



Raleigh Camerata
The Triangle's Premier Baroque Ensemble
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The Tumultuous Scene of Baroque Music in France

Louis XIV (1643-1715) was one of the last of Europe's absolute monarchs. Famous now for having constructed the over-the-top Palace of Versailles, he reigned over a court every bit as splendiferous as the palace itself. Life at Court was a constant succession of lavish entertainments, balls, ballets, operas, and banquets for which attendance by the nobility was mandatory. In other words, everybody had not only to live at Court but also to travel with the King on his official travels. It was a way for Louis to keep an eye on everybody who might even think about crossing him. Not surprisingly, he was not unique among monarchs, just more ostentatious because he could afford it – with taxation on the backs of the peasants.

Louis also assumed control of all the entertainment, dictating elements of both content and style. He was a consummate dancer, liked to perform himself, and encouraged everyone else at Court to do the same.

Louis outlived his son during his 62-year reign and was succeeded by his grandson Louis XV, aged five. France was ruled by regents until Louis was thirteen, but part of his earliest training included dancing. Two paintings of the two kings, intentionally or not, picture them with legs positioned in dance-like poses in addition to full regalia.

Louis XV (1711-1764) reigned nearly as long as his predecessor (59 years) but had a significantly less autocratic personality, leaving much of the actual governing through peace and war to his various ministers. He was, however, a major patron of all the arts, and his daughters were fine musicians. He supported the Couperin family of composers and, in particular, Jean Philippe Rameau, who supplied him with over 30 operas. He was also the lead gawker at the young Mozart, who dedicated two violin sonatas to one of his daughters.

The Revolution of 1789 wasn't the only uproar of the eighteenth century. The internal and external political drama did not overshadow the passionate, public wars over musical style. Essentially, these were battles between musically conservative, chauvinistic proponents of pure French style and those who welcomed both musical innovation and the influence of Italian music.

The music on this program covers nearly a century; in listening to it, one should keep in mind that Louis XIV was essentially a creature of the seventeenth century while Louis XV belonged to the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment. It also offers example of composers who found themselves in the middle of the culture wars.

Sonate à quatre parties in G Minor, Op. 34, No. 1

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier
1689-1755

Boismortier is not one of the names that immediately comes to mind when thinking about the French Baroque. Although a contemporary of Louis XV, he never seems to have been integrated into the circle of court musicians; instead, he successfully relied on the sales of his prodigious musical output, much of which he never published. Little is known about his early life or musical training, except that he was employed along with his family in the French tobacco control. Even after his death, his music was praised by those musicians who had gotten their hands on it.

Boismortier was a violinist and flutist and composed primarily chamber music – including a set of six concertos for five flutes. He was also an unheralded innovator, having composed the first *French* concerto for a solo instrument (cello), all based on the Italian (horrors!) model.

His Sonata for Four Parts plus basso continuo is also in the Italian style consisting of four movements (slow-fast-slow-fast). All four movements are in the same key, and the third movement serves as an introduction leading directly into the fourth.

Trios pour le coucher du Roi, LV 35 **(Trios for the King's Chamber)**

Jean-Baptiste Lully
1632-1687

Jean Baptiste Lully was the inventor of French opera and the most important composer at the court of Louis XIV, a monarch who was steeped in the arts, especially ballet and opera, which always contained a significant opportunity for dance and in which he often participated. Lully was born Giovanni Battista Lulli in Florence, the son of a miller, and was virtually self-taught in music. He acquired French citizenship when he came to work as a scullery boy and Italian teacher after having been “discovered” by Roger de Lorraine, member of one of France's grandest families, and taken to France.

Lully, who “francocised” his name for obvious reasons, entered the service of Louis XIV in 1652 as a dancer. After presenting ballet music to the King, Lully quickly ascended the “corporate ladder,” composing ballets, operas and incidental music for several of the plays of Molière. He was extremely successful and important in the development of French opera, which took a very different stylistic course from that of the Italians.

Lully had one of music history's more interesting deaths. Music directors of the period used a long staff instead of the modern, delicate baton. Lully died after having accidentally mashed his foot while conducting. The wound turned gangrenous, but Lully refused to have his leg amputated presumably because it would end his dancing career.

Although Lully may have invented a new style for French opera, he certainly brought much of his Italian musical heritage into his instrumental music. The *Symphonie*, a slow introduction followed by an *Allegro*, is like the Italian *sinfonia* in structure. The musical style, especially of the *Allegro*, sounds right out of Claudio Monteverdi – whose career intersected Lully's by eleven years.

Trio Sonata, Op. 4, No. 4

Jean-Marie Leclair
1697-1764

Composer and violinist Jean-Marie Leclair is credited with founding the French violin school. He was involved in the *Concert Spirituel* series of public concerts and for a time was connected to the court of Louis XV. Leclair's death remains among the backlog of unsolved crimes; he was poisoned, possibly by his nephew, who shares a last name with today's cellist, Stephanie Vial.

This Trio Sonata is the weightiest and most technically challenging work on today's program, composed in high Baroque style with heavy Italian influence. The second-movement fugue would have been appreciated by Leclair's older contemporary J. S. Bach.

Pièces de Clavecin

La Follette (The Sprite) (Rondeau)

L'entretien des Muses (Meeting of the Muses)

Les Tourbillons (The Windmills) (Rondeau)

Jean-Philippe Rameau
1683-1764

Jean-Philippe Rameau was the leading French composer of keyboard music and opera during the late Baroque period, and a renowned innovator in harmonic theory. In 1702, he began a two-decade career as organist in numerous churches around France. That phase in his career ended at Clermont Cathedral where he secured his release from a 29-year contract by deliberately playing all the most unpleasing registrations and adding unresolved dissonances on a feast day. It was a spectacular example of the bad humor for which he became famous for the rest of his long life.

Rameau moved to Paris in 1722 where he published the first of his many books on music theory. His theory of harmony, which still forms the basis of the modern study of tonal harmony, embroiled him in disputes with the Encyclopedists, Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, and especially with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

His work eventually brought him to the attention of La Riche de la Pouplinière, a wealthy tax collector who devoted much of his fortune to supporting musicians and made Rameau head of his household orchestra. Rameau was known at the time primarily as a composer of keyboard music and cantatas, but when la Pouplinière learned of his protégé's ambition to compose for the stage, he put him in touch with the librettist Simon-Joseph Pellegrin. Together they produced *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733, followed by a string of over 30 grand operas and spectacles for the Paris stage.

Much of Rameau's keyboard music belongs to a genre of "character pieces," works meant to evoke a visual image or even portray a particular person. His older contemporary, François Couperin was the foremost proponent of this style.

The other important aspect of all the keyboard music of this period is the fact that the score of any given piece was only a skeleton of what was actually to be played. There was, of course, a wealth of ornaments, both suggested and improvised. Performance practice also included a kind of rubato called *notes inégales* (unequal notes) in which adjacent notes appearing in the score as equal in length were adjusted to be unequal in order to add beauty or emotional intensity to a passage. From entire treatises on *notes inégales* one learns of the rather strict set of rules and regulations that controlled

what sounded in performance as the artistry and fancy of the player. The most famous treatise is François Couperin's *L'art de toucher le clavacin* (The Art of Keyboard Playing).

Sonata en Quatour in B minor

Louis-Antoine Dornel

1680-1757

The most obscure composer on today's program would certainly be Louis-Antoine Dornel. He was not directly associated with the Court but was appointed as the music master of the *Académie française*. What exactly was required for this post is not entirely clear since the French Academy was charged with giving "exact rules to our language, to render it capable of treating the arts and sciences." It is possible that Dornel provided music for special meetings or occasions.

The Sonata in B minor is in four movements, the first of which offers a series of musical mood swings. Its particularly somber opening is interrupted by an agitated Allegro of only a few measures. These two moods alternate continually throughout the movement.

The Sonata is also unusual in that its two fast movements are a conventional fugue and a double fugue respectively.

From *Concerts de Simphonies* in F Major, Op.3, No. 2

Antoine Dauvergne

1713-1797

Antoine Dauvergne was one of the influential composers of the decades immediately preceding the French Revolution. At various times in his career, he served as master of the *Chambre du roi*, director of the *Concert Spirituel* (the first public concert series in Paris), and director of the *Opéra*. His contribution to French comic opera led particularly to the development of the *opéra comique* of the nineteenth century. Among his instrumental works is a multi-movement new genre that he called *Concerts de Simphonies*.

Somehow, he managed to survive the stylistic and political ravages of his time with his head intact.

The style of this piece illustrates perfectly the blur between the Baroque and pre-Classical styles. Of the three movements. The Allegro and Vivace movements belong to the Baroque dance suite.

The Chaconne is one of the oldest and still most easily recognized genres of the Baroque, characteristically either flamboyant (Bach) or mordant (Monteverdi, Purcell), and virtually always in a minor key. So, in encountering Dauvergne's take on the form, listeners might feel understandably disoriented. This is a hybrid chaconne, a collection of short bassline patterns that recur irregularly in the five-minute movement. Its major key also diverges from convention.

A recent biography presents Dauvergne in 450 pages as an innovator, balancing between the stylistic quarrels of the century.