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Johann Sebastian Bach: The English Suites

aud 23.450

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BBC Music Magazine (2026.12.01)

Anyone seeking to wrap themselves in the flag of St George would be hard pushed to find anything 'national' in Bach's dance-corralling English Suites. Should it be of any comfort, their sequel, the French Suites, are more modest in scale, heading straight to the dance floor while shunning their English cousins' curtain-raising preludes.



Jonathan Ferrucci and Bach are well-acquainted. The pianist toured the Goldberg Variations illustrated with photos of himself in poses invoking a visual counterpart to the music; and his studio recording debut homed in on the Toccatas. For this follow-up he writes of having the time of his life at the 'English Suites rave ... one dance after another'. There's no doubting it!

Re-ordering the published sequence, he opens with an A minor Prelude that at once sets out his stall: crisp, clean articulation, animated dialogue between right and left hands, rhythmic propulsion together with a willingness to ambush expectations – highlighting an improbable fragment here, effecting a sudden change of dynamics there. In the E major Passepied, a wash of sustaining pedal might be unapologetically anachronistic, but it elicits pure magic; and after an A major Bourrée I that sounds like thistledown playing tag, Bourrée II insists on a little chordal braggadocio. Perhaps the speed propelling the E minor Prelude subverts any possible grandeur, but Ferrucci is a formidable Bachian, conjuring protean exuberance in the second section of the D minor Prelude, and dispatching the fiendish migratory trills of the Gigue with aplomb.

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JS Bach

The English Suites

Jonathan Ferrucci (piano)

Audite AUD23450 141:38 mins



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