



I. Ruckers, 1627 (l.) & I. Ruckers, 1635 (r.)

Photo by Scott Hewitt

LE CLAVECIN FRANÇAIS



François Couperin

L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin (1716)

Second Livre de Pièces de Clavecin [1717]

Davitt Moroney, Harpsichord

Ioannes Ruckers (Antwerp, 1627)

Ioannes Ruckers (Antwerp, 1635)



FRANÇOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733)

L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin (1716) • *Second Livre de Pièces de Clavecin* [1717]

Disc 1

Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord, 1627

<i>L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin</i>	16:16
1. Premier Prélude	1:22
2. Second Prélude	1:28
3. Troisième Prélude, <i>Mesuré</i>	1:10
4. Quatrième Prélude	1:33
5. Cinquième Prélude	2:54
6. Sixième Prélude, <i>Mesuré</i>	2:00
7. Septième Prélude, <i>Mesuré-lent</i>	2:46
8. Huitième Prélude, <i>Mesuré-léger</i>	1:23
9. Allemande	1:40

Second Livre de Pièces de Clavecin

Sixième Ordre (in B flat major)	28:54
10. [Septième Prélude]	3:16
11. Les Moissonneurs, <i>Gajement</i>	2:25
12. Les Langueurs-Tendres	5:09
13. Le Gazouillement, <i>Gracieusement et Coulé</i>	2:19
14. La Bersan, <i>Légèrement</i>	2:53
15. Les Baricades Mistérieuses, <i>Vivement</i>	3:10
16. Les Bergeries, Rondeau, <i>Naïvement</i>	5:06
17. La Commère, <i>Vivement</i>	2:17
18. Le Moucheron, <i>Légèrement</i>	2:19

Septième Ordre (in G major/minor) 29:29

19. [Troisième Prélude, <i>Mesuré</i>]	1:17
20. La Ménétou, <i>Gracieusement, sans lenteur</i> Les Petits Âges	4:17
21. Première Partie: La Muse Naissante	2:57
22. 2 ^e Partie: l'Enfantine	2:05
23. 3 ^e Partie: L'Adolescente, Rondeau	2:30
24. 4 ^e Partie: Les Délices, Rondeau	3:42
25. La Basque	2:36
26. La Chazé, <i>Tres Lié, sans lenteur</i>	4:59
27. Les Amusemens, <i>sans lenteur</i>	5:06

Total Time 74:40

Disc 2

Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord, 1627

Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord, 1635

Huitième Ordre (in B minor)	36:10
1. [Sixième Prélude]	2:21
2. La Raphaële	6:44
3. Allemande l'Ausoniène, <i>Légèrement et marqué</i>	2:40
4. Courante	1:53
5. Seconde Courante	2:55
6. Sarabande L'Unique, <i>Gravement</i>	3:42
7. Gavotte, <i>Tendrement</i>	1:42
8. Rondeau, <i>Gayement</i>	1:50
9. Gigue	3:10

10. Passacaille, Rondeau	7:05
11. La Morinète, <i>Légerement, et très lié</i>	2:08
Neuvième Ordre (in A major/minor)	37:03
12. [Cinquième Prélude]	3:00
13. Allemande à deux Clavecins (with Karen Flint, Ioannes Ruckers 1627)	4:04
14. La Rafrâchissante, <i>Nonchalamment</i>	5:13
15. Les Charmes, <i>Mesuré, sans lenteur; Luthé, et lié</i>	6:22
16. La Princesse de Sens, <i>Tendrement</i>	2:57
17. L'Olimpique, <i>Impérieusement, et animé</i>	2:58
18. L'Insinüante, <i>Tendrement</i>	3:19
19. La Séduisante, <i>Tendrement, sans lenteur</i>	3:47
20. La Bavolet-flotant, <i>Tendrement, légèrement et lié</i>	2:27
21. Le Petit-deüil ou les trois Veuves, <i>Gracieusement</i>	1:50
22. Menuet	1:06
Total time	73:15

Disc 3

Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord, 1627

Dixième Ordre (in D major/minor)	27:48
La Triomphante	
1. Première Partie: Rondeau, Bruit de Guerre, <i>Vivement, et les croches égales</i>	2:44
2. Seconde Partie: Allégrésse des Vainqueurs, Rondeau	4:16
3. Troisième Partie: Fanfare, <i>Fort gaÿement</i>	1:59

4. La Mézangère, <i>Luthé-mesuré</i>	6:07
5. La Gabriële, <i>Légèrement et coulé</i>	1:42
6. La Nointéle, <i>Gayement</i>	2:52
7. La Fringante, <i>Vif et relevé</i>	4:22
8. L'Amazône, <i>Vivement et fierement</i>	1:35
9. Les Bagatelles, Rondeau	2:11
Onzième Ordre (in C minor/major)	26:49
10. [Premier Prélude]	1:35
11. La Castelane, <i>Coulamment</i>	4:28
12. L'Étincelante ou La Bontems, <i>Tres Vivement</i>	2:10
13. Les Graces-Naturéles, suite de la Bontems, <i>Afectüusement, sans lenteur</i>	3:49
14. La Zénobie, <i>D'une legéreté gracieuse, et liée</i> Les Fastes de la Grande, et Ancienne Mxnxstrndxssx	3:43
15. Premier Acte: Les Notables, et Jurés-Mxnxstrndxurs, <i>sans lenteur</i>	1:19
16. Second Acte: Les Viéleux, et les Gueux, <i>Airs de Viéle</i>	2:10
17. Troisième Acte: Les Jongleurs, Sauteurs, et Saltinbanques: avec les Ours, et les Singes, <i>Légèrement</i>	0:59
18. Quatrième Acte: Les Invalides: ou les gens Estropiés au Service de la grande-Mxnxstrndxssx	3:52
19. Cinquième Acte: Desordre, et dérouté de toute la troupe: Causés par les Yvrognes, les Singes, et les Ours, <i>Tres Vite</i>	2:44

Douzième Ordre (in E major/minor)	25:03
20. [Huitième Prélude, <i>Mesuré-léger</i>]	1:23
21. Les Jumèles, <i>Affectüusement</i>	5:19
22. L'Intîme, <i>Mouvement de Courante</i>	3:06
23. La Galante, <i>Gayement</i>	1:36
24. La Coribante, <i>Vivement</i>	2:53
25. La Vauvré, <i>Coulamment</i>	2:03
26. La Fileuse, <i>Naïvement, sans lenteur</i>	3:12
27. La Boulonoise, <i>Tendrement, sans lenteur</i>	3:24
28. L'Atalante, <i>Tres légérement</i>	2:07
Total Time	79:42

Executive Producer: Karen Flint

Producer and Engineer: Ken Blair, BMP (Disc 1, Tracks 1-9; Discs 2 & 3)

Post-Session Producers: Ken Blair, Karen Flint & Davitt Moroney

Audio Editor: Ken Blair

Producer & Editor: George Blood (Disc 1, Tracks 10-27)

Post-Session Producers: George Blood, Karen Flint & Davitt Moroney

Engineer: George Blood

Production Assistant: Tadashi Matsuura

Production Manager and Design: Robert Munsell

Instruments tuned at A=392

Plectra Music

1205 North Orange Street

Wilmington, DE 19801

PL21402

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6



FRANÇOIS COUPERIN
L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin (1716)
Second Livre de Pièces de Clavecin [1717]

François Couperin (1668-1733) had started publishing his harpsichord works in 1713, when he was 45. His first book had contained 70 compositions organized into five large groups (or *ordres*), all beautifully engraved by François du Plessy on 73 unusually large pages. The second volume contains seven *ordres*, on 83 equally monumental pages also engraved by du Plessy. (The additional pages caused a 20% increase in the price of the book.) There are only 56 pieces in the second book, but many of them are longer, by comparison with those in the first.

In the preface to the first book, Couperin had given several reasons why it had been “impossible” for him to publish the pieces earlier, adding that he had a second book that he would publish at the end of the same year (*je compte en donner un second volume a la fin de l'année*). The vast majority of the pieces in the second book must therefore have been composed by early 1713 since his original intention had clearly been to give them straight to the engraver. However, in the end the second collection was only published four years later. He notes that the process of engraving, correcting, and printing the first volume had taken “more than a year” (*il y a plus d'un an qu'on travaille à ce premier livre*), but clearly other matters also slowed him down,

7



resulting in a delay of three additional years. The somewhat longer second volume is unlikely to have been produced more quickly than the first. No publication date appears on the second volume itself. Couperin seems to have already sent it to the engraver by March 1716, but we know that du Plessy was still working on a different (but equally complex) volume until January 1717 so it is most unlikely he could have already completed Couperin's book by then. These facts suggest that Couperin's second book of

harpsichord pieces was printed in 1717. The volume was certainly available by the end of that year since another book printed in late 1717 refers to it as being already in print.

The four years since the appearance of the first book, as he approached the age of fifty, were important and busy ones in Couperin's life. In 1713 he had somewhat self-consciously justified his inability to publish his pieces any earlier by referring to his many

“glorious” obligations at court, as organist to the king and harpsichord teacher to six royal princes and princesses, as well as his duties as composition teacher to the *Petit Dauphin*, Louis duc de Bourgogne. The same excuse is repeated in the second book, where he cites his responsibilities “both at Court and in public” (*tant à la cour, que dans le public*). His duties to members of the royal family, combined with his other “occupations in Paris” (*ces occupations, celles de Paris...*), clearly kept him busy. These comments no doubt partly refer to his regular official duties as organist at the Parisian church of Saint-Gervais; but his attendance at Court as one of the royal musicians also increasingly involved work in Paris.

On 9 September 1715, just nine days after Louis XIV's death, the Court left Versailles and moved back to the capital, where it would remain until 15 June 1722. The five-year-old Louis XV (Louis XIV's great-grandson) moved into the Tuileries Palace; the Regent (Philippe II d'Orléans, Louis XIV's nephew) lived at and worked from the Palais-Royal, just next door; and one of Couperin's most faithful patrons, the comte de Toulouse (Louis-Alexandre de Bourbon, Louis XIV's legitimized son by Madame de Montespan and an important member of the ruling Regency Council), had just bought a new Parisian residence immediately behind the Palais-Royal, the Hôtel de Toulouse (which is now the Banque de France, in rue de la Vrillière). Couperin's Parisian residences at this time were within

easy walking distance of all of these palaces: in 1713 he was living in the rue Saint-Honoré but in 1716 moved to an address on the corner of the *rue des Foureurs*. (This street no longer exists but was close to the Place Sainte-Opportune and the present-day Chatelet.) In 1717 he moved a little further away, to the rue de Poitou in the Marais; this address therefore appears on the second book of harpsichord pieces. By 1723 he had moved to his last residence, next door to the Hôtel de Toulouse. The second book of harpsichord pieces would therefore certainly have initially been appreciated and heard in these Parisian contexts, not at Versailles.

In the preface to the second book Couperin once again gives a series of reasons why the production had taken so long, leading to the four-year delay, and this time he carefully numbers the excuses.

— First, he claims that his original plan of producing the volume immediately in 1713 was set aside because he wanted to give people more time to digest the pieces in his first book.

— Second, he notes that in the meantime he had composed nine *Tenebrae* lessons for Holy Week, for one and two voices, of which three had already been published (having been engraved by the same engraver, du Plessy); although the publication is not dated, it probably appeared in 1714. (The six others, composed but never printed, are now lost.)

— Third, he explains that he had recently also written a

harpsichord method, *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*. It had been first published in 1716 and then reprinted in a substantially corrected, revised, and enlarged edition in 1717, all before the appearance of the second harpsichord book.

— Fourth (and here he raises a purely practical matter), he states that he shared the same music engraver as “one of the illustrious [musicians] of our time, who has just published a book of viol pieces, and the engraving of whose book I did not wish to interrupt since he had not interrupted the engraving of my first harpsichord book” (*un des illustres de nos jours qui vient de donner encore un livre de Violle, et dont je ne devois pas traverser la gravure puisqu'il n'avoit pas interrompu celle de mon premier livre de Clavecin*). Indeed, throughout 1716 du Plessy had been busy engraving Marin Marais's fourth book of viol pieces, which appeared in 1717 (probably early in the year). In the booklet accompanying my recording of Couperin's first book (Plectra PL21201), I discuss in more detail his decision to work with this young engraver and with the eminent text engraver Claude Auguste de Bery.

— Fifth, he evokes his heavy professional commitments. Although his main job at Court was as one of the four organists (he played officially only during the first three months of the year), he had other duties at court at all times,

teaching, and playing the harpsichord in, for example, the little concerts of chamber music for the king that occurred almost every Sunday during 1714 and 1715. These are mentioned in the prefatory text to the *Concert royaux*, published in 1722 as a supplement to his third book of harpsichord pieces (*les petits Concerts de chambre, ou Louis quatorze me faisoit venir presque tous les dimanches de l'année ... en 1714 et 1715*). And on 5 March 1717 he finally achieved what had surely been his lifelong ambition, to have the job of official harpsichordist to the king. (A court technicality meant that at that point he acquired only the right to eventually get the title, despite having to start doing the job immediately, since he was granted what was known as the *survivance* of the post; in order for Couperin to have the formal title officially, the incumbent first had to die.)

— Finally, he once again evokes his poor health. In the first book he had already mentioned having had “several illnesses” (*plusieurs maladies*); in the second, he simply mentions having “above all, a very fragile health” (*par dessus tout, une santé tres delicate*). If Couperin seems to us to have been something of a hypochondriac, he might be forgiven. In April 1711 the heir to the French throne, Louis the *Grand Dauphin*, had contracted smallpox (*la petite vérole*) and died. Then in

February 1712 both the Dauphin's son and daughter-in-law, the duc and duchesse de Bourgogne, had died of measles (*la rougeole*), followed a further year later by the death of their son, Louis duc de Bretagne. Finally, on 1 September 1715 Louis XIV had died from an infection caused by gangrene. These deaths in rapid succession—three dauphins from three generations, and then the monarch himself—cast a somber mood over the court, but they may have provided Couperin with some relief from regular official duties, giving him the time to compose new works, to write *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*, and to deal at last with the publication of his harpsichord pieces.

When the second book appeared, then, Couperin was at the summit of his career. The chronology outlined above explains the intimate link between the second book of harpsichord pieces and the important text *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*, which had been dedicated to the young Louis XV. Couperin's “method” is a fundamental source for all harpsichordists, containing many details that occur in no other text of the period. He writes evocatively about how to “play beautifully,” or what he calls “giving the harpsichord a soul.” The 70 or so pages of text also contain many off-hand reflections and comments. The book at first seems to give an impression of charming disorganization; but its careful construction can be discerned, once

the reader understands how the book came into being and how to read it. Also included are useful indications of fingerings for difficult passages in his first two books, and nine complete pieces of music, all which are recorded here: an allemande in D minor and eight preludes.

The allemande is an occasional composition, designed to show what kind of pieces originally written for stringed instruments work well on the harpsichord. In the 1716 edition he did not make it quite clear that he was the composer of the allemande, so in the 1717 revision he added the phrase “the author composed it specially” (*l’Auteur l’a composé exprès*). Couperin explains that when playing other compositions on the harpsichord the ones that work best are those where there is constant motion between the hands and chordal figurations in arpeggio-like passages, adding “as in the following Allemande.” It remains slightly unclear, therefore, whether this is really an original harpsichord piece or just the type of string piece that works well on the keyboard. Certainly, it also works well when played, for example, by a violin and continuo, and is unlike any other harpsichord allemande by Couperin. I take the view that despite its constant sixteenth-note movement (which would normally place it notationally in the company of the solemn *allemandes graves*, it is really an *allemande légère* and should therefore be played rather faster (like the second allemande, *L’Ausoniéne*, in the eighth *ordre*).

As for the eight preludes, each one is a miniature masterpiece. Couperin hints that the first four are most appropriate for children; the remaining four are longer and clearly not written for beginners. Couperin explicitly says “I composed the eight following preludes in the keys of my Pieces, both of the first book and the second” (*J’ai composé les huit préludes suivans, sur les tons de mes Pièces; tant de mon premier livre que du second*). The implication is that every tonality used for an *ordre* in the two books has a prelude that can be used for it.

This presents the modern player with some surprising opportunities, especially when recording a complete series, like the present recording. The eight different keys of the preludes—C major, D minor, G minor, F major, A major, B minor, B flat major, and E minor—do not quite correspond to the keys of the twelve *ordres* in the first two books. The first five *ordres* (in Book 1) are in G minor, D minor, C minor, F major, and A major; it follows that the first prelude (in C major) is the only one that can be used to introduce *La Ténébreuse* (in C minor) at the start of the third *ordre*; indeed, using it to set up that dark piece is highly effective. A contrary effect occurs in the second book when the high energy of the third prelude (in G minor) sets up the calmness of *La Ménérou* (in G major) at the start of the seventh *ordre*. In other words, just as *ordres* themselves often contain pieces in both major and minor modes based on a given

tonic, so a prelude in C major can serve for pieces in either C major or C minor, and a prelude in G minor can serve for pieces in G minor or G major. In the opening phrase of another little text that Couperin wrote around this time, the *Regles de l'accompagnement*, he writes “There are only two tones or modes in music; one major and the other minor” (*Il n’y a que deux tons ou modes dans la musique; l’un majeur et l’autre mineur*). When it comes to using preludes, the two “tones or modes” seem to have been interchangeable for a given tonic.

I have presented the eight preludes more than once across Couperin’s first two books. They occur not only individually, as preludes to corresponding *ordres*, but also as a free-standing group (just as Couperin published them in 1716). I find that they work very well as a single group, despite the disparity of styles and keys, and I often play them that way in concert. But when the preludes are integrated into individual *ordres*, they can throw an unexpected light on the following pieces, and the context can lead to a quite different performance of the same music. I have made an exception for the tenth *ordre* since it seems to have no need of a prelude; the opening piece, *La Triomphante*, amply serves the purpose. In one prelude (the sixth, in B minor), Couperin wrote an unusual high D (two octaves above Middle C). In 1716 this note was not available on many older harpsichords, whose top note was C; he therefore thoughtfully gave

an alternative version for the whole phrase, avoiding the high D. I follow his instructions and use that lower alternative version here when playing a harpsichord whose keyboard stops at high C.

Given Couperin’s many direct connections to the royal family, and his dedication of *L’Art de Toucher le Clavecin* to the young king, it is surprising that he did not dedicate his harpsichord books to highly placed members of the royal family. The first had been dedicated to Christophe-Alexandre Pajot, the Marquis de Villers. Pajot was the *Contrôleur-général des postes et relais de France*—in other words, a highly-placed tax collector. He seems also to have been responsible for finally convincing Couperin to publish his works and may even have helped finance the expensive operation. Pajot had just married. The piece “La Villers” in the fifth *ordre* was clearly written for him or his new wife, Anne de Mailly. Since he died in 1739 at the age of about 60, he seems to have been a good ten years younger than Couperin.

Less is generally known about the dedicatee of the second book, *Monsieur Prat, Receveur general des Finances de Paris*, another tax collector. François Prat had been appointed to his post in 1708. A document dated 21 December 1721 (published by Thierry Claeys in 2011) shows that he lived in the center of Paris, on the rue du Petit Mail near the church of Saint-Eustache (*demeurant rüe du Petit Mail paroisse Saint Eustache*). Claeys also notes that once the Regency

Council started ruling France in earnest, there was a purge of the financial institutions; two of highest office-holders were accused of corruption and formally investigated. By August 1716 only ten of the *receveurs généraux* were retained, but François Prat was among them. He seems to have been a public official above reproach, a non-aristocrat who had made his career due to his talents and integrity. According to his obituary in the *Mercur de France* (July 1742), he was named counselor to the king (*Conseiller-Secrétaire du Roy*) in 1720 and never married. Since he died on 25 May 1742 at the age of 73, he must have been born in 1668 or 1669 and was therefore the same age as Couperin. No piece in the second book has yet been identified as having been composed specifically for him.

No doubt because the two dedicatees of Couperin's first two harpsichord books were men of money, both of the short prefaces are full of amusing monetary puns (as Kenneth Gilbert pointed out to me many years ago). In the first book, the vocabulary includes *valoir* (to value) and *reconnaissance* (debt). *Espèce* (species, sort, or kind) is also used, referring to a "kind" of person, but as a pun (somewhat comparable to the English monetary phrase "in kind") because *espèce* was and still is the standard French word for cash. Even Couperin's word for his book, *livre*, can be seen as a pun since it also meant a pound in monetary value (the *livre tournois* was an important unit of French currency at the time, and Couperin's books are all priced in

livres; Book 1 was priced at 10 *livres* while Book 2 cost 12 *livres*). In the second book, the six-line dedication continues the punning, this time around the words *s'aquiter* (repay), *obligations* (obligations), *espèces* (cash), *avoir cours* (to have currency), *recevoir* (receive/receipt), *à compte* (on account), and *reconnaissance* (debt). The witty implication is that publishing each book is, for Couperin, a musical way of paying his taxes!

Even though Couperin's first two books must have been expensive to prepare, they were no doubt also profitable for him. The first volume is known to have gone through at least seven different editions in his lifetime, being reprinted in 1716, 1717, 1723, 1726, 1730 and 1733; the second seems to have been reprinted immediately in 1717, then again in 1722, and 1733. (Both books were also reprinted in 1745, twelve years after Couperin's death, thanks to the efforts of his cousin, Nicolas Couperin.) Although we do not know how many copies were printed each time, these numerous reprints make Couperin's first two harpsichord books stand out among all other such books of keyboard music in the eighteenth century; no comparable volume of keyboard music in any country went through so many editions in so short a time.

Some of the works in the second book (like many in the first) must have been composed earlier, perhaps even in the 1690s for a few pieces. The eighth *ordre*, for example, is closer (at least in formal

terms) to the more traditional keyboard suite inherited from the seventeenth century. The shadows of the traditional dances hang over many works even if the movements are not always called by the traditional dance names. Taking the standard forms of allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue, etc. in order: *La Raphaële* (ninth *ordre*) and *La Castelane* (eleventh *ordre*) are both *allemandes graves*; *L'Intime* (twelfth *ordre*) is marked to be played at courante speed (*mouvement de Courante*) without quite being a real courante; *La Boulonnoise* (twelfth *ordre*) is one of the newer kinds of sarabande, delicate and melodic, similar to *Les Sentimens* (first *ordre*); *Le Moucheron* (sixth *ordre*) is an English jig similar to *La Milordine* (first *ordre*); *La Gabriële* (tenth *ordre*) is closer to the Italian *giga*; *Les Moissonneurs* (sixth *ordre*) and *L'Adolescente* (seventh *ordre*) are both derived from the gavotte model; the first movement of *Les Fastes* (eleventh *ordre*) is clearly a march.

As Couperin made clear in the preface to his first book, some of the pieces are musical “portraits” of people. *La Bersan* is a reference to someone in the family of another financier, André Bauyn de Bersan (d.1706). Damien Vaisse has shown that the famous “Bauyn” manuscript of harpsichord music, containing most of the known works of Chambonnières and Louis Couperin, must have belonged to this family (and, indeed, should from now on be called the “Bauyn de Bersan manuscript”). In the 1690s their house was less than a

minute’s walk from Couperin’s; he then lived at 24 rue de Thorigny. *La Ménetou* refers to Mademoiselle de Ménetou (Françoise-Charlotte de Senneterre), a young musical prodigy who at the age of nine sang and played at court, accompanying herself, and at the age of 11 published her first book of songs. *La Princesse de Sens* is probably Louise-Anne de Bourbon (1695-1758). *La Castelane* may refer to a member of the family of Monsieur de Castellan, beautifully sketched by the painter Jean-Baptiste Oudry. *La Bontems* no doubt refers to Louis-Alexandre Bontemps (1669-1742), Louis XIV’s *premier valet*. *La Mézangère* probably has a link with Marie-Thérèse de Pas de Bois l’abbé, who was *Dame de la Mézangère*; Rigaud painted her portrait in 1715. The two-part *Les Jumèles* may be a double portrait of the elegant sisters, Jeanne and Catherine de Loison, one of whom was a brunette, the other a blonde. Bonnart engraved their double portrait in 1694. They were just the same age as Couperin. Jeanne was generally known as “Doguine” and Catherine was called “Tontine.” Catherine was clearly a good musician since her portrait painted by François de Troy (and engraved by André Bouys, who painted Couperin’s portrait) shows her holding a sarabande of her own composition. In 1702, the poet Jean-François Regnard wrote a poem about the sisters, stressing Catherine’s musical skills: “Oh, how charming she is! With the accents of her voice! Or when a touching string speaks tenderly under her fingers, how charming she is!”

(*Qu'elle est charmante / Avec les accents de sa voix ! / Ou quand une corde touchante / Parle tendrement sous des doigts, / Qu'elle est charmante !*)

More than half of the pieces in Couperin's second book are in newer styles that he had made famous. The stylistic changes are particularly evident when an *ordre* in the second book is in the same key as an *ordre* in the first book. The pieces in the seventh *ordre*, for example, could have found their place in the second part of the first *ordre*, also in G (minor and major); but their separation from those pieces may indicate that they were mostly composed after the ones in the first book, or simply that Couperin felt they belonged to a different musical universe. Similarly, pieces in the ninth *ordre* could have been placed with the fifth *ordre* in the first book, also in A (major and minor); but with the exception of the menuet, they are mostly in the newer styles where the rondeau form predominates. Even when pieces are in the traditional bipartite form, their second half tends to be considerably longer than the first, providing Couperin with the musical canvas on which to develop his ideas at greater length, with more striking harmonic and melodic twists.

In the first book, published two years before Louis XIV's death, the shadow of the *Grand siècle* of Louis XIV hangs quite heavily over the music, despite Couperin's clear sense of a new direction demonstrated with *Les Sylvains*, right at the start in the second half of the first *ordre*. In the second book, published two years after Louis

XV acceded to the throne, that shadow is much dimmer. Instead, a freshness of style shines from every *ordre*. The characterization of each movement is more individual and more subtle, making each one a unique utterance, despite the fragility of the musical language. And time and again Couperin's extraordinary melodic gift is combined with his carefully ambiguous harmonies.

This freshness is never stronger than when the pieces are heard on beautiful instruments of the period. Couperin's musical language emerges as vastly less fragile. Forty years of playing this music has only made me more aware of the strength and assurance of his personal style. It was imitated by many, yet no one else achieved the perfection of expression that he managed to capture, often through a kind of precise haziness in which time seems to stop and the voluptuous world of Watteau and Lancret comes to harmonious life.

This world is evoked by the words of the song *La Voluptueuse*, published at just this time. The music is the same as Couperin's harpsichord piece *La Voluptueuse* from the first book (second *ordre*), but the keyboard version is probably an arrangement from the vocal version. In other words, the song came first even though it was published only in 1718, five years after the harpsichord piece. The piece was popular, judging by the number of copies, adaptations, and parodies that survive. Its text evokes the desire to avoid all conflicts of jealousy and is a paean to sentiment, pleasure, and tranquility,

preferably all veiled: “God of Love, drive away from here all those who are jealous; may such sweet moments be tranquil and flow slowly. Always hide our secret pleasures under a thick veil.” (*Dieu d’amour... / Ecarte tous les jaloux, / Que des moments si doux / Se passent tranquillement, / Et coulent lentement. / Toujours sous un voile épais, / Cache nos plaisirs secrets*).

The secret world of Couperin, which he observes ironically through half-closed eyes, is quietly voluptuous. Its subtle nuances express private sentiments. They were fully present in the first book in *Les Pelerines* (third *ordre*), another harpsichord piece that also survives as a song whose text is about “pilgrims” of Love, on their way to the temple of Venus. Couperin had already made his view about sentiment quite clear in the first *ordre*, where the second sarabande is entitled *Les Sentimens*, a perfect embodiment of “sweet moments” that are “tranquil and flow slowly”. The second book is even more fully rooted in this world. Long before the arrival of the Sentimental Novel in England, with Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), Couperin was placing sentiment at the center of French keyboard music.

Davitt Moroney
Paris, April 2014

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Peter and Karen Flint for the privilege of being able to perform and record on the wonderful antique harpsichords of the Flint Collection. Instead of our trying to pull these instruments towards the 21st century, we just need to relax and let them pull us back towards them. These instruments are our best teachers, and the ideal companions for our never-ending journey with the music of the past.

DM

DAVITT MORONEY

Davitt Moroney was born in England in 1950. He studied organ, clavichord, and harpsichord with Susi Jeans, Kenneth Gilbert and Gustav Leonhardt. He is Professor of Music, University Organist and Director of the University Baroque Ensemble at the University of California, Berkeley.

His international performing career has led him in recent years to give organ and harpsichord masterclasses at the Paris Conservatoire, the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire, the Flint Collection of Antique Instruments, the Juilliard School in New York, and Oberlin Conservatory, as well as in South Korea, Finland, Belgium, and Switzerland. Other recent concerts have included recitals in Germany, Holland, Italy, England, and Scotland.

He has made nearly seventy commercial CDs, especially of music by Bach, Byrd, and various members of the Couperin family. Many of these recordings feature historic organs and harpsichords dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His recent recordings include: *Pièces de Clavecin*, *Premier Livre* of François Couperin

(Plectra 2012), The Complete Harpsichord Concertos of J. S. Bach (Plectra, 2009), the complete harpsichord works of Louis Marchand and Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (Plectra, 2007) and a two-CD album of pieces from “The Borel Manuscript” (Plectra, 2008), pieces from a recently discovered manuscript of French harpsichord music acquired in 2004 by University of California Berkeley’s Hargrove Music Library.

His recordings have been awarded the French *Grand Prix du Disque* (1996), the German *Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik* (2000), and three British Gramophone Awards (1986, 1991, 2000). In 1987 he was named *Chevalier dans l’Ordre du mérite culturel* by Prince Rainier of Monaco and, in 2000, *Officier des arts et des lettres* by the French government.

KAREN FLINT

Karen Flint is artistic director and harpsichordist of Brandywine Baroque, with degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and The University of Michigan. On Plectra Music’s *Le Clavecin Français* series, Ms. Flint has recorded the Complete Works for Harpsichord of Nicolas Lebégue and Jacques Hardel (Plectra, 2014), Complete Works for Harpsichord by Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (Plectra, 2010), and pieces by Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (Plectra, 2010).

IOANNES RUCKERS HARPSICHORD, ANTWERP, 1627

Ioannes Ruckers (1578-1642), the most famous member of the illustrious Flemish family of harpsichord makers, built this two-manual instrument in Antwerp in 1627. Ioannes was the son of Hans Ruckers

(c.1550-1598), the founder of the Ruckers dynasty. The 1627 Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord was in the Château de Villebon for many years with a hiatus between 1903 and 1924 when it was sold and later bought back. This chateau in the Loire Valley was once the seat of the Duc de Sully (1559-1641), the great minister of Henri IV.

Originally a two register instrument with non-aligned keyboards, it was almost certainly restored by Nicolas Blanchet in Paris: the new keyboards are dated 1701; the jacks and range were modified; and a new stand, lid and exterior decoration were added. The range is GG/BB-c³, with a bass short octave and a split E^b key. The exceptionally beautiful Villebon Ruckers was restored to its early eighteenth-century state by John Phillips of Berkeley, California in 2009.

IOANNES RUCKERS HARPSICHORD, ANTWERP, 1635

The 1635 Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord was originally a single manual instrument with the usual Ruckers 45-note (C/E-c³) range, but with the unique disposition of two unison registers and an octave. In about 1700 it was converted to a double with the expanded range of 48 notes (C, D-c³) and later (possibly 1753), it was extended by four notes (BB, C# in the bass and c^{#3}, d³ in the treble). The case was lengthened for the second keyboard, but was never widened. The instrument preserves its original exquisite soundboard decoration and printed papers. Other than a restorer’s signature from 1907, nothing is known of its history before it was auctioned in 1997. John Phillips of Berkeley, California, restored it in 2005.