**An Album for my Friends**

The idea for this set of piano pieces initially came from writing one as a 60th birthday present (I shall not mention which one!). Having written one Baroque-titled piece, I gradually added more, until a whole suite of Baroque dances was completed. The stimulus of writing a modern set of pieces based on Baroque models (in my case a mixture of the English and French Suites of Bach) is nothing new of course. Many twentieth-century composers were inspired by the rigours of devising new ways of looking at Baroque dances, and in the process brought new life to the forms (in the case of Schoenberg’s Piano Suite of 1925, actually liberating his new method of 12-note composition from theory into practice).

For my part, the challenge was to write a set of pieces for the piano which would be technically suitable for both young and mature pianists, whilst still responding to the compositional demands of creating interesting material, mainly organised through contrapuntal means (often just two-part counterpoint, as in Bourrée 1 or the Gigue), but sometimes through harmonic means (as in theSarabande or Gavotte). In addition, the more personal nature of the genesis of the album resulted in each piece, or dance, being dedicated to a particular friend. Whilst their pianistic skills might vary quite considerably, they all share a great love of music – something which unites us all.

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