

## The Suite

(Johann Sebastian Bach)

## The Suite

- ▶ A suite is an ordered set of dances that contrast in tempo, meter, and character
- ▶ In the Baroque period, the ordering was usually PACSOG:
  - ▶ **P**: Prelude or overture (optional)
  - ▶ **A**: Allemande (a stately German dance in 4/4)
  - ▶ **C**: Courante (a lively French dance in 3/4)
  - ▶ **S**: Sarabande (a slow Spanish dance in 3/4)
  - ▶ **O**: [Other dances] such as the Minuet, the Bouree, the Polonaise, or the Gavotte (optional)
  - ▶ **G**: Gigue (a fast English dance in 6/8)
- ▶ All of the dances are normally in the same key and most are in two-reprise binary form

## Bach's Suites

- ▶ Although the suite likely originated as instrumental accompaniment for dancing, Bach's suites are stylized compositions that are not intended for dancing
- ▶ Bach wrote several sets of suites for keyboard, including his English suites and French Suites
- ▶ He also wrote four orchestral suites and a set of unaccompanied suites for solo cello
- ▶ His suites feature the careful working out of a small number of characteristic motives