

# The Fifth Cello Suite by J.S. BACH

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*Masteroppgaven er gjennomført som ledd i utdanningen ved Universitetet i Agder og er godkjent som del av denne utdanningen. Denne godkjenningen innebærer ikke at universitetet inntår for de metoder som er anvendt og de konklusjoner som er trukket.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**The Fifth Cello Suite by J.S.Bach** deals with many questions and problems about performing this suite on modern, baroque cello and scordatura. It is written in English language by Andrej Miletic and it is 53 pages long. It is a master thesis from the Agder University College, Faculty of Fine Arts, Institute of Music, classical department in Kristiansand, Norway.

*This master thesis is divided into nine sections:*

**The first section** is the introduction with methods and history.

**In the second section** I am writing about the Suite and the methods I will use.

**In the third section** I You will read about playing ornaments on cello.

**In the fourth section** I have tried to find the answer about the bowings and fingerings while playing and performing this suite.

**In the fifth section** I have described the suite, baroque cello, bow in 18<sup>th</sup> century and the modern cello and the bow .

**In the sixth section** I have given a short overview over Bach's six suites.

**In the seventh section** I have given my conclusions.

**The eight section** is a bibliography.

**Ninth section:** Appendix.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the beginning of the school year, here in Kristiansand, we knew that one part of the final exam would be the writing of a master thesis that would show that we were able to achieve a scientific approach to music. During writing this master thesis I realised that this is a remarkable occasion to devote myself to things I am deeply interested in.

I would like to give a special gratitude to my Professor Mr Per Kjetil Farstad, who led my ideas and goals wisely to their final forms and whose knowledge and experience especially of the baroque era were invaluable to me and my work .

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# **J.S.Bach, and the six Suites for cello**

## **Short biography**

Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 21st 1685. The family at Eisenach lived in a reasonably spacious home just above the town center, with rooms for apprentice musicians, and a large grain store. Here young Johann Sebastian was taught by his father to play the violin and the harpsichord. During his life he changed and lived in many cities: Arnstadt (1703-08) Weimar (1707-18) Cothen (1717-23) and Leipzig(1723-50) where he died. Besides many master pieces he composed cello suites which have been acclaimed as some of the greatest works ever written for solo cello.

## **Short introduction to the Cello-suites**

It is not known for certain when and in which order the suits composed. Disagreements most often appear when discussing the question: Did Bach compose the suits before or after the solo violin sonatas? However, most scholars believe – after extensive analysis of the styles of the sets of works – that the cello suites arose first, sometimes before 1720, which was the year when Bach appointed the title “The violin sonatas” to the respective piece. The suites were not very known before the 1900s, and for a long time it was generally thought that the pieces were intended to be kind of etudes. Attempts to compose piano accompaniments to the suites include a notable effort by Robert Schumann. In 1923, Leopold Godowsky realized suites 2, 3 and 5 in full counterpoint for solo piano.

The suites are in six movements each, and have the following structure and order of movements: Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Menuet (suites 1 and 2), Bourees (suites 3 and 4) Gavottes (suites 5 and 6) and Gigue.

### **Suite No. 1 in G major, BWV 1007**

The Prelude, mainly consisting of chords, is most likely the best known movement from the entire set of 6 suites. The second Menuet is one of only twelve movements in all 6 suites which doesn't contain chords other than in the last measure (measure 42).

### **Suite No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1008**

The Prelude consists of two parts, in the first part has a strong rotation theme that is immediately introduced in the very beginning.

The second part has a scale-based cadenza movement that leads to the final, with very powerful chords. The Allemande contains short cadenzas which are showing an exception in form which is generally very strict. The first Menuet contains chords-shiftings and demands string crossings during the whole movement.

### **Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009**

The Prelude of this suite consists of an A-B-A-C form. A form begins with a scale-based movement that eventually dissolves into very demanding arpeggio part. In the B-part the cellist is playing in thumb position, which is needed to reach the very difficult chords. Then it slowly returns to the scale theme, and ends with a powerful and strong chord movement.

The Allemande is the only movement in the suites that instead of one semiquaver has an three semiquavers up-beat, which in general is the standard form.

The second Bourree, in C minor, has a 2-flat (or G minor) key-signature. This notation, well known in pre-Classical music, is sometimes very suitable as a partial

key-signature. The first and second Bourree of the 3rd suite is very often used as solo material for other bass instruments such as tuba, trombone or euphonium.

#### **Suite No. 4 in E-flat major, BWV 1010**

Suite No. 4 is written in E-flat key and is one of the most technically difficult suites. This is an uncomfortable key for good intonating on cello and requires many extended left hand positions. The Prelude primarily consists of a difficult flowing quaver movement that leaves space for a cadenza before returning to its original theme. The Sarabande is very peaceful and the second beat in the movement is the basic characteristic of the 3/4 dance. In this particular Sarabande, almost every first beat has a chord.

#### **Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011**

Suite No. 5 was originally written in scordatura with the A-string tuned down to G, but nowadays a version for standard tuning is included in almost every edition of the suites along with the original version. Some chords must be simplified when playing with standard tuning, but some melodic lines become easier as well.

The Prelude is written in an A-B form, and resembles a French overture. It begins with a slow, emotional movement that explores the deep range of the cello. Then comes a fast and very demanding single-line Fugue that leads to the powerful end with full cord sound. This suite is most famous for its intimate Sarabande, which is the second of the two movements throughout the suites that does not contain any chords. The fifth suite is also exceptional as its Courante and Gigue are in the french style, rather than the italian form in the other five suites.

Generally speaking, the suites these days do not seem suitable for dancing. Some movements such as sarabanda, menuet, gavotte, however, can be considered as dances as well. Bach has probably used the dance-forms as starting points and through his imagination, modeled them to be suited to his own ideas.



## **Suite No. 6 in D major, BWV 1012**

It is widely believed that the sixth suite has been written specifically for a five-string "cello-piccolo" a smaller cello, about the size of a 7/8 normal cello which has a fifth upper string tuned to E, a perfect fifth above the otherwise top string. But, other believes that there is no substantial proof to support this belief that it is written for an instrument with "a cinq cordes". Only Anna Magdalena Bach's manuscript indicates the tunings of the strings and the other sources do not mention any intended instrument at all.

Many cellists who want to play the piece on a modern 4-string cello encounter difficulties as they are forced to use very high positions to reach many of the notes. In spite of this modern cellists regularly perform the suite on the 4-string instrument.

Performers specializing in early music and using authentic instruments, most often use the 5-string cello for this suite, but also that is another kind of view when it comes to performing



This suite is written in a much more free form than the others, containing more cadenza-like movements and virtuosic passages. It is also the only one of the suites that is partly notated in the Tenor C key.

This is what one of the most famous cellist in the world thinks about Bach cello suites.



Truls Mørk said in his 1999 ICS interview:

"I remember studying these dance forms with a Baroque dance specialist. I discovered that the actual dance tempos were so slow that they would be unplayable on the cello. Nobody could dance to the Bach Cello Suites as they are traditionally played because the cellist's tempos would be much too fast. I'm not sure that it's appropriate to think of the Bach Suites in terms of dances." <sup>5</sup>

One used this term in music, even though at the time it was known as pairs of dances. The classical suite form is: prelude, allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue. Suites which were written later included other movements as well, placed between sarabande and gigue.

The Cello suite No.5 in C minor, is believed been made by Bach's second wife Anna Magdalena. The published manuscript has been written in scordatura. It also has been published in modern editions.



While many modern cellists from our generations are using the metal strings, gut strings were obligated in the baroque era. Metal stings produce a brighter and harder sound then gut strings, but gut strings have softer and transparent, very light sound.

What can contribute to baroque sound is the lower tension on the strings due to this lower pitch, because the most commonly accepted baroque pitch for A was 415 Hz. As I earlier mentioned that the baroque cello is played without a pin. The pin brings the modern cello higher and it changes the holding of the instrument in many ways.

The pin gives some advantages and reduce technical difficulties on the modern cello. The body of the cello with the pin has a different angle, but the freedom like on baroque cello without the pin is not the same any more. One of the things which are sometimes forgotten is the chair height which in playing has an important role both in baroque and modern cello performing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.cello.org/heaven/baroque/baroque.htm>) Accessed March 2010

# Introduction

The Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello by Johann Sebastian Bach are very often considered to be some of the greatest works ever written for solo cello.

It is believed that Bach composed them while serving as a Kapellmeister in Cothen, between the period of 1717 until 1723.

The suites contain a great variety of technical devices, a wide range of emotional content, and compelling voice interactions and conversations, by which Bach is commonly recognized and appreciated. However, it is their intimacy, that has found them a place among Bach's most popular works today, and that popularity has left us not only with many different interpretations of the suits, but also with fierce defender of each and every one interpretation.

It is also interesting that the suites have been transcribed for numerous instruments, including the viola, double bass, classical guitar, horn, saxophone, trombone, and euphonium.

## History

It is not known for certain when and in which order were the suits composed. Disagreements most often appear when discussing the question of whether Bach composed the suits before or after the solo violin sonatas. However, most scholars believe – after extensive analysis of the styles of the sets of works – that the cello suites arose first, sometimes before 1720, which was the year when Bach appointed the title “The violin sonatas” to the respective piece.

The suites were not widely known before the 1900s, and for a long time it was generally thought that the pieces were intended to be etudes.

Attempts to compose piano accompaniments to the suites include a notable effort by Robert Schumann. In 1923, Leopold Godowsky realised suites 2, 3 and 5 in full counterpoint for solo piano.

## Approach to the problem

Suite No. 5 was originally written in scordatura<sup>2</sup> with the A-string tuned down to G, but nowadays a version for standard tuning is included in almost every edition of the suites along with the original version. Some chords must be simplified when playing with standard tuning, but some melodic lines become easier as well.

What I would like to research and analyze is why the 5<sup>th</sup> suite is the only one among the six which was written in scordatura. I will also analyze the question of whether it is better to play that particular suite with A-string or A-string tuned down to G.

When trying to play Bach's V suite with scordatura, which means a new tuning and totally new fingerings, I found that it is very different and strange compared to normal playing on a 4-stringed modern cello. A question is also arising: Is playing on a baroque cello<sup>3</sup> with scordatura more appropriate to the baroque way of playing Bach?

We know that the bow is important for the cellists, and it plays a very important role in the way of playing and interpreting. What is the difference between a baroque cello and a modern cello these days, and what pros and cons arise by comparing the one to another?

## Methods

To get an overview of the research area it was required to take a look at the numbering, movements and form of the suites. This was done by reading important literature.

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<sup>2</sup> A scordatura, which is also called cross-tuning, is a way of tuning and its used on open strings on string instruments. This way of tuning can help a lot and make the piece much more easier to perform. The scordatura has been used in many classical pieces such as : Vivaldi Opera : Tito Manlio, Mozart: Sinfonia Concertante (viola part), Mahler 4<sup>th</sup> symphony and many others. Scordatura was quite common in Baroque period, but these days many performers play without it.

<sup>3</sup> The other way of performing Bach V suite is playing it on baroque cello. The 18<sup>th</sup> century cello-baroque cello is played without a pin, the original hold of the cello allows big freedom of movement in the upper body.

The cello suites could in special ways also be compared to Bach violin sonatas, which contain similar elements, and a general look at the violin sonatas was required.

I have played the 5<sup>th</sup> suite on a classical cello and with a different scordatura than the original. This led to an extended comparison to see in how to interpret the piece, from different points of view.

I have also listened to important recordings of the suite, both cellists that play with the original baroque scordatura on the baroque cello, and cellists that play with the modern approach on the modern cello.

## **The Suite**

This suite is most famous for its intimate Sarabande, which is the second of the two movements throughout the suites that does not contain any chords.

The fifth suite is also exceptional as its Courante and Gigue are in the French style, rather than the Italian form of the other five suites.

A frequently asked question concerning the suites is whether they were composed for dancing? The opinions about this differ among the scholars in the music circles.

Generally speaking, the suites do not seem suitable for dancing. Some movements such as sarabanda, menuet, gavote, however, can be considered as dances as well. Bach has probably used the dance forms as starting points and through his imagination, modeled them to be suited to his own fancy.

**In order to enlighten the difference in sound and interpretation I will discuss the following points:**

- interpretation of ornaments
- articulations
- change in fingerings,
- bow-use on both the baroque and modern cello

### **Playing ornaments on cello**

For most the performers who are playing ornaments in written music, it is required to play it with special quality of good taste. I quote Rousseau, the Conservatoire method defined the subject thus:

“Ornaments or embellishments are several notes of taste which one adds to performance to vary a melody frequently repeated, or to decorate passages too “simple” which the author himself often composes with the intention of leaving the exercise to the taste of the performer.”

Opinions varied a lot, as with other aspects, when it comes to violoncello performance. I think that ornaments should be used with taste, because it can easily become boring. Ornaments just need to be held simple and played in a proper manner, with good taste and used with moderation. We should know and pay attention that the violoncello will not allow as many ornaments as another instruments.

They should be played in certain places on the string, and follow the solo line further on.



## The Trill

One of the most commonly recognized ornament was the trill. The notation of the trill differed between the French and Italian style and it was discussed by most teachers. In the midpart of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Italians used “t” and the French used “+” mark. From the Italian point of view notation of trills without termination was “tr” and the trill with termination was both “tr” and “+” marks were used by composers of France and Italy in 19<sup>th</sup> century as well.



Many writers on violoncello performance considered and linked the trill as part of the cadenza. In French they were referring the trill as a cadenza rather than an ornament.

The Plain shake or “tr” was to be used only in quick movements.

The Turn'd shanke or □ with termination could be made quick and long, depends how it fits to express certain piece.

The use of open strings wasn't acceptable by the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The reason was that those fingerings will never be used for cadences.

The only way when it could be used was for double-stops. In the baroque music each trill begins or it is prepared from the note above and in general it has a termination.

## Appoggiaturas



The appoggiatura started as a decorative note which is placed on the first part of the note of a melody.

It is always played on the strong beat of the bar and could be either dissonant or consonant. In either case it is always resolved into consonance.

The appoggiatura is not a very short ornament, it usually takes full half of the length of the note to resolve in consonance. It is usually connected with a main harmony by a slur.

**Haydn: Sonata in G maj XVI:27 Allegro con Brio**

A musical score for a piano piece in G major, 2/4 time. The score is for measures 23-26. Measure 23 starts with a treble clef and a bass clef. The treble clef has a quarter note G4 with an appoggiatura G4. The bass clef has a quarter note G2. Measure 24 has a treble clef with a quarter note A4 and a bass clef with a quarter note G2. Measure 25 has a treble clef with a quarter note B4 and a bass clef with a quarter note G2. Measure 26 has a treble clef with a quarter note C5 and a bass clef with a quarter note G2. The appoggiatura in measure 23 is marked with \*1. The notes in measure 25 are marked with \*2 and \*3. The bass clef notes in measures 23-26 are marked with 7-6, A, D, and A 4/3. The notes in measure 26 are marked with a slur and a wavy line.

## Acciacatura



The acciaccatura is often called “short appoggiatura”. Perhaps that is the best way to explain the meaning of this term. It is a shorter, less melodically important, variant of the long appoggiatura. It is written using a grace note.

## Mordents



Around this term big confusion has been made in the past. Many performers referred word “mordent” to ornaments which are some kind of trill variants. The definition has finally been made by Robert Donnington which clarifies this issue like an open shake or beat, in its standard form in the very fast alteration of the main note.

Regarding the use of mordents discussion becomes present more and more between the French and English cellist after the mid part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite discussions the mordents stayed and continued to be taught by German teachers.

## Turns

The term turn - also known as a “gruppetto” - is a short figure which has the note above one indicated, the note itself, note below the indicated and again the note itself. These are examples how the turns can be like :



which can be played like this:



The speed of the notes can be different and vary a lot, as can its rhythm.

### **Fingerings**

The fingerings in Bach’s V suite have various of possibilities. If the performer is playing on a baroque cello, the fingerings are different than when it’s played on a standard cello.

The main difference is, that during playing on a baroque cello the performer must change a lot of left hand positions. It mainly requires playing in the first, second and fourth position, but it can also be performed using open strings, which is also common when playing Bach V suite. Playing the suite on standard cello is a bit easier because it doesn’t requires much shifting, it is mainly played in first and fourth position. Fingerings are playing an important role in this particular suite because bad fingerings can make the suite much more difficult to perform.

## The Bowing

The bowings can be very different and free, such as: *detache*, *staccato*, *slurs*, *slur-detache combination*. The down-bow rule is the oldest and most fundamental way of playing on the string. That rule remained the foundation for all cellists during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mentioned four ways of bowing are most commonly used for performing this piece.

The *detache* term applied to separate bow strokes in the beginning of nineteenth century. Fast *detache* passages like the one we have in the fugue in this suite are often played in the middle or the upper part of the bow.

The bowing have the fundamental role in character of the suite. The performer who plys this suite on baroque cello will use mostly the *detache* bowing, because it will make the suite sound very light and demonstrate a dancing character. With the suitable fingerings, the *detache* bowing is more appropriate when played playing on a baroque cello. When performing this suite on a standard cello the bowings and fingerings are very connected, and rely on each other very much. Considering that during a performance of the suite on a standard cello we have a lot of shifting and position changing, and the performer must be aware of the bowing he will use, which will help him to follow the line and express himself. While the *detache* bowing was the most common in the 19th century, the linking of several notes on one bow was something new.

Slurs were used to help the players to connect several notes on one bow and make the passages easier to play. The number of slurs grouped in one bow was directly connected with a bow type and the way it was held (Walden 2004)

## THE V SUITE

### *Prelude*

In the prelude we can use a lot of bowings with slurs, because the prelude itself is in a way calm, has big lines, musical phrases and requires slurs in that way. Either if its played on baroque cello, standard cello or with scordatura, the most natural way is using a slur-detache combination in this part of movement. Putting together detache and slurs was an early method of providing contrast.

That kind of bow connection was most common in solo cello music. French cello teachers in 18<sup>th</sup> century started combining slurs and detache notes, and this kind of bow organization stayed until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### *Fugue*

In the fugue the very beginning itself is a mixture of staccato and detache. That is the theme which will be repeated many times during the fugue and it is important that it is recognised every time it is played. Later during the fugue we experience mostly detache bowings or slur-detache combination which in most of the performances is connected with the performer and with the interpretation he wants to present while playing.

The musician who wants to present this suite in a romantic way, will use a lot of slurs bowings and long lines. For ones who would like to present it in a baroque way, the bowings in general will be more light and detache-staccato.

Staccato done with a bow stroke is very close to detache, the only difference is that the staccato bow has wedges placed above the note and the bow should be pulled fast like it is planned for detache bowing. In general it is a light bow stroke.

The dynamic in the prelude and fugue is very important, especially in the fugue. The very beginning of prelude should be very dark, powerfull, in forte dynamic.

In that part we use mostly slurs, which help us to a better way of expressing the dynamic.



In the fugue, as I earlier mentioned, we have a few bars theme which will be repeated several times and it should be played in piano dynamic at first, then done with crescendo louder and louder and at the very end it should be loudest. So the dynamic in the prelude and fugue is very wide, from the very pianissimo to a powerful forte at the end.

*pp*



The violoncellists treated the vibrato as a left hand technique. It was added to notes as an ornament in the eighteenth century and from that time it stayed that way.

For many generations vibrato was suitable for long notes but it was also commonly used in Bach's pieces and other pieces by baroque composers. It was intended as an ornament and it was rarely used. There is evidence of use of vibrato from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and earlier, like occasional discreet vibrato or the one used for coloring a particular note.

Many famous cellists today are using the vibrato while playing Bach's V suite, especially in the Prelude. Mischa Maisky, one of the top cellist nowadays, uses a lot of vibrato while playing Bach.

Modern cellists however uses vibrato almost all the time. It is a part of their tone expression, or tone-building.



Violoncello bows in the 18th century demonstrate a very rich diversity of all kinds of bows.

There are many differences in musical style, variations in bow grips, and various discussions about the right type of bow for a soloist and for an orchestra musician.

The bow used for playing dance music was shorter in design, and it was thinner than the one used for playing in orchestras. Bows for orchestras were more heavy, more adjusted for orchestra playing. During the 18th century it was advised that orchestra bows should have black hair and the solo bows should have white hair. Many bow makers modified their bows to the demands of musical styles and to the influence of some virtuoso violinists such as: Viotti, Cramer, Tartini, and Corelli.



The centers for adoption, development and bow progression in design were located in Paris, London and Manheim, the cities where virtuoso violinist were working at the time. During the time, performers desired placing more strength power against the string, the bow had concave shape.

When the bow stick became increasingly concave, the tip of the bow had to increase the distance between the stick and bow hair. The extra weight which has been made by demands on the tip of the bow, was much more heavier then before. In order to fix it and make a necessary balance, the bow makers started putting decorative elements on and in the frog. That way they succeed to increase the weight on the frog.

What is the *frog*? The frog is part of the bow and it has a very important role in bow function. The frog holds and adjusts the near end of the horsehair. At the very end of the bow frog has a screw which is used for adjusting the horsehair pressure of the bow. Near the frog is the *grib* which is mosly made of a wire, and it is the place where the fingers are placed during holding the bow.

Under the influence of violinists, the practice of holding the bow above the stick developed. There has been various of possibilities how to hold the bow. French cellists held the bow like french violinists, with the fingers on the top of the sticka and the thumb under the bow hair.

Some other, mostly Italians were holding the bow almost on the middle of the stick.



( Walden 2004)

During the 18th century, solo performers raised the instrument from the floor and it was held between the legs and played without an endpin.



In the 18th century cellist tended to hold the cello little lower than the 19th century performers, most likely because the playing length of the fingerboard was a bit shorter. The most important thing was that the instrument was held so that the bow didn't hit the knees. Then the cellist had to sit with a straight back so he didn't have any kind of chest pain and breathing problems. This kind of playing and holding the cello stayed universally until the 19th century. The playing without an endpin showed that the vibrations of the instrument was dampened by the legs. The use of an endpin would reduce the pressure in the legs and the sound would be more open.

Adrien Servais was first who used an endpin on his Stradivari cello during the second half of the 19th century.

Even with Servais influence, the endpin did not become a standard cello part for soloists until the beginning of the 20th century. However the use of endpin was unknown before Adrien Servais.

*The bow and the strings*



Baroque bow plays a big part in performing. The convex shape of the bow allows it to have a bit different approach to the string by hugging it and also it is perfect for the articulation of shorter notes. In general the bow should be held a bit further from the frog by keeping the middle finger in contact with the bow hair.

The resistance of the bow can be controlled with the bow speed and by pressure. Also with the shape and the speed we can control the crescendo and decrescendo.

### ***Modern cello bow***



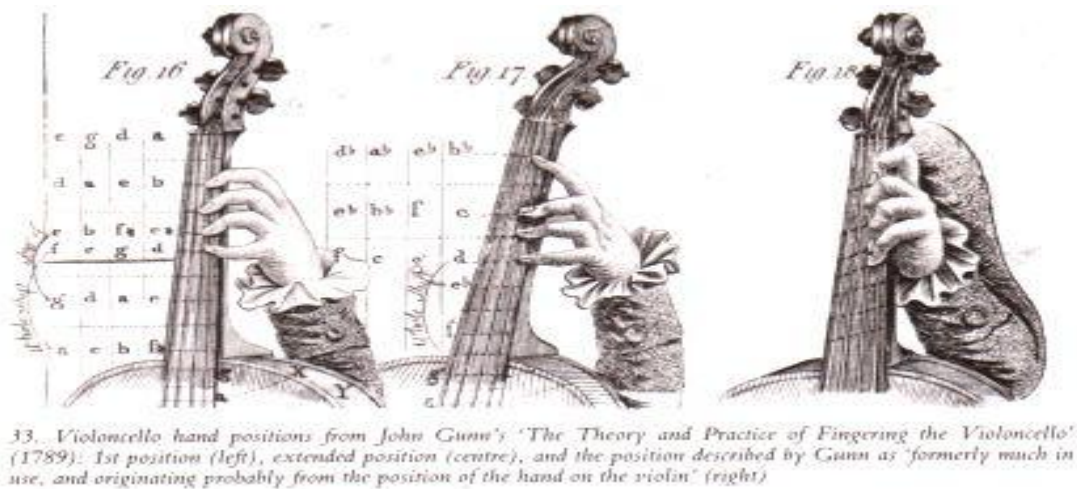
The modern cello bow, developed from the baroque bow and it has some differences even though the purpose was the same.

Except from brazilwood and pernambuco, these days modern cello bows can be made from other materials. Carbon fibre is one of the possibilities, and fiberglass. The average length is 73 cm, 3 cm high and 1.5 cm wide. The cello bow is around 10-12 grams heavier then the violin one, the frog is wider and has a rounded corner, similar like viola bow. The bow-hair is regular horsehair but the synthetic ones in many colors has been in use as well. The main difference between the baroque cello bow and the modern cello bow is that baroque bows were much thicker and the outside arch was more bigger, if we compare it to modern cello bows. The inner arch on the modern cello bow creates bigger tension which makes the sound bigger and greater.

I personally have the carbon cello bow and I am quite satisfied with it because it has the same characteristics as a wooden cello bow and this kind of bow is not very expensive and is commonly in use by students all over the world.

### ***Left hand on cello***

During eighteenth and nineteenth century it existed two opposing methods about placing the left hand on the neck of the instrument. One of them was less popular and it was placing the hand in the oblique fashion.



Despite of opposite opinions group of virtuosos continued to teach in that way of holding the neck. The main thing was strength of finger pressure, which of course had influence on sound. Upward against the side of the neck we had the thumb, and the finger were curved and shaped.

When the thumb encircles the neck of the cello and the fingers are all arched and present all the time during playing, the sound becomes greater and clarity of the sound is much more bigger. This kind of theory for holding the cello neck was the same in any of the four positions on cello.

During the time when cello fingerings became increasingly idiomatic, a big number of cellists became convinced that vertical left hand position became the most natural and comfortable for good intonation on the cello. It is very important to have a proper left hand position while playing for producing good articulation and intonation.

The first position which is the base-position of playing on cello can easily be upgraded for playing in other positions, but only if the left hand has natural holding of the cello neck with the neck thumb relaxed, just lightly pressing the neck.

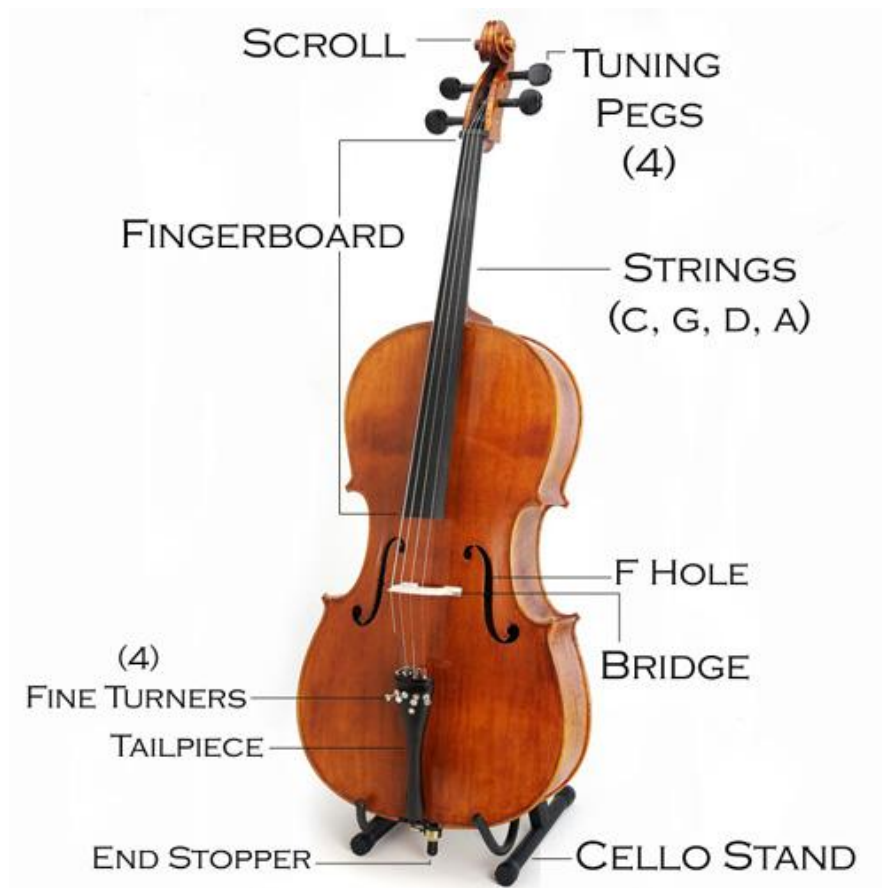
If the thumb is stiff it will trig other problems such as the intonation, especially with f-sharp and b-flat tones.

During playing Bach's V suite the cellist performing on modern instruments usually play everything as simple as possible and that means in first, second position and other positions, which allows the use of open strings.

### ***Modern cello***

After the double bass the modern cello is the second largest string instrument. Modern cello is tuned in fifths, tuned the same as the viola except for an octave lower. In European classical music cello has been described as the closest sounding instrument to the human voice.

Like the baroque cello, the modern cello is also made from different wood, but for the modern cello some other materials can be used as well.



The body has wide top bowed-rounded shape, the middle one formed by two C bouts, and a wide bottom bout with the F holes and the bridge. Most modern cellists use strings made from metallic materials like aluminium, titanium, and chromium, but during the baroque period mostly strings made from guts was used.

The end pin these days is made of steel but it also can be made of wood and plastic. It is a small kind of mechanism which could be adjusted very easily. The main goal and intention of the end-pin is to support the cello and make it easier for playing in position. The steel or metal end pins are much more retractable and adjustable than the wooden ones, and many of the wooden end pins can be removed when not in use.

Then, which type of cello is more suitable for Bach performing the baroque cello or the modern cello?

In my opinion these days modern cello has a big support from many world wide known cellists. The baroque cello is one part of the history, which shows how has it been played in baroque period. The differences between modern and baroque cello are big, not so much because of the cello itself, but more about the sound, freedom of playing, holding the instrument, performance, and so on.

I think the biggest difference is that modern cello have an end pin. This is actually a new part of the instrument which not only improves the freedom of playing, but it makes the performer much more secure and relaxed on the stage. I have tried playing Bach's V suite on a baroque cello once, and for me as a modern cello player it was a beautiful new experience, but with a limited possibility to express my feelings while playing.

I felt that way because modern cello player need to get used to new way of sitting on the chair, holding the instrument, bow contact and many other things. For me the chair was too low, I didn't feel comfortable with the way I had to hold the instrument because I noticed that the sound was completely different, I felt like I had a mute on my cello. Because of baroque cello holding I had to be very cautious when I was changing the strings and positions. Perhaps I felt that way because I had no end pin, which in a way is making all those technical moves more stabile and easier.

There are many ways on sitting, on the chair when we play modern cello, chairs are adjustable, the end-pin is adjustable, we can feel very free and make a choice in a practical way about the performing. This is not the case when playing the baroque cello. The sitting is different, the chair needs to be shorter, the end-pin doesn't exist, and there are also a special way of holding baroque cello between the legs.

All those maybe small things but tremendously important, and could be crucial for the performance in general. The sound produced on a baroque cello is much smaller, firstly because of the gut strings, secondly the way of holding the baroque cello is effects the sound. The legs are pressing the parts of the cello and the sound we hear is reduced. When it comes to modern cello the sound is free and greater because of the end-pin which places cello in another position for playing and lifts it from the ground. The strings used on modern cello are made out of steel and the sound we have from those strings is much bigger and clearer than on the gut-stringed baroque cello.<sup>4</sup>

I also tried playing Bach's V suite with scordatura on modern cello. The problem that arised was the tuning itself and the interval problem because of the tuning A to G.

I also had to change many of the fingerings and get use to the sound, because for us modern cello performers change of tuning requires technical changing. Here is the example:

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<sup>4</sup> Information from the books of Pejovic, and Walden. Se litteratur list





At the very beginning we have the mark for the tuning, As I earlier mentioned the A string is tuned to G. This tuning doesn't effect on other strings when we are reading the music. It only effects the A or should I say G string. The playing in the first position now is completely different because all the fingerings must be changed. Different fingerings also requires lot of shifting while playing with scordatura.

This manuscript shows in a way the connection between *detache* bowing and *scordatura*. As we can see there is not many slurs used in this example.

Why is that the case? Well, for me as a modern cello player and from my point of view, it is mostly because of the *scordatura*. When we have this kind of “italian tuning”, fingerings which are closely connected to the bowings must be adjusted and carefully considered in order to play this suite in best possible way. Many shiftings are the reason why the slur is not commonly used in this manuscript. This kind of bowings and tuning are perfect for playing in the baroque style and on the baroque cello. Now we can’t use open A string like on modern cello, it has to be played with the first finger on “G” string and that makes it more difficult. This particular music manuscript has been made by Bach’s second wife Anna Magdalena. The manuscript has been published in other modern editions as well, which I will talk more about later.

In the following example I will show you the way modern cello players perform the Bach V suite on modern cello. The tuning for the modern cello is A-D-G-C. As we can see from the beginning, the use of slurs is often used than in the previous “baroque” example. The A-string itself makes the playing much more easier and allows slurs and long phrases during the Prelude. Now when we can use the A string more often, the fingerings are more simple and most of the piece can be played in first, third and fourth position, and it doesn’t require a lot of shifting. Of course the shifting depends of the performer himself but to make it sound more natural and relaxed, open strings are commonly used in all Bach’s masterpieces. Some fingerings has also been suggested in this edition, in order to help with advices for shifting positions. Longer phrases could be made with slurs, the flow of the Prelude is different then when we have mostly *detache* bowing. As You can see in the example the slurs are not obligate, there are some suggestions about the bowings which could make the Prelude more interesting for performing.

Suite V  
BWV 1011  
eingeteilt für Norcalstimme

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## Conclusion

By studying and playing Bach's V suite I realized how unique and special this masterpiece actually is. I have played and performed it many times and every time I had a different approach and feeling while playing. This theme I chose is very complex, and it raises many questions and topics to investigate and have led to many discussions. For some of the questions I tried to find the answers and discuss the possibilities.

I wanted to give the answer on the problem definition: Is it better to play with scordatura or without it, with standard cello tuning? What are the biggest differences between baroque and standard cello?

The playing with scordatura is a big process. The performer needs to get use to the tuning, the intervals, open "G" string and fingerings. The playing of this suite by using a baroque cello with scordatura was more appropriate for the baroque period. The instrument itself, strings, baroque bow, and the holding of the instrument are the reasons I presume this. For standard cello performers this will be a great challenge, like it was for me when I started working on this piece few years ago.

First I played the V suite with scordatura and afterwards with standard tuning. Attending many master classes, listening to many concerts, I think that this suite is more often performed with standard cello tuning. The question will stay unfinished, because there will always be performers, professors, scholars who will say and think the opposite, because the choice is in the hands of those who are playing. Perhaps older generations of cellists like Mstislav Rostropovich were more determent to play this suite with standard tuning? Newer generations are more opened for suggestions and willing to explore more about this question.

After all I have just been trying to find the complicated answer regarding this theme, and the more I investigate, discuss and read about this problem it is getting more difficult for me to give an exact answer. My final comment is that we probably should leave this question open. My impression is that there is no particular answer on how the way this suite should be played.

## About the DVD

I recorded this DVD with Bach's V suite in March and I am playing on modern a cello without scordatura. The tuning I use is a standard one A-D-G-C. What I would try to show on this recording is how the V suite sounds on a standard modern cello. During the Prelude I mostly used slurs and long phrases. The fingerings are chosen to be most suitable for my left hand, because I have a rather big hand and therefore a lot of shifting for me in this suite is not necessary. I am playing in the first, third and fourth position during whole suite. The bow I use is the standard one. The end pin is adjustable and this helps me when it comes to solo and orchestra playing. After the Prelude is done, and the 3/8 bar starts, I am changing the bowings and some of the fingerings. The bowings I am using in the fugue are a combination of *detache* and slur. I think this the most common when playing Bach.

I didn't want to play this suite completely in a "modern" way, but wanted to have *some* baroque elements. That's why I am not using a lot of vibrato, especially in the Prelude. I had to make some adjustments and changes in the fingerings and bowings in order to get this baroque character. The dynamical differences I use sometimes help in the balance between the bass and main line. By doing the relatively few adjustments I have tried to present to You how the Bach's V suite can sound on modern cello with some elements of baroque playing.

**The repertoire on this DVD is:**

J.S.Bach Prelude suite No.5

J.S.Bach Allemande suite No.5

Halvor Haug Sonata Elegica, modern piece 1981.

Orchertal Excerpts (J.Brahms.Tchaikovsky Symphony, J.Brahms Symphony)

F.Chopin Polonaise Brillante Op.3

C.Saint Saens Cello Concerto in A minor

## APENDIX

In the apendix You will find the notes for J.S.Bach's V suite Prelude and Allemande.

The first illustration is the manuscript with scordatura tuning made by Anna Magdalena, Bach's second wife.

The second illustration is the music with standard tuning from the standard cello repertoire.

## **Literature list**

1. De Slezer, Boris *Introduction in J.S.Bach.*
2. Pejovic, Roksanda 1980. "*History of music*", Belgrade, Yugoslavia
3. Walden, Valerie, 2004. *One hundred year of violoncello.* Cambridge University Press
4. William, Pleeth 1982. *Cello.* Macdonald
5. <http://www.cello.org/heaven/baroque/baroque.htm>
6. <http://www.wimmercello.com/bachs5ms.html>
7. Dr. Dragana Stojanovic Novicic, "History of Music 3"

## **Youtube -recordings of Suite V**

1/ Anner Bylsma; Bach Cello Suite 5, Prelude

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19Cgwa5s7Dg>

2/ Yo-Yo Ma Plays Bach Cello Suite No. 5 Prelude

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2bbuLJFXhE&feature=related>

3/ Bach Cello Suite No 5 in C minor, BWV 1011 (1-6) Prelude - Josephine van Lier

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aTJlck97HE&NR=1>



*Suitte pour violoncelle, arr. 3* *Recluse*

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Recluse" from a "Suite for Cello, arr. 3". The score is written on 11 staves. The first staff begins with the title and arrangement information. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns, including many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and frequent rests. The notation is dense and detailed, with various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, and dynamic markings. The overall style is that of a personal manuscript or a working draft.

A handwritten musical score consisting of 12 staves. The notation is dense and complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic values including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests and ties. The score is written in a single system across the page. The handwriting is clear and legible, with some decorative flourishes in the notation. The paper appears aged and slightly yellowed.

A handwritten musical score consisting of 12 staves. The notation is dense and includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamic markings. The word "Corrente" is written in a cursive hand on the sixth staff. The score is written in black ink on aged paper.

A handwritten musical score consisting of 11 staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The word "Corrente" is written in cursive at the start of the fifth staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a fermata on the final note of the eleventh staff.



## Suite V

BWV 1011

eingeteilt für Normalstimme

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Musical score for bass clef, measures 27-74. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/8 time signature. It consists of ten staves of music, each starting with a measure number. The notation includes various rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and articulation marks such as accents and slurs. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. Dynamic markings include *tr* (trill) and *V* (forte). Measure 27 starts with a trill on a quarter note. Measure 33 features a trill on a quarter note followed by a series of eighth notes. Measure 36 has a trill on a quarter note. Measure 43 shows a sequence of eighth notes with slurs. Measure 48 begins with a trill on a quarter note. Measure 54 contains a series of eighth notes with slurs. Measure 59 has a trill on a quarter note. Measure 64 shows a series of eighth notes with slurs. Measure 69 features a trill on a quarter note. Measure 74 ends with a trill on a quarter note.

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164 4 4 1 2 3 1 1

168 1 1 1 1 2 3 1 2

172 1



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## ALLEMANDE

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