of the chorale melody *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*. Spitta, however, does not mention Forkel's observation about a possible sacred use for the sonatas and partitas. The link regarding the chorale incipit as a fugal subject is reiterated by Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) in his 1908 Bach biography, *J. S. Bach*, (English translation by Ernest Newman published by Dover, Vol. 1, p. 392).

Sonata III/2 BWV 1005 Fuga

The incipit melody line from the chorale at the conclusion of BWV 226 (transposed from the original key)

Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott

Komm, Hei - li - ger Geist, Her - re Gott, er - füll mit dei - ner Gna - den Gut

The Whitsuntide antiphon "Veni Sancte Spiritus" as expanded and translated into German by Martin Luther, Erfurt, 1524

This is one of the primary chorales designated for Pentecost (Whitsuntide)

Arnold Schering (1877-1941) picks up the thread regarding the possible performance venue for the solo violin and cello works in his generally well-documented book on Bach's sacred music in Leipzig:

»Unter der Communion, ehe die teutschen Lieder angefangen werden, wird ein Stück musicirt oder eine Motette gesungen«, vgl. Leibnitz, Kirchenandachten 1694, desgleichen Leipziger Kirchenstaat 1710 (§ 18) und Sicul, Neo Annalium Lips. Cont. II (1717) § 11. Bei solchen Gelegenheiten scheint es zuweilen auch solistische Instrumentalmusik gegeben haben (Bachsche Solosonaten für Violine und für Violoncello?).

[During communion, before the congregational singing of the German chorales commences, an instrumental composition {Schering explains on the same page: 'unterschied sich diese Kommunionmusik durch das Fehlen der Orchesterbegleitung' =the difference with the communion music is that it lacked orchestral

² Philipp Spitta, *Joh. Seb. Bach*, (Leipzig, 1873), Vol. 1, pp. 677-709 in the English translation by Clara Bell and J. A. Fuller-Maitland published by Novello/Dover Volume 2 Book IV, Section/Chapter III, pp. 68-101

accompaniment} is performed or a motet is sung. Schering cites three separate sources from 1694, 1710, and 1717. For such occasions {as part of the church service during communion} it appears that sometimes solo instrument music was also performed (Bach's sonatas for solo violin and perhaps also the solo cello suites) {the question mark seems to refer only to the solo cello suites}.³

Günther Hausswald and Rudolf Gerber, editors of the NBA KB VI/1, p. 64, state:

Da Bach in der Fuge der Sonata III das Thema dem Choral *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott* entnommen hat, dürfte ein derartiges Musizieren *sub communione* für Pfingsten wahrscheinlich sein.

[Since Bach based the theme for the fugue in Sonata III (BWV 1005/2) on the chorale *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott*, it is quite possible that a performance of this type of piece would have been intended to take place during communion in Whitsuntide.]

Beginning with a series of articles and publications and later including a recording of the Partita in D Minor (BWV 1004) with special emphasis upon the *Ciaccona*,⁴ Helga Thoene⁵ has identified some of the hidden, not-so-apparent, underlying chorales that appear to form the background or provide the basis for Bach's compositions. Thoene recognized the overall structure and sequence of the solo violin sonatas and how they were correlated to the medieval Trinitarian formula which summarizes the central articles of Christian belief:

**Ex Deo nascimur
In Christo morimur
Per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus**

**[From God we are born
In Christ we die
Through the Holy Spirit/Ghost we are born again]**

The three sonatas and their associated partitas, according to Thoene, describe the theological progression that begins with Christmas ("we are born" = incarnation of Christ) Sonata & Partita I, leads to the Passion/Easter ("we die" = passion and resurrection of Christ) Sonata & Partita 2 and culminates with Pentecost ("we are born again" = the Holy Spirit comes to us) Sonata & Partita 3. The explicit reference to the primary Lutheran Pentecost chorale *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herre Gott* used as the main subject of the *Fuga* in the third sonata (BWV 1005/2) as indicated above provides strong support for this assumption. Thoene also supports her argument with quotations of other chorales in these sonatas and partitas which relate to the corresponding high feasts in the liturgical calendar. In the booklet accompanying the *Morimur* CD issue, she refers at one point only to the sonatas stating that:

³ Arnold Schering, *Johann Sebastian Bachs Leipziger Kirchenmusik*, Leipzig, 1936, p. 10, footnote.

⁴ *Morimur* was issued in 2001 as a CD by ECM Records New Series 1765 289 461 895-2.

⁵ Helga Thoene, *Die Architektur der drei Sonaten, J. S. Bach: Sei Solo/Sechs Sonaten und Partiten für Violine* (Stuttgart, 1991); *Johann Sebastian Bach, Ciaccona: Tanz oder Tombeau? Verborgene Sprache eines berühmten Werkes*, Cöthener Bach-Hefte, vi (Köthen, 1994); "Ehre sey dir Gott gesungen"; *Johann Sebastian Bach, Die Violin-Sonate G-Moll BWV 1001: Der verschlüsselte Lobgesang*, Cöthener Bach-Heft, vii (Köthen, 1998).

Recent research has revealed that this self-contained cycle of church sonatas relates to the three high feasts of the liturgical year: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

Each of the three works is based on an inaudible *cantus firmus* consisting of one or more lines from church chorales. The first, in G Minor, is associated with a hymn by Bartholomäus Ringwaldt: “Herr Jesu Christ, Du höchstes Gut, Du Brunnquell aller Gnaden” (Lord Jesus Christ, thou highest good, thou wellspring of all mercy). The second, in A minor, contains in its opening movement (*Grave*) the first four lines of the Passion chorale “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden” (O head of blood and wounding), while the third, in C Major, is governed by Luther’s Pentecostal hymn “Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott” (Come, Holy Spirit, God the Lord).

The two sonatas in the minor mode probably relate to Christ’s earthly existence – his incarnation, passion and resurrection – while the third, in the major mode, points to Heaven, to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (p. 48)

Although Thoene does mention the form of the sonatas as being based upon the *sonata da chiesa*, she does not take the *da chiesa* literally. This may be in accordance with the presently prevailing musicological definitions as, for example,

The ‘da chiesa’ label was little needed, since volumes not suited for church use were obvious from both scoring and content; moreover abstract sonatas, even if conceived for liturgical use, were no doubt heard elsewhere as well.... But such distinctions between church and chamber sonatas evaporated in Corelli’s lifetime (dances intrude on church sonatas, expressive adagios on chamber sonatas; the melodic bass and continuo share a single line; even the church sonata’s fugue could be replaced by a binary movement). Thus when J.G. Walther defined the sonata as a serious piece in which adagios and allegros alternate (*Musicalisches Lexicon*, 1732), the church and chamber distinction had little relevance.⁶

Here is what Walther (1732) really states about this matter:

Da. Diese Italiänische *Præposition* bedeutet ... (2. *vor*. Z.E. *Sonate da Camera*, Sonaten vor das Zimmer, oder Cammer-Sonaten. *Sonate da Chiesa*, Sonaten vor die Kirche, Kirchen-Sonaten....

[*Da* – this Italian preposition means ... 2. for, e.g., *Sonate da Camera*, sonatas for a {large} room or chamber sonatas. *Sonate da Chiesa*, sonatas for the church, church sonatas.]

Chiesa (ital.) eine Kirche. *Sonate, Musiche, Concerti da Chiesa*. Sonaten, Musicken, *Concerten*, so sich in die Kirche schicken.

[*Chiesa* (Italian) a church. *Sonate, Musiche, Concerti da Chiesa*. Sonatas, collections of pieces, concertos which are appropriate for performing in a church.]

Sonata oder *Suonata* (*ital.*) von *Sonare* oder *Suonare*, lauten, klingen; ist ein vor Instrumente, insonderheit aber vor Violinen, gesetztes *gravitätisches* und künstliches Stück, so in abgewechselten *adagio* und *allegro* bestehet.

[*Sonata* or *Suonata* (Italian) derived from *Sonare* or *Suonare* to create a sound; is a serious, artistic, instrumental composition, particularly for violins, consisting of a sequence of *adagio* und *allegro* movements.]

Sonates d’Eglise, oder *pour Eglise* (*gall.*) Kirchen-Sonaten.

[*Sonates d’Eglise*, or *pour Eglise* (French) church sonatas.]

Musica Ecclesiastica (*lat.*) *Musica da Chiesa* (*ital.*) *Musique d’Eglise* (*gall.*) Kirchen-Music, oder, die sich schicket in der Kirche *executirt* zu werden.

⁶ From the article on *Sonata da chiesa* by Sandra Mangsen in the New Grove Online, Oxford University Press, 2009

[*Musica Ecclesiastica* (Latin) *Musica da Chiesa* (Italian) *Musique d'Eglise* (French) church music or such music that is suitable for performing in a church.]

From the above it becomes apparent that Bach and his contemporary composers and musicians still felt a need to distinguish sacred instrumental music from the type/style described in early 18th century sources as either chamber or opera/theater music while at the same time an evolutionary process was taking place that allowed various dance forms such as those appearing in suites to be considered appropriate for performances in churches. Nevertheless, the somewhat simplistic view persists among some musicologists, particularly in the 19th and early 20th century (see Spitta above), that the suite with its various dance movements was primarily, if not exclusively, intended as a secular and/or courtly entertainment. In reality, however, elements of the church sonata found their way into the chamber sonata, while, on the other hand, the dance movements/rhythms as the predominant characteristic of the secular suites were being accepted as appropriate for church sonatas. This phenomenon is quite evident in Bach's vocal works where elements from theater and court music were assimilated into his sacred works. Thus these were enriched without losing their appropriateness for performance as part of a sacred setting since these elements were adapted and the performance of them adjusted to suit the *stylus ecclesiasticus*.

A fairly large number of 'church-designated' compositions from the 17th and early 18th centuries have a title that distinguishes them stylistically (*stylus ecclesiasticus*) from appropriate use in other performing venues (*stylus theatralis, stylus cubicularis*):

per la capella vs. per la camera

sonata/suonata da chiesa vs. sonata da camera

canzoni per chiesa e camera

sinfonia da chiesa sinfonia per la chiesa

concerto da chiesa (per chiesa) Concerti musicali per uso di chiesa

capriccio da chiesa

sonata concertate per chiesa

musica da chiesa, Musica di Camera et Chiesa

Concerti ecclesiastici a 1, 2, 3, 4, con sei sonate, per instrumenti a 2, 3, 4 (1610)

Sandra Mangsen, in the article referred to above, summarizes this situation as follows and includes information about the liturgical use of, among other instrumental combinations, a solo violin playing a sonata:

Brossard (1703) noted that, while there are many kinds of sonatas, 'the Italians reduce them to two types. The first is the sonata *da Chiesa*, that is one proper for the Church, ... The second type is the Sonata which they call *da Camera*, fit for the Chamber. These are actually suites of several small pieces suitable for dancing, and all in the same scale or key'. The liturgical use of Baroque sonatas has been well documented (see Bonta, 1969): 17th-century ensemble canzonas and sonatas replaced the organ solos formerly heard at Mass, and solo violin

sonatas were customary at the Elevation; from about 1690, concertos or orchestral performance of trio sonatas might be heard instead. Moreover, 17th-century church musicians may have adapted longer sonatas by performing isolated sections, a practice likely to have encouraged composers to construct independent movements.

It is worth considering whether Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber(n) (1644-1704) performed (or intended them to be performed) as part of church services his *16 Violin-Sonaten "zur Verherrlichung von 15 Mysterien aus dem Leben Mariae"* (1674), [16 Violin Sonatas 'for the glorification of 15 Mysteries from the Life of Mary'] also known as the Passion or Christ Sonatas. Here we have an example of solo, unaccompanied violin sonatas that more explicitly and less abstractly connect the content of the music with the liturgical setting offered by a church than many other more typical church sonatas. Did Bach have any knowledge of their existence?

Note that the earliest manuscript copy by Kellner of the solo cello suites [Source: B above] has the type of conclusion usually reserved for Bach's sacred works: *Fine / Soli Deo Sit Gloria*. Did the circa 21-year-old Kellner insert this on his own or was he faithfully copying from Bach's autograph everything he saw there?

Of course, up to this point the emphasis has been almost exclusively on Bach's solo violin sonatas and partitas which could possibly provide some analogous, indirect evidence for potential interpretation of the solo violoncello suites as intended not only for didactic purposes but also for performance as part of a church service in which the performer participates. At the very least a performer might be able to recapture a religious experience while considering a possible venue for which Bach may have composed these masterpieces.