

**Mark Kosower begins
Trinity livestream series
with Bach cello suites (June 5)**

by Jarrett Hoffman



Cellist Mark Kosower has long believed that the music of J.S. Bach can bring people together. His live-streamed performance from Trinity Cathedral on Friday, June 5, revealed how deeply he feels about that: perhaps what was most healing was his passion itself.

This was the first in a pair of concerts that Kosower will give at Trinity this summer with no audience present, covering all six of the composer's solo cello suites under the banner of his project "Bach for Humanity." On Saturday, he brought the odd-numbered works, playing from memory and starting with No. 5. Full of agony and desperation, its Prelude was a fitting way to begin. The Allemande stood out for its poetic flexibility, while the second Gavotte ran smooth, Kosower's technique flowing easily.

It was clear here and throughout the concert that Kosower achieves an impressive set of dualities in his playing. His sense of forward motion never lags even while he imbues each phrase with remarkable expressivity. His interpretive approach sounds at once spontaneous and well-conceived. And his tone is both beautiful and flexible, traversing the spectrum from a gravelly shade of color to a hot, gleaming intensity.

A long moment of silence followed the Fifth Suite. Then, removing his mask after a brief trip off-camera, Kosower took up the microphone to introduce his next selection, the First Suite in G, which he dedicated in part to his father. The Allemande was elegant, and the Corrente was full of vitality, without any rough edges as each musical idea came forward and shaped into a new one. Kosower's keen sense of structure

came through in his smooth transition to the Gigue, a movement he then paced skillfully and dramatically.

Kosower's belief in Bach comes through not only in his playing, but also in his words. Introducing the *Suite No. 3 in C*, he quoted President Obama on the limitless potential of the next generation, tying that in with the "limitless inspiration" of this suite. (And earlier in the concert, he quoted Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush.)

The cellist also spoke of triumph over challenges, a theme that comes through clearly in the Prelude of the Third Suite, in which the sounds of extreme disagreement eventually make way for extreme beauty. In the Sarabande, so intimate was each gesture that it seemed as if Kosower were saying hello to old friends. The Gigue, a festive hoedown with its own moments of contrapuntal tension to work through, was a riveting conclusion.

As for the stream itself, it was solid, with only a few brief moments of technological hairiness. At one point, colors became psychedelic — Kosower turned green, yellow, then red. The two alternating camera views were a nice touch, though the audio mix was consistently a bit unbalanced between left and right. All in all, an easy trade-off to make considering the performance that we heard.

One question raised by this concert that's worth debating: in general, what music *is* best-suited to bringing people together? Another question: what music is most appropriate for the present day, in the middle of a pandemic and a powerful movement for change and social justice? The many possible answers might or might not overlap.

You can still watch Kosower's recital on [Facebook](#). Introductory remarks from Trinity Cathedral music director Todd Wilson begin at the 11:48 mark, Kosower takes the microphone at 16 minutes, and he begins playing at 20 minutes.

The cellist will return to Trinity on July 31 with the remaining suites.

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