



LE CLAVECIN FRANÇAIS

François Couperin
Pièces de Clavecin
Premier Livre (1713)

Davitt Moroney, Harpsichord
Nicolas Dumont (Paris, 1707)
Ioannes Ruckers (Antwerp, 1627)



FRANÇOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733) • *Pièces de Clavecin, Premier Livre* (1713)

Nicolas Dumont harpsichord, 1707

Disc 1 Premier Ordre (in G minor/major)	48:09
1. [Prelude 3 from <i>L'Art de toucher le Clavecin</i>]	1:20
2. Allemande l'Auguste	4:18
3. Première Courante	1:33
4. Seconde Courante	2:14
5. Sarabande La Majestueüse	3:08
6. Gavotte	1:30
7. La Milordine, Gigue, <i>Gracieusement et légèrement</i>	1:57
8. Menuet; Double de Menuet précédent	2:29
9. Les Silvains, Rondeau, <i>Majestueüisement, sans lenteur;</i> Seconde Partie	5:41
10. Les Abeilles, Rondeau, <i>Tendrement</i>	1:14
11. La Nanète, <i>Gajement</i>	1:18
12. Les Sentimens, Sarabande, <i>Très tendrement</i>	3:47
13. La Pastorelle, <i>Naïvement</i>	1:20
14. Les Nonètes: Première partie: Les Blondes, <i>Tendrement,</i> Seconde partie: Les Brunnes	2:17
15. La Bourbonnoise Gavotte, <i>Gajement</i>	1:03
16. La Manon, <i>Vivement</i>	1:25
17. L'Enchanteresse, Rondeau	2:56
18. La Fleurie ou la tendre Nanéte, <i>Gracieusement</i>	3:14
19. Les Plaisirs de Saint Germain en Laÿe	3:32
20. Siciliéne in G major (Ballard, 1707, and several manuscripts)	1:53

Disc 1 Second Ordre (in D minor/major)	66:03
21. [Prelude 2 from <i>L'Art de toucher le Clavecin</i>]	2:08
22. Allemande La Laborieuse <i>Sans lenteur; et les doubles Croches un tant-soit-peu pointées</i>	5:50
23. Première Courante	1:59
24. Seconde Courante	2:47
25. Sarabande la Prude	2:45
26. L'Antonine, <i>Majestueüisement, sans lenteur</i>	1:33
27. Gavotte	1:15
28. Menuet	1:10
29. Canaries Double des Canaries	2:19
30. Passepied Seconde partie	1:55
31. Rigaudon Seconde partie	1:58
32. La Charoloise	0:54
33. La Diane, <i>Gajement</i>	1:21
34. Fanfare pour la Suitte de la Diane	0:54
Total Time	76:58

Nicolas Dumont harpsichord, 1707

Disc 2 Second Ordre [continuation] (in D minor/major)	
1. La Terpsicore, <i>Modérément, et marqué</i>	4:46
2. La Florentine, <i>D'une légéreté tendre</i>	1:53

3. La Garnier, <i>Modérément</i>	5:42
4. La Babet, <i>Nonchalamment</i>	2:22
Seconde partie: <i>Un peu vivement</i>	
5. Les Idées Heureuses, <i>Tendrement, sans lenteur</i>	7:55
6. La Mimi, <i>Affectüusement</i>	1:59
7. La Diligente, <i>Légèrément</i>	2:45
8. La Flateuse, <i>Affectüusement</i>	3:43
9. La Voluptueüse, Rondeau, <i>Tendrement, &c.</i>	4:02
10. Les Papillons, <i>Très légèrément</i>	2:06

Disc 2 Troisième Ordre (in C minor/major)	42:33
11. [Prelude 1 from <i>L'Art de toucher le Clavecin</i>]	1:40
12. La Ténébreuse, Allemande	4:49
13. Première Courante	1:33
14. Seconde Courante	2:18
15. La Lugubre, Sarabande	3:49
16. Gavotte	1:07
17. Menuet	1:03
18. Les Pélerines:	3:50
La Marche, <i>Gajement</i>	
La Caristade, <i>Tendrement</i>	
Le Remerciement, <i>Légèrément</i>	
19. Les Laurentines, <i>Gracieusement</i>	4:33
Seconde partie	
20. L'Espagnolète, <i>D'une légèreté modérée</i>	2:01
21. Les Regrets, <i>Langüissamment</i>	5:12

22. Les Matelotes Provençales, <i>Gajement</i>	3:06
Seconde partie	
23. La Favorite, Chaconne à deux tems, Rondeau,	5:13
<i>Gravement sans lenteur</i>	
24. La Lutine, <i>Très vivement, et marqué</i>	2:19
Total Time	79:48

Ioannes Ruckers harpsichord, 1627

Disc 3 Quatrième Ordre (in F major/minor)	22:15
1. [Prelude 4 from <i>L'Art de toucher le Clavecin</i>]	1:48
2. La Marche des Gris-vêtus, <i>Pesamment, sans lenteur</i>	2:43
3. Les Baccanales:	9:05
Première partie: Enjouement Bachiques	
Seconde partie: Tendresses Bachiques	
Troisième, et dernier partie des Baccanales: Fureurs Bachiques	
4. La Pateline, <i>Gracieusement</i>	4:58
5. Le Réveil-matin, <i>Légèrément</i>	3:40
Cinquième Ordre (in A major/minor)	51:58
6. [Prelude 5 from <i>L'Art de toucher le Clavecin</i>]	3:10
7. La Logivière, Allemande, <i>Majestueüusement, sans lenteur</i>	5:38
8. Courante	2:46
9. Seconde Courante	2:55
10. Sarabande la Dangereuse, <i>Gravement</i>	4:20
11. Gigue	2:12

12. La Tendre Fanchon, Rondeau, <i>Gracieusement</i>	4:41
13. La Badine, Rondeau, <i>Légèrement et flaté</i>	2:02
14. La Bandoline, Rondeau, <i>Légèrement, sans vitesse</i>	2:32
15. La Flore, <i>Gracieusement</i>	2:48
16. L'Angélique, Rondeau, <i>D'une légèreté modérée</i> Seconde partie	2:53
17. La Villers, <i>Gracieusement</i> Seconde partie: <i>un peu plus vivement</i>	4:09
18. Les Vendangeuses, Rondeau	2:02
19. Les Agréments, <i>Gracieusement, sans lenteur</i> Seconde partie	6:17
20. Les Ondes, Rondeau, <i>Gracieusement, sans lenteur</i>	3:33
Total Time	74:13

Executive Producer: Karen Flint
 Producer & Editor: George Blood
 Production Manager & Design: Robert Munsell
 Post-Session Producers: George Blood, Karen Flint & Davitt Moroney
 Engineer: George Blood
 Production Assistant: Tadashi Matsuura

Plectra Music
 1205 North Orange Street
 Wilmington, DE 19801

www.plectra.org



FRANÇOIS COUPERIN

Pièces de Clavecin, Premier Livre (1713)

François Couperin (1668-1733) was not in a hurry to publish his *Pièces de Clavecin, Premier Livre*, or First Book of Harpsichord Pieces. When it finally appeared in 1713, he had been established for nearly twenty years as a leading organist, composer, and harpsichord teacher in Paris. Since 1685 he had been employed professionally as the organist of Saint-Gervais in Paris, under the watchful eye of two important musicians at the French court: Michel-Richard de Lalande and Jacques-Denis Thomelin. He had published two superb organ masses early on in 1690, and already in 1692 was listed among the three finest organists in Paris (the other two were older men and both court organists, his teacher Thomelin and Nicolas Lebègue).

On Christmas Day 1693, his life changed professionally when he was chosen personally by Louis XIV to succeed Thomelin as one of the four court organists (*Organistes du Roi*). He was thus responsible for playing at court during the first three months of the year, becoming the colleague of Jean-Baptiste Buterne (April-June), Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers (July-September), and Nicolas Lebègue (October-December). This important post left him considerable time for parallel activities at Saint-Gervais, at court, and in other circles in and around Paris.

Couperin's multiple professional activities before 1713 somewhat obscure the fact that he had also established himself as the leading French composer and teacher of harpsichord music. He taught at least six royal princes and princesses, one of whom (the duc de Bourgogne) was also his student for composition and accompaniment; another (the comte de Toulouse) became a lifelong patron who paid Couperin a retainer salary that exceeded the combined salaries of his posts as organist at Saint-Gervais and at court.

Surviving documents confirm Couperin's increasing reputation not only as an organist and harpsichord teacher but also as a composer of Italianate trio sonatas, as an expert accompanist, and as a composer of motets at the French court. These activities brought him work at the other royal court nearby, the Jacobite court in Saint Germain-en-Laye, where the Stuart king James II of England was in exile with his queen, Mary of Modena. The young son of James and Mary led that court as James III for twelve years, from 1701 until 1713, when the Treaty of Utrecht forced Louis XIV to "invite" him to leave for Italy.

Couperin seems to have been involved with some regularity in musical activities at the Stuart court in France; he even ended up renting a house in Saint-Germain in 1710. The fact that he finally found time to publish his harpsichord music in 1713 may have been connected with the winding down of musical activities at the Stuart Court in that year. It is surely no coincidence that the first *ordre* contains a Gigue clearly evoking a "Milady" (*La Milordine*) as well as a piece entitled "The Pleasures of Saint Germain-en-Laye". It is even possible that the Sarabande of that *ordre*, entitled *La Majestueuse*, may evoke the young Stuart monarch, rather than (as is often said) Louis XIV.

COUPERIN'S REPUTATION IN 1713

Couperin was broadminded in his musical outlook. He had been ennobled by Pope Clement XI in about 1702-04, becoming a *Chevalier de Latran*. The honor was bestowed partly in recognition of his devotion to the cause of Italian music. Our perception of him as the quintessential French harpsichord composer is based on a somewhat reductive view of his harpsichord music, since the Italian elements in his work are more immediately evident in his other compositions, many of which are early works. He published the harpsichord music only from the age of 45 onwards: the four main books of

1713, [1717], 1722, and 1730, as well as *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* (1716); we should probably include in this list the *Concerts royaux* (1722) even though Couperin explains they can also be played on other instruments. This vast body of harpsichord pieces—the four main books alone contain over 220 works—shows his many different approaches to both French and Italian styles (and even perhaps occasionally English, as with *La Milordine*).

The strongest evidence for Couperin's reputation as the leading French harpsichordist is the fact that in about 1710, the excellent provincial composer Nicolas Siret (1663-1754), organist of the cathedral church of Troyes (about 50 miles east of Paris), dedicated his own first book of harpsichord pieces to Couperin. The terms of the dedication shed light in a touching way on Couperin's reputation just a few years before the appearance of his *Premier Livre*. Such a dedicatory gesture was rare from one musician to another and speaks of a genuine affection between the two men, who had known each other for a long time. Siret's text tells us much about Couperin's personality. Despite the standardized formality of the language, it is a surprising and moving homage from a musician who was five years older than Couperin:

Sir, The sincere friendship with which you have honored me for over twenty years obliges me to give you some proof of my debt to you by offering you two Suites of my pieces. Every year I leave the Provinces to come here [to Paris] to admire you and I never leave without having my imagination filled with a thousand beautiful things. What more perfect model could I have chosen? One is not surprised to hear such superior genius, such elevation of harmony, when one has the pleasure of hearing you. One is even happier, Sir, when one has the honor of knowing you. One soon notices that you add to the merit of which I have just spoken that of being the perfect honest man. How

many times have I heard you called by people in our profession their protector, their father! This is ample matter to praise you justly, if your modesty did not refuse to allow it. I am, Sir, with an inviolable attachment, your humble and very obedient servant.

COUPERIN'S ENGRAVERS

If we did not have this dedication, the other main evidence of Couperin's reputation as a harpsichordist at this time would be only the fact that a meager handful of his shorter pieces had been printed, anonymously, in a messy little keyboard anthology published in 1707 by the royal music printer, Christophe Ballard. The experience of having these works appear in such a collection was probably an unhappy one for Couperin; he cannot have been pleased with the results and presumably did not authorize the edition. From an aesthetic and practical point of view, the grim aspect of the volume is a result of the kind of typography employed. The use of movable type for harpsichord music was a highly unsatisfactory option, especially for someone like Couperin who tried to be exceptionally precise and meticulous. The notes are badly aligned and randomly spaced. Chords are printed oddly, with notes of different sizes. There is a "one-size-fits-all" approach to slurs and accidentals. The appearance of these pieces in such an unsatisfactory manner may have spurred Couperin to think about finally getting together his works and publishing them properly in a manner that was entirely under his control.

For over forty years there had been a better alternative, a method of printing music that seems to have originated in Italy: engraving. The earliest known engraved book of French music was the *Airs* of Michel Lambert, engraved by Richer in 1660. The first engraved French keyboard book appeared five years later: Guillaume Gabriel Nivers's *Livre d'Orgue contenant cent pièces*.

The earliest books of engraved harpsichord music were the works of Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, published at the end of his life in 1670; the engraving was by Jollain.

Engraving keyboard music presented uniquely complicated difficulties but several skilled artists soon started specializing in it. By the time Couperin would have been planning his volume (from about 1705 onwards?) one engraver of quality stood out: Henry de Baussen. He had been engraving keyboard music for over twenty years, including Nicolas Lebègue's third organ book (1685), Jacques Boyvin's two organ volumes (1689-90; 1700), and Gaspard Corrette's organ book (1703). He had also issued a large number of other collections of chamber music and opera. In particular, he was responsible for five finely engraved harpsichord volumes: Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre's *Les Pièces de Claveßin* (1687); Louis Marchand's second book of *Pieces de clavecin* (1702); Gaspard Le Roux's *Pieces de Clavessin* (1705); Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre's *Pieces de Clavecin Qui peuvent se Jouer sur le Violon* (1707); and Nicolas Siret's *Pieces de Clavecin Dediées A Monsieur Couperin* (c. 1710). We can be sure that Couperin would have examined the engraving of Siret's volume very closely! In 1711 de Baussen also took on as an apprentice for three years the young Louis Hue, who from 1716 would gradually become Couperin's principal engraver. Couperin's choice of Hue to engrave *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* in 1716 must have been the result of a strong recommendation from someone like de Baussen.

I have always been mystified by the fact that Couperin's first two harpsichord books were nevertheless not engraved by Henry de Baussen. Instead, he chose François du Plessy, about whom very little is known other than that he was probably younger than de Baussen. (His first engraved books date from 1709; his last from the mid 1730s.) Was de Baussen too busy? It is possible that Couperin, who seems to have had strong ideas about how



he wanted his music to appear, felt that a younger engraver might be more malleable and could be more easily convinced to do things exactly as he wanted. A younger engraver was also, presumably, less expensive. This last factor may have been significant for two reasons: Couperin was not wealthy; and his *Premier Livre* was more substantial than any known harpsichord book to that date. It finally appeared with 72 pieces engraved on 73 exceptionally large pages of music, so the costs of having it all engraved might well have appeared daunting. (The second book is even longer.)

Of the many things that are revolutionary about Couperin's *Premier Livre*, the most immediately striking is its large format. Until then, the standard format for French organ and harpsichord books had been with six staves to a page (making three systems of keyboard score); such books were wider than they were tall, being in "Italian" format (now called "landscape"). Couperin chose to have pages that are twice as big, with twelve staves to a page (making six lines of keyboard score); his books are thus taller than they are wide, being in "French" format (modern "portrait").

This was a practical solution to something he presumably saw as a problem. The older format almost always imposed a page-turn in the middle of a harpsichord piece. Such page-turns had been manageable in movements composed in the traditional dance forms of French music (Allemande,

Courante, Sarabande, Gigue, Menuet, Gavotte, etc.) since such works were almost exclusively in two sections of more or less equal length. The double bar in the middle, where the music stopped for breath, made the physical gesture of turning the page possible, or at any rate not impractical. However, such an arrangement was far less suited to many of the pieces of Couperin's *Premier Livre*. His compositional style was different from that of the composers of the previous generation in three ways that relate specifically to this problem of engraving.

- (1) In works like *La Terpsicore*, *Les Idées Heureuses*, *La Diligente*, *Le Réveil-matin*, and *La Logivière*, the second half is considerably longer than the first and would not have fitted practically into the older format since the pause at the double bar does not fall in the middle. Couperin (as Bach would do, perhaps partly under Couperin's influence) used the second half for more serious development of his musical material, both melodically and harmonically, extending his phrases to unusual lengths; clear examples are the *Fureurs Bachiques* in the fourth *ordre* and the second part of *Les Agréments* in the fifth.
- (2) Several of his pieces are in the newly fashionable *rondeau* form, where the player repeatedly has to go back to the initial few bars of music, returning to them at regular intervals throughout the movement. Works such as *L'Enchanteresse* and *Les Plaisirs de Saint Germain en Laye* (in the first *ordre*), *La Favorite* (in the third), and *Les Ondes* (in the fifth), would in the old format have been spread over at least four pages, requiring the player not only to keep turning back to repeat the opening *rondeau* couplet but also to keep turning forwards again for each subsequent couplet. The new format required no page-turns at all.

•(3) In general, Couperin was also starting to write some much longer works that could not be presented comfortably or elegantly within the standard format or page size. His engraver responded to this by engraving a different amount of music on each page, according to the length. Some pages have four keyboard systems, some have five, most have six. A few of the longest pieces even have seven (with 14 staff lines in all); for example, *La Florentine*, *Les Matelotes Provençales*, *La Lutine*, *Fureurs Bachiques*, *La Pateline*, *La Tendre Fanchon* and *L'Angélique*. *La Villers* and *Les Agrémens* would also have been too long to fit comfortably in the old format. (In Book Four—again engraved by du Plessy—the material was compressed even more for one exceptionally long piece, *L'Amphibie*. The music is printed on two facing pages that each use eight keyboard systems, sixteen staves. There is no need for a page-turn. The result is practical for the player, if a little cramped.)

The cost of engraving the 73 large music pages in the *Premier Livre* must have been high. The contract is not known to survive, but we can glean some indications of what it might have contained from a very rare surviving contract signed on 6 October 1720 by the composer Thomas-Louis Bourgeois and the music engraver Claude Roussel. It established that the musical plates for Bourgeois's book of cantatas would be finished and corrected by the start of January 1721, that the musical pages would have ten staves per page, and that the price would be “four pounds and ten sols for each page engraved, corrected and perfect” (“*quatre livres dix sols en argent pour chaque page ou planche gravée corrigée et parfaite*”). The composer, not the engraver, had to furnish the metal plates. Payment was to be made in installments, as the engraved and corrected pages were finished. Couperin's book, by contrast, took over twelve months



to prepare, not three. His plates would certainly have cost more, since they were larger, with twelve and often fourteen staves. So if we assume they were at least 5 livres each, the music engraving alone would have amounted to a minimum of 365 livres.

Couperin also chose to have the preliminary text pages engraved not by du Plessy but by Claude Auguste de Bery (?1651-1732), Paris's finest “engraver of letters”. In this way he made sure that the title page, dedication, and preface were as elegant as possible. De Bery was the son of the Parisian engraver Nicolas I de Bery (1606-1665). He had earned his reputation partly as an engraver of textual elements on maps and elegant titles on the works of engravers who specialized in paintings or portraits.

More important, de Bery had also published three supremely elegant books on beautiful calligraphy. The first was Etienne de Blégnys's *Les Elemens ou premières instructions de la jeunesse* (1691; reprinted 1702, 1709); but he had also self-published two books of his own: *Nouveau livre d'écriture financière composé de differens exemplaires. Gravé par Claude Auguste Bery* (Paris: l'auteur, [c. 1694-1695]); and *L'écriture italienne bâtarde en sa perfection, de la manière qu'elle s'écrit à présent, écrite et gravée pour apprendre de soy mesme et sans maistre à bien écrire par Bery graveur* (Paris: l'auteur, [c. 1699-1706]). One hundred years later, after the French Revolution, de Bery's plates were still being reprinted as examples of superbly engraved handwriting in *Les nouveaux exemplaires des écritures financières et italiennesbatarde comme on les exerce*

maintenant. Avec une brève instruction contenant une simple description de chaque lettre (Paris: Citoyen Jean, s.d.).

A sign of de Berey's status is the fact that he would be chosen in 1723 to engrave all the text for the official book commemorating Louis XV's coronation, prepared by the poet Antoine Danchet (1671-1748) of the Académie française. The names of de Berey, Danchet, and Couperin all occur together on the second edition of *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin* (1717) since Danchet had written the official *Approbation* in 1716, and de Berey engraved the prefatory plates for the second edition of Couperin's famous work.

Not surprisingly, de Berey charged highly for his work. We know from some engraving he did on the plans for the Abbey of Clairveaux that his price in 1709 was "1 sol for each engraved word, and 1 sol for three numbers" Twenty words therefore cost one pound (*livre*) (*quatre livres dix sols en argent pour chaque page ou planche gravée corrigée et parfaite*). A rough calculation can be made from this (assuming there had been no change in his prices four years later) of the minimum costs Couperin would have had to pay for the text plates for his *Premier Livre*. Since there are about 1000 words on the preliminary pages, de Berey's contribution would have added up to at least 50 *livres*. He would then have also had to supply the metal for the plates to both engravers, and then pay the printer to print the finished books. In other words, the whole procedure cannot have cost him less than 600 *livres*. This expense can be put into perspective when we remember that his annual salary as "Organist of the King" at Versailles was exactly that same sum, 600 *livres*.

If Couperin had been looking for a way to produce an extremely beautiful edition of his harpsichord music in monumental format, his experience with Ballard in 1707 would certainly not have provided the answer. The delay in publishing the *Premier Livre* may have been due in part to this search for a better solution, and to his reluctance to have these works appear in inferior

editions. In other words, the delay was due to a combination of patience, self-awareness, exacting standards, and pride in his own achievement.

Since Couperin says that the book took over a year to prepare, its production must have started early in 1712. He may have finally found the solution he needed in 1711, when his friend and colleague Marin Marais issued his second book of viol pieces. The music in that book was engraved by du Plessy and the preliminary pages engraved by de Berey. Marais's book may therefore have provided Couperin with the perfect example he needed. It also had something that until that point had not been common (or at least systematic) in keyboard volumes: proportional spacing of the notes in the measure, according to their rhythmic value. Couperin draws attention to this in the preface to his *Premier Livre* as one of the specific features over which he and the engraver had taken great pains.

Finally, Couperin may have had reasons beyond simple practicality to choose a format that was not only large, but also luxurious and expensive. He seems to have wanted to publish his works in monumental format. He maintained this large "portrait" format for all his works, including the instrumental chamber music, and used thick paper of excellent quality with generously large margins. In 1723 he even referred to this format being convenient for those who wished to bind his works in uniform bindings—a clear hint of the vision he had of his "Complete Works" sitting on shelves in magnificently engraved and finely bound large library volumes.

The skill with which the differences of musical density on the page are assimilated by du Plessy into a single visual impression of uniform elegance is marvelous and the superb preliminary pages by de Berey are of a similar standard. They help make the *Premier Livre* one of the most beautiful and monumental music books ever produced. The quality of Couperin's

compositions earned a unique place in the history of harpsichord music for this book; but the quality of the engravers who produced it at such a high technical level also earned for it a unique place in the history of elegant book production.

COUPERIN'S PREMIER LIVRE

Following Couperin's specific suggestion in *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin*, I have here used the appropriate preludes from that volume to introduce the *ordres* of the *Premier Livre*. I have also added, as a kind of Appendix at the end of the first *ordre*, the little piece entitled "Siciliéne" that was printed by Ballard in 1707 and is attributed to Couperin in several manuscripts. I am not entirely convinced the piece is by Couperin, and the title seems dubious since the piece resembles a Gigue more closely than a Sicilienne. But it is included here for the sake of completeness and because it appears in the modern *Oeuvres complètes*.

By 1713 Couperin had ready well over a hundred harpsichord pieces, including most of the ones now found in his second book. His initial plan was to issue Book 2 before the end of 1713, but for various reasons it was delayed and did not appear for over three years, probably in 1717 (almost certainly including a handful of more recently written pieces in the keys of G and D). The contents of Book 1 are therefore not distinct in any significant way from the contents of Book 2, but in the first volume he grouped together works in five keys (combining major and minor) and called these groupings "orders", or *ordres*. They are, in sequence: 1st *ordre*, in G minor and major (18 pieces); 2nd *ordre*, in D minor and major (23 pieces); 3rd *ordre*, in C minor and major (13 pieces); 4th *ordre*, in F major and minor (4 pieces); and 5th *ordre*, in A major and minor (14 pieces). The fact that the *Second Livre* contains so many pieces in other keys confirms Couperin's division of his works in 1713 between the

two books: 6th *ordre*, in B flat major; 7th *ordre*, in G major/minor; 8th *ordre*, in B minor; 9th *ordre*, in A major/minor; 10th *ordre*, in D major/minor; 11th *ordre*, in C minor/major; 12th *ordre*, in E major/minor.

The *Premier Livre* stands out in a remarkable fashion not only for bringing the traditional classical suite to its apogee but also for opening the path to a quite new style of composition for the harpsichord, and accordingly Couperin uses a new word to indicate the groupings of pieces. The traditional word, *suite*, would not have been an inappropriate word since it simply means "sequence". In the late seventeenth century it had come to imply a sequence that was unified not only by key but also by a particular grouping based on the established, standardized dances. Yet Couperin chose not to use the word *suite*. As if to demarcate himself from his predecessors, he used the term *ordre*, a word that has an Italian pedigree. The term *ordine* was already used in Italy to refer to key, notably in Giovanni Paolo Cima's *Partito de ricercari* (1606), which contains instructions for tuning *in ogni ordine* (in every key); and in Giovanni Battista Breve's string trios, Op. 5 (1693), where the grouping of pieces is by *ordine*. Couperin's gallicization of *ordine* into *ordre* is entirely in keeping with his approach to other such musical words: just as it was normal in French to say *ballade* instead of *ballata* and *sérénade* instead of *serenata*, he explained in 1723 that he preferred to use *cantade* and *sonade* instead of *cantata* and *sonata*. Similarly, Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre and the unidentified compiler of the Bauyn manuscript (c.1690-95) had already used *tocade* instead of *toccata*. So Couperin's use of *ordre* instead of *ordine* was part of a larger linguistic movement that was not unique to him, although he now appears to have been one of its principal protagonists.

His choice of the word *ordre* may imply that he was thinking less of the grouping of dances as such, and more of a simple grouping according to tuning

and temperament. Ten years later he specifically referred to a comparable kind of arrangement for his *Concert royaux*, works whose grouping is not based on dance styles but simply on key groupings; he says “I have arranged them by key”. (“*Je les ay rangées par Tons.*”) In *Les Nations* (1726) each of Couperin’s four main works contains an Italianate *sonade* followed by a *suite* of dances. This shows that in Couperin’s mind a *suite* could be a subsection of something larger. Perhaps in his harpsichord works he was at first similarly thinking along the same lines, that the concept of an *ordre* encompasses something greater than that of a *suite*. Here, unlike in *Les Nations*, the *suite* dances tend to come at the start rather than end.

Despite the strong presence of so many pieces in newer styles, the classical *suite* is nevertheless fully present in Couperin’s *Premier Livre* and the shadow of its component movements often hides behind works that are not officially called Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, or Gigue yet remain easily recognizable as such. The French harpsichord *suite* may be said to reach its peak with Couperin, notably in the first part of the first *ordre* and the first part of the fifth *ordre*. In the *Premier Livre*, most of the *ordres* start with what looks like a classical *suite*. The entire eighth *ordre*, published in the *Second Livre* but one of the more retrospective sets in that collection, is perhaps the only one Couperin wrote that remains entirely within the musical compass of the older *suite*.

Nevertheless, after a few dances most of the *ordres* in the first book move on to something quite different, to a grouping of pieces in newer styles: portraits, character pieces, descriptive pieces, arrangements of songs, and *rondeaux*, all with evocative titles. Several of these newer pieces circulated in manuscripts and in versions for other instruments that predate the 1713 publication.

Some of the works published as solo harpsichord pieces, such as *La Pastorelle* and *Les Pélerines*, clearly had an earlier life as songs. In these cases, the harpsichord versions are highly refined arrangements of tunes that were already popular and the titles are explained by their direct reference to the words. The same may be true for *La Voluptueuse* (for which several texts survive), as well as *La Marche des Gris-vêtus* (for which the words of a military song survive, but it is unclear when they were written) and *Les Vendangeuses* (for which no words have yet been identified). This suggests that the endless search for the meaning of Couperin’s more perplexing titles might occasionally lead to the conclusion that a title is nothing more than a now obscure reference to words that in Couperin’s day were known to be associated with the melody.

Although it is sometimes clear that the harpsichord version is based on a previous vocal work, it is certainly true that some of the known vocal versions are later *parodies*, derived from the harpsichord originals. The vocal versions of *La Babet* fall into this category. *Les Ondes* also survives with a remarkable set of *parodie* words that refer specifically to the sea; the rising waves are explained in the last couplet.

Less clear is the case of *Le Réveil-matin*, which is usually assumed to be an amusing depiction of an alarm clock going off repeatedly; and so it may be. Yet the song text, a drinking song, could perhaps have been written earlier despite being published a few years later. It refers appropriately to sunrise after a long night with the bottle. The rattling octaves traditionally associated with the clock are presented as repeated notes, charming depictions of glasses chinking together as the drinkers carouse and toast each other (“*tin, tin, tin, tin, tin!*” or as the French now say “*chin, chin!*”). The words make a clear reference to the *Réveil-matin*: “While Dawn, to please Flora, is making charming treasures shine in the fields; let’s all chink our glasses. Oh, the sweet war! *Tin, tin, tin, tin, tin!*”

Ah, the divine *Reveil matin!*” (*Tandis que l’Aurore, / Fait, pour plaire à Flore, / Briller dans nos champs / Des trésors charmants; / Choquons-tous le verre: / O la douce guerre! / Tin, tin, tin, tin, / Ah le divin / Reveil matin!*) In this case the closing words of the song might possibly have been the source for the title of the harpsichord piece. (Incidentally, such texted versions sometimes imply that the music should not be played too fast.)

Most of these pieces that were so popular are in the newer styles, ones where Couperin can be seen to have broken away from the tradition of the great earlier school of French harpsichord composition. The shadow of Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, Nicolas Lebègue, Jean Henry d’Anglebert, and Jean-Nicolas Geoffroy can certainly be felt over the *ordres* where the *suite* is still audibly present. But a new spirit had started moving in the last years of Louis XIV’s reign. It can be felt stirring already in the works of the next generation of composers, from Louis Marchand, Gaspard Leroux, and Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre to Louis-Nicolas Clérambault and Nicolas Siret. These were all musicians who had broken new stylistic ground while basically remaining within the confines of the edifice of the *suite*. Couperin broke down the walls. He wrote works in different styles and was proud of having done so. In the preface to this first book he noted that the “varied new characters” of his pieces have made them popular (“*les caracteres nouveaux et diversifiés les ont fait recevoir favorablement dans le monde*”), and in 1730 he proudly asserted that no one had composed more than he in various styles (“*personne n’a gueres plus composé que moy dans plusieurs genres*”).

Couperin did not rebuild the language of French harpsichord music in one stroke, just as most old French chateaux took more than one generation to build. Versailles itself had started as a country hunting lodge but was expanded in the late seventeenth century when Louis XIV decided to move his court

there. Yet new wings were added in the eighteenth century and as we walk through these rooms we leave behind certain styles and find ourselves in different worlds. This reminds me of a remark made some years ago by the French harpsichordist and Couperin specialist Olivier Baumont, that playing or listening to Couperin’s first *ordre* is like walking through the late seventeenth-century rooms in Versailles. The *suite* itself (the first seven movements, Allemande to Menuet) is like an *enfilade* of connected rooms, where the *grand salon* connects seamlessly and with a reassuring predictability to the *bibliothèque*, the *petit salon*, the *boudoir*, and so on; but then, by opening a door, we suddenly find ourselves in a new wing, where the *décor* is different and unpredictable, rooms that seem to have been fitted out for more modern comfort.

Such is the feeling when in the first *ordre*, we end the Menuet and walk through a barely perceptible portal into the eighteenth-century wing, or perhaps even into a garden. With *Les Sylwains* (where the first sounds of G major occur) we are drawn into another world. Here, instead of the formal courtly dances we find a rustic world of Nature, a utopian and almost mystical Arcadia inhabited by bees, pastoral sentiments, mythological creatures, enchantments, and hazy voluptuousness. It is, indeed, a world of sentiment and physical experience, different from the conceptual world of the *suite*. This universe might seem far from the formal, almost hieratic world of Versailles and court ritual, but it had always been part of the subtext in the *divertissements* of the *Grand siècle*, ever since La Fontaine’s *Les Amours de Psyche et Cupidon* (1669).

In the second *ordre*, the traditional *suite* ends with the Rigaudon; the new wing of the *suite* is opened up by *La Charoloise* (a piece presumably for Mademoiselle de Charolais, one of the princesses Couperin taught), but this

little piece was probably placed in the empty space at the bottom of the page after the Rigaudon since the new world is more truly found in *La Diane*. In the third *ordre*, as with the first, the portal occurs after the Menuet (before *Les Pelerines*, the words of which speak of women who are pilgrims on their way to the temple of Venus in this new world). In the fifth, the portal is between the Gigue and *La Tendre Fanchon*. Only the fourth *ordre* seems to belong entirely to the new eighteenth-century world.

Just as the modern visitor to Versailles may not at first notice the stylistic differences between a room decorated in 1685 and one dating from 1730, so listeners to Couperin's pieces may find it helpful to identify these changes of language, of attitude, and of evocation, and to identify the great variety found in his different musical universes. Experiencing the subtle emotions of these worlds is an essential part of understanding his achievement and why he was so revered by composers for the harpsichord in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Davitt Moroney
Berkeley, April 2012

French and large type versions of this booklet
are available for download at www.plectra.org.

Une version française de ce texte est disponible en ligne.
Veuillez visiter www.plectra.org.

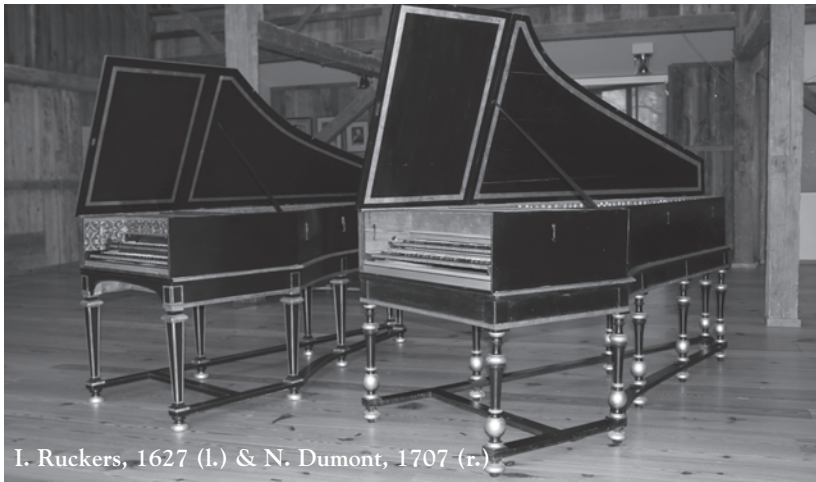
DAVITT MORONEY

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 is regularly invited as a jury member for international organ and harpsichord competitions.

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: *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), comprising pieces from a recently discovered manuscript of French harpsichord music acquired in 2004 by UC 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.



I. Ruckers, 1627 (l.) & N. Dumont, 1707 (r.)

NICOLAS DUMONT HARPSICHORD, PARIS, 1707
Premier, Second, and Troisième Ordres

Little is known about the life of the important Parisian harpsichord builder Nicolas Dumont (active from 1675–1707) except that he married in 1673, became a master in the instrument makers guild in 1675 and had died by February, 1711. Three Dumont two-manual harpsichords survive, dated 1697 (Paris, Musée de la musique), 1704 (Paris, private collection) and 1707 (USA, private collection). The 1697 was originally a small Flemish-inspired instrument, since enlarged. The 1704 and 1707 instruments are the earliest examples of the standard model for eighteenth-century Parisian harpsichords. The 1707 harpsichord is the first with a five-octave (FF-e3) range.

Records of the Château du Touvet in Isère (Southern France) show that this harpsichord was purchased in 1719 by Count Pierre de Marcieu for his country estate. During the French Revolution it was tucked away in a granary where it was rediscovered in the 1970's and restored by Hubert Bédard in 1975-1976 and by Dominique Laperle in 1996. Despite 80-odd years of service, 180 years in the granary and two restorations, the 1707 Dumont remains in substantially original musical condition, with its original stand and decor. It was restrung and re-voiced in 2002, and completely restored in 2012 by John Phillips, Berkeley, California, and is in a private USA collection.

IOANNES RUCKERS HARPSICHORD, ANTWERP, 1627
Quatrième and Cinquième Ordres

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 I. 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 the instrument had two registers with non-aligned keyboards (one 8-foot & one 4-foot pitch). The instrument 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-c^{'''}, with a bass short octave and a split Eb key. The exceptionally beautiful Villebon Ruckers is now restored to its early eighteenth-century state. The restoration was carried out by John Phillips of Berkeley, California in 2009. It is in a private collection in the USA.