

Cello Suite No. 1 - Prelude

Johann Sebastian Bach

Arranged For Solo Bass Guitar By Cliff Engel

Cello Tuning: C-G-D-A

First system of musical notation for the Cello Suite No. 1 Prelude. It consists of a bass clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in eighth notes. Below the staff is a tablature line with fret numbers 12, 14, 15, and 16. The tablature includes fingerings for the thumb (T) and bass (B) hands.

Second system of musical notation. The melody continues with eighth notes. The tablature includes fret numbers 12, 14, 16, 17, and 18. Fingerings for T and B are indicated.

Third system of musical notation. The melody continues with eighth notes. The tablature includes fret numbers 12, 14, 16, 17, and 18. Fingerings for T and B are indicated.

Fourth system of musical notation. The melody continues with eighth notes. The tablature includes fret numbers 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Fingerings for T and B are indicated.

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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) is the most highly revered composer of the German Baroque era. Throughout his lifetime, Bach was more acknowledged as an organist than as a composer, and for many decades after his death, Bach's compositions were largely ignored. It wasn't until the 19th century that his real musical genius came to be recognized, particularly by romantic-era composers such as Mendelssohn and Schumann. Since that time, Bach's popularity has grown steadily. During his musical career, Bach maintained three significant posts including court organist and orchestral director in Weimar (1708-17), court orchestral director at Köthen (1717-23), and cantor (municipal composer) in Leipzig (1723-45). It was during his time spent as the orchestral director at Köthen that he composed some of his greatest secular instrumental works including the Cello Suites.

Practically every great cellist of the past century has recorded Bach's Six Suites For Solo Cello. Up to the early decades of the twentieth century, Bach's Cello Suites remained virtually undiscovered. Sometimes cellists used them as technical fingering exercises but never performed them in public. It wasn't until the 1930's when the legendary Spanish cellist Pablo Casals resurrected Bach's Cello Suites from obscurity with the first definitive recording of the Suites. Since then, the Cello Suites have become among Bach's most favored works and required repertoire for all cellists.

Cello Tuning:

Traditionally, a 4-string bass guitar is tuned in fourths, and standard tuning for the open strings is E-A-D-G (low to high). Cellos are tuned in fifths, C-G-D-A (low to high). When analyzing recordings of Bach's Cello Suites, you will hear that the open strings play a significant role in the overall sonority of the music. The Cello Suites can be played on a 4-string bass guitar in standard tuning, but to attain the often sustained resonance of the open strings, the Cello Suites should be played in cello tuning. The Cello Suites are much easier to play in cello tuning because many of the awkward fingerings that are required in standard tuning on bass guitar are eliminated.

Cello tuning can be easily achieved using standard gauge bass strings without the worry of placing unnecessary tension on your instrument. In order to perform this arrangement, you will need to modify three of the four strings on a 4-string bass guitar in standard tuning. First, raise the standard open G-string a whole step to A. The G-string will be the only string that you will need to raise in pitch. The D-string will remain the same. Next, lower the open A-string a whole step to G. Finally, detune the open E-string two whole steps to C.

Capo:

After you have tuned your bass to cello tuning, you will need to place a capo across all four strings at the 12th fret. By playing the "Prelude In G Major" in the second octave of the fingerboard, between the 12th and 24th frets, you will be performing this work in the same pitch range as it is heard on cello. Whenever you see the 12th fret indicated in the tablature of this arrangement, you will play the open string which will now be stopped at the 12th fret by a capo.

Technique:

From a technical perspective, this arrangement is easy to play utilizing a fingerstyle picking method which includes your thumb, index, and middle fingers.

Interpretation:

Within the standard notation and tablature of this arrangement, I have only included the notes and indicated the positions where those notes are to be played. The Cello Suites are among Bach's most adapted and recorded works, and each time they are performed, the Suites are phrased in a slightly different fashion.

Recommended Recordings:

John Patitucci - *Heart Of The Bass*

Gary Karr - *J.S. Bach Solo Suites*

Edgar Meyer - *Unaccompanied Bach Cello Suites*

Yo-Yo Ma - *Bach: The 6 Unaccompanied Cello Suites*

Pablo Casals - *Bach Cello Suites*