



The Sixty-second Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,499th Concert

Mischa Maisky, *cellist*

6 June 2004
Sunday Evening, 7:00 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 pm.

2,499th Concert
6 June 2004, 7:00 pm

Music for Solo Cello by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major

BWV 1007 (1720)

Prélude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Menuett I

Menuett II

Gigue

Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major

BWV 1009 (1720)

Prélude

Allemande

Courante

Bourrée I

Bourrée II

Gigue

Intermission

Cello Suite No. 5 in C Minor

BWV 1011 (1720)

Prélude

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Gavotte I

Gavotte II

Gigue

The Musician

MISCHA MAISKY

Mischa Maisky has the distinction of being the only cellist in the world to have studied with both Mstislav Rostropovich and Gregor Piatigorsky. Rostropovich has lauded him as “one of the most outstanding talents of [his] generation. His playing combines poetry and exquisite delicacy with great temperament and brilliant technique.” Mischa Maisky has been enthusiastically received in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, New York, and Tokyo, to mention only a few of the major music centers of the world. After winning the prestigious Gaspar Cassado International Cello Competition in Florence, Italy, Maisky made his debut at Carnegie Hall in November 1973 with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under William Steinberg. In 1974 he was awarded an America-Israel Cultural Foundation scholarship for study with Gregor Piatigorsky, becoming his last student. At the Rostropovich Cello Competition in Paris, Maisky was awarded the special prize for his interpretation of the commissioned work.

Mischa Maisky began his studies in his native Riga, Latvia, and continued in Saint Petersburg (then Leningrad), where he won the All-Russian Cello Competition at age seventeen. A year later he won a prize at the International Tchaikovsky Competition, which led to studies with Mstislav Rostropovich at the Moscow Conservatory. While still a student, Maisky launched an active concert career throughout the Soviet Union. In 1972 Maisky emigrated to Israel, where he soon established himself as one of the leading European cellists of his generation. His love for chamber music led him to Gidon Kremer’s Lockenhaus Festival, where he is a regular guest and performs with pianists Martha Argerich, Radu Lupu, Peter Serkin, Malcolm Frager, and Nelson Freire.

Maisky’s recording debut on Deutsche Grammophon was Brahms’ *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello* with Gidon Kremer, accompanied by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under Leonard Bernstein. Maisky’s recordings have enjoyed worldwide critical acclaim and have twice been awarded the Record Academy Prize in Tokyo as well as the coveted Grand Prix du Disque in Paris. Mischa Maisky appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Columbia Artists Management, LLC, of New York City.

Program Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote all six of his suites for unaccompanied violoncello around 1720. He composed them with the cellist Christian Bernard Linike (1673–1751) in mind. Until 1717 principal cellist of the Hofkapelle in Berlin, Linike was hired that year by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen, who at the same time placed Bach in charge of his court musicians as kapellmeister. The suites are secular in nature, even though they were intended to be played during communion services in the court chapel. The genesis of the suite form lies in the idea of joining different types of dances together to provide artistic balance and contrast. The resulting dance movements in Bach's suites bear little resemblance to the simple eighteenth-century dance tunes that were actually used to accompany dancers.

Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007, makes liberal use of the open strings of the cello. There are pedal points on the open A and D strings throughout the opening *Prélude*, and the constant presence of sixteenth notes in the movement suggests improvisation. The *Allemande* of this suite is somewhat unusual in having been written in cut time (2/2) instead of the customary 4/4 meter, and it is typically performed slightly faster than the *Allemande* movements in the other suites. The *Courante* is in Italian style and, like the *Prélude*, is characterized by running sixteenth notes. The *Sarabande* makes frequent use of double and triple stops, calling on the performer to play two or three notes at once. By means of this device, Bach implies intricacies in the contrapuntal lines that the listener's ears may fill in. This is followed by two light and charming minuets. The final movement, the *Gigue*, is full of rhythmic and harmonic subtleties that are not immediately apparent in what seems to be a simply conceived movement.

The opening movement of the *Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009*, the *Prélude*, begins with a series of toccatalike running passages that soon narrow to a rocking movement. This episode gradually expands and reaches a climax in a magnificent passage over a pedal point on the open G string.

The rocking figures and scale passages return, leading to a coda of impressive broken chords. The *Allemande* also presents rapid rhythmic figures and scales, arabesque figurations that almost obscure the slow quadruple pulse of the movement. Here the melodic ideas are not vocal in quality but present many figurations, leaps, and plunges in the line, in the manner of instrumental music. The *Courante* flows in an unbroken stream of eighth notes in rapid triple meter. The *Sarabande*, always the slowest movement in a dance suite, is also the most melodic in this case. The large, resonant chords serve as pivots around which the melodies revolve and from which they receive their driving power. Both *Bourée I* and *Bourée II* move in a moderate *alla breve* tempo. The first of the pair, in C major, is contrasted by the second in C minor. These are perhaps the most celebrated pieces Bach ever wrote for the cello. The *Gigue* gives the feeling of a cheerful, wayward piece with its awkward high notes that plunge to double-stopped unisons, and its frenzied scurrying of sixteenth notes. The pedal point idea is again used, but over two pedals instead of one, creating the musical effect known as a drone.

Suite No. 5 in C Minor, BWV 1011, begins with a two-part *Prélude* modeled after a baroque French overture, followed by a rapid fugue. This section, containing no polyphony, obtains its formal organization by the use of thematic expositions and divertimentos, very much like the fugues of Bach's violin sonatas. Following a solemn *Allemande* and a rigorous *Courante*, the *Sarabande* displays Bach's masterful melodic control by offering a single-line approach and using no double stops. The pair of *Gavottes* that follows eases the tension established by the previous movements. Both rely on rhythmic structures: the first *Gavotte* features an initial rhythmic idea that is continued and developed throughout the piece, and the second is distinguished by its triplet motion. The work ends with a light and compact *Gigue*.

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Edited and adapted by Elmer Booze