

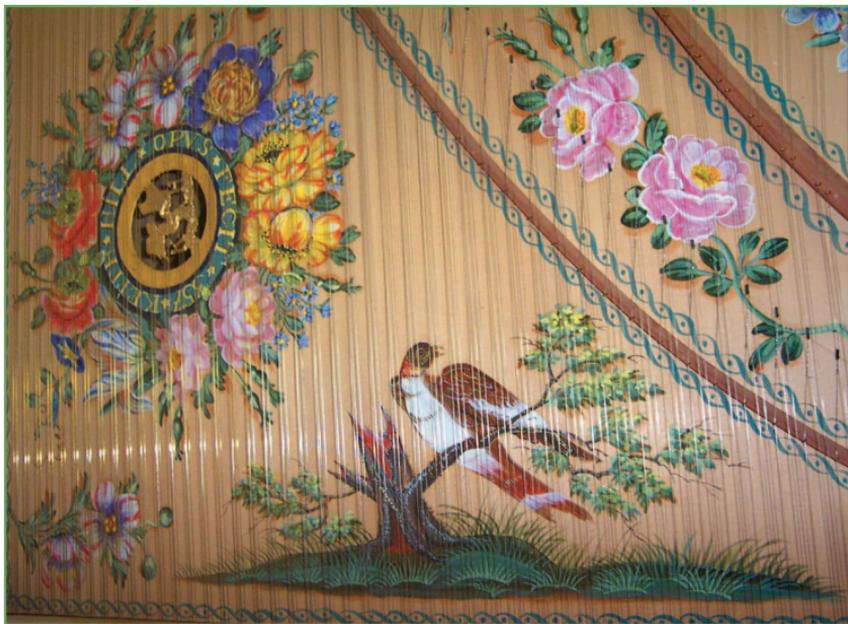
NAXOS

Elisabeth-Claude
JACQUET DE LA GUERRE

2 CDs

Harpichord Suites Nos. 1-6

Elizabeth Farr, Harpichord



Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre (c.1664/65-1729) Harpsichord Suites Nos. 1-6

Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre was famous during her lifetime both as a composer and harpsichordist. Women musicians of her era were successful as singers or harpsichordists, and sometimes even as composers of music for voice or harpsichord. Jacquet de La Guerre transcended these boundaries by composing music for larger forces as well, including an opera, a ballet, cantatas, solo and trio sonatas, and a *Te Deum*. She was one of only four French composers known to publish a book of harpsichord pieces in the seventeenth century, and the only French composer to publish harpsichord pieces in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Elisabeth-Claude was born into the Jacquet family of musicians and instrument builders. (There is an important harpsichord by a member of the Jacquet family in the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida.) She was introduced into the court of Louis XIV where she was declared to be a prodigy in the publication *Mercurie galant* (1677), which details extraordinary musical abilities for one so young, and because the account claimed that she was only ten years old and that she had been playing at court for four years, her birth date was believed to be 1667. It is now known, however, that she was baptized in March 1665. Accounts in print, such as this, tended to exaggerate the facts no matter how sensational they may already truly have been. In 1732, however, just three years after her death, she was hailed in *Le Parnasse français* as one of the most talented musicians of her era and was described as an imaginative composer, improvisateur, harpsichordist, organist, and singer with supremely good taste. Familiarity with her music shows that this praise is indeed no exaggeration.

Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet stayed with the royal court until it moved to Versailles. Remaining in Paris, she married the organist Marin de La Guerre in 1684. They had one son, a very precocious child who may

have been even more musically talented than his famous mother. Unfortunately both Marin and the child were dead by the early eighteenth century. Elisabeth-Claude continued to compose and give recitals in her home, for which she was renowned, to the end of her life. The inscription on the medal made in her honour following her death states: "With the great musicians I competed for the prize".

Jacquet de La Guerre's first book of harpsichord pieces (1687) was believed lost until the scholar Carol Henry Bates discovered a copy, possibly the only one surviving, in a Venetian library. There is also only one copy of the second book of harpsichord pieces (1707) known to exist today. No ornament table is to be found in either volume, and thus we must rely on ornament tables from other composers of the period and an understanding of the musical context in which each ornament symbol occurs.

You will hear additional ornamentation in this recording, during the repeated sections of the movements. The ornamentation used is of the type that can be indicated by ornament symbols as well as melodic ornamentation, or *passaggi*. The choices for the additional ornamentation used for this recording came from a study of Jacquet de La Guerre's own ornamental writing and her use of ornament symbols. The ornamentation is not intended to change her music, rather to follow her lead in exploring how ornamentation could enhance the Affect.

Jacquet de La Guerre's music is in the popular *style brisé*, an attractive arpeggiated, or broken, style borrowed from lute playing. In particular, "unmeasured" preludes, which initiate the dance movements, were composed in each key to emulate a special practical habit of lutenists, who customarily improvised "tuning" preludes as a means of testing the harmonies of the chosen key in order to isolate any strings requiring further tuning. This style of prelude

became an art form, and with Jacquet de La Guerre it is an expressive and dramatic musical vehicle that presents a virtuoso interpretive challenge for players of today.

Unmeasured preludes typically have no bar lines and, subsequently, no metre, with the exception of short *mesuré* or *mouvement* sections that occur in some preludes. In most unmeasured preludes the notation is exclusively in whole notes with broad sweeping slurs used to show the organization and possible duration of notes. Jacquet de La Guerre uses a combination of whole, quarter, and eighth notes (semibreves, crotchets and quavers) in her unmeasured preludes, as Lebègue and others do. It is uncertain what the relation of the note values is meant to be since they exist in a format that is without metre. What is clear, however, is that these preludes are meant to elicit a very personal interpretation from each player in every performance that is based on many things, only one of which is the actual notation. The characteristics of the key for each suite of pieces, characteristics described during the Baroque period by various authors, also contribute to an understanding of mood and pacing in Jacquet de La Guerre's music. Whatever one's interpretation, the preludes should sound coherent harmonically and melodically, but also as if they are being spontaneously improvised.

The *Tocade* that introduces the fourth suite of

pieces in F is unusual in the repertoire of the French *clavecinistes*. While it begins and ends with short unmeasured sections in the French style, the greater portion of the piece is metered and notated more precisely in the manner of a sectional Italian toccata. This in no way removes the impression of improvisation, albeit in a slightly different language.

There are as many varieties and shades of difference in Jacquet de La Guerre's harpsichord suites as there are movements. She clearly knows the inherent character of the different stylized dance forms in each suite, yet each example speaks with an individual expression that makes her music captivating. Well structured rhythmically and harmonically, her music never sounds staid or predictable. Composing in the *brisé* style allowed her to put individual notes precisely where she wanted them, suggesting a freedom in how harmonies are sounded and melodies unfold. Her use of dissonance and the placement of ornaments is often surprising, in the most pleasing way, and lends undeniable atmosphere and flair.

Because of these qualities, this music asks to be played in a way that is sensitive to and communicative of Affect, while sounding relaxed and unpremeditated. Each performance, as well as hearing, of each movement should be as fresh as if it were the first and as satisfying as if it were the last.

Elizabeth Farr

Elizabeth Farr

Elizabeth Farr specialises in the performance of keyboard music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She has performed solo recitals on the harpsichord, organ, and pedal harpsichord to critical acclaim throughout the United States and in Germany. Her performances as a collaborative artist, concerto soloist, and basso-continuo player have also earned high praise. Winner of the first prize in a number of competitions, Elizabeth Farr holds degrees in harpsichord and organ performance from Stetson University, the Juilliard School, and the University of Michigan, having studied with Paul Jenkins, Vernon de Tar, and Edward Parmentier. Currently she is on the faculty of the University of Colorado where she teaches harpsichord and organ, conducts the Early Music Ensemble, and offers classes in performance practices and basso-continuo playing.

The Harpsichord

Elizabeth Farr plays a French-style harpsichord, lent for the recording from the collection of Keith Hill, built in 2003 by Keith Hill in Manchester, Michigan. It was selected specifically because its sound was made to support the lute-like improvisatory playing style you hear in this recording. Its resonance, depth, blooming quality, and colour allow the player to “sing” each voice or line expressively and independently without breaking the overall flow of the music.

CD 1

Les Pièces de Clavecin (1687)

Suite No. 1 in D minor

1	Prélude	3:14
2	Allemande	3:56
3	Courante	2:39
4	[2 ^e] Courante	2:11
5	Sarabande	2:44
6	Gigue	2:12
7	Cannaris	2:43
8	Chaconne L'inconstante	3:29
9	Menuet	1:17

Suite No. 2 in G minor

10	Prélude	2:29
11	Allemande	3:10
12	Courante	2:23
13	2 ^e Courante	2:17
14	Sarabande	2:28
15	Gigue	1:55
16	[2 ^e] Gigue	2:31
17	Menuet	1:23
18	Double	0:34

Suite No. 3 in A minor

19	Prélude	2:19
20	Allemande	3:27
21	Courante	2:26
22	[2 ^e] Courante	2:30
23	Sarabande	2:14
24	Gigue	1:57
25	Chaconne	3:28
26	Gavotte	1:40
27	Menuet	1:35

65:11

CD 2

Suite No. 4 in F major

1	Tocade	3:06
2	Allemande	3:21
3	Courante	2:02
4	[2 ^e] Courante	2:17
5	Sarabande	2:26
6	Gigue	2:07
7	Cannaris	2:14
8	Menuet	1:23

Pièces de Clavecin qui peuvent se jouer sur le violon (1707)

Suite No. 5 in D minor

9	La flamande	5:57
10	Double	5:49
11	Courante	2:49
12	Double	2:50
13	Sarabande	3:22
14	Gigue	3:58
15	Double	4:35
16	[2 ^e] Gigue	4:04
17	Rigaudon	0:55
18	[2 ^e] Rigaudon	2:36
19	Chaconne	6:36

Suite No. 6 in G major

20	Allemande	3:56
21	Courante	2:01
22	Sarabande	3:20
23	Gigue	2:50
24	Menuet	1:18
25	Rondeau	1:49

77:39

18:55

43:29

15:14

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DDD

Playing Time
2:22:50

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 Booklet notes in English
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A child prodigy at the court of Louis XIV, Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre was famous during her lifetime both as a harpsichordist and a composer of a wide range of works. One of only four French composers known to publish a book of harpsichord pieces in the seventeenth century, de La Guerre wrote in the popular *style brisé*, an attractive arpeggiated, or broken, style borrowed from lute playing. Her captivating harpsichord suites contain as many varieties and shades of expression as there are movements.

Elisabeth-Claude
JACQUET DE LA GUERRE

(c. 1664/65-1729)

Les Pièces de Clavecin (1687)

Pièces de Clavecin qui peuvent se jouer sur le violon (1707)*

	CD 1	65:11
1-9	Suite No. 1 in D minor	24:26
10-18	Suite No. 2 in G minor	19:09
19-27	Suite No. 3 in A minor	21:36
	CD 2	77:39
1-8	Suite No. 4 in F major	18:55
9-19	Suite No. 5 in D minor*	43:29
20-25	Suite No. 6 in G major*	15:14

Elizabeth Farr, Harpsichord

A detailed tracklist can be found in the booklet.
 Recorded at Orum Hall, Valparaiso, USA, 3rd-6th August 2004
 Producer & Engineer: Wolfgang RübSam

Booklet Notes: Elizabeth Farr

Cover Image: *French-style harpsichord* (2003) by Keith Hill, Manchester, Michigan
 [Photo: Wolfgang RübSam]