

## COUPERIN Music for Two Harpsichords, Volume One

### Les Nations, Quatrième Ordre:

#### La Piémontoise (1726)\*

1	I	Gravement, et rondement –	1:00
2		Vivement –	0:52
3		Gravement, notes égales et rondement –	0:42
4		Vivement, et marqué –	1:19
5		Air, Gracieusement –	0:52
6		Second Air –	0:51
7		Air, Gracieusement –	0:55
8		Gravement, et marqué –	0:29
9		Légèrement	1:06
10	II	Allemande. Noblement, et sans lenteur	2:49
11	III	Courante	1:47
12	IV	Seconde Courante. Un peu plus gayément	2:12
13	V	Sarabande. Tendrement	2:22
14	VI	Rondeau. Gayément	2:55
15	VII	Gigue. Affectuëusement; quoy-que légèrement	2:10

### Pièces de Clavecin, Second Livre:

#### Sixième Ordre (1717)

16	V	Les Baricades Místérieuses. Vivement*	3:09
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### Concerts Royaux, Premier Concert (1722)

17	VI	Menuet en Trio	1:16
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### Pièces de Clavecin, Troisième Livre:

#### Seizième Ordre (1722)

18	VII	La Létiville	1:40
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### Les Nations, Second Ordre:

#### L'Espagnole (1726)\*

19	I	Gravement, et mesuré –	1:07
20		Vivement –	1:11
21		Affectuëusement –	1:04
22		Légèrement – repos –	1:01
23		Gayément – repos –	0:33
24		Air tendre –	0:54
25		Vivement, et marqué (Badinage pour le clavecin, si l'on veut)	2:08
26	II	Allemande. Gracieusement	3:00
27	III	Courante. Noblement	1:53
28	IV	Seconde courante. Un peu plus vivement	2:00
29	V	Sarabande. Gravement	1:38
30	VI	Gigue Lourée. Modérément	3:01
31	VII	Gavotte. Tendrement, sans lenteur	0:59
32	VIII	Rondeau. Affectuëusement	2:41
33	IX	Bourée. Gayément. Double de la Bourée précédente	1:12
34	X	Passacaille. Noblement et marqué	4:41

### Pièces de Clavecin, Troisième Livre,

#### Quatorzième Ordre (1722)

35	VI	La Julliet. Gayement	1:53
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### Concerts Royaux, Troisième Concert (1722)\*

36	VI	Muzette. Naïvement	2:10
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TT 62:21

\*FIRST RECORDING IN THIS VERSION

# François COUPERIN



## Les Nations – Sonates et Suites de Symphonies en Trio

## and Other Pieces for Two Harpsichords Volume One

Jochedwed Schwarz and  
Emer Buckley, harpsichords

FIRST RECORDING IN THIS VERSION

# FRANÇOIS COUPERIN, MUSIC FOR TWO HARPSICHORDS, VOLUME ONE

by Emer Buckley and Jochewed Schwarz

François Couperin was born in Paris in 1668, into a family of musicians. His father, Charles, was the youngest of three brothers (Louis, 1626–61; François, 1631–1708; and Charles, 1638–79), who came to the city from a small town, Chaumes-en-Brie, nearly 50 kilometres to the south-east. Having met one of the best-known musicians of the time, Jacques Champion de Chambonnières,<sup>1</sup> and played for his birthday celebrations, Louis, the eldest of the three boys, was invited to accompany him to Paris and had settled there by 1650 or 1651, thus beginning a new era in the musical life of the Couperin family.

Another Louis was to herald a new era for France: Louis XIV, 'Louis le Grand', the Sun King. Born in 1638, he was crowned at age five; but became *de facto* king only in 1661, at 23. As a child, with Cardinal Mazarin (who, rumour had it, was the young king's mother's lover) acting as regent, Louis witnessed the uprising of Parisian citizens, unable to pay the huge taxes forced upon them. The trauma of this uprising undoubtedly influenced his political approach: he had a clear idea of what had to be done to establish an impressive court and a strong state. Armed by his distrust of the Parisians, he set himself to building an impressive palace well outside Paris, on the site of a former royal hunting lodge in Versailles. Not only his architectural projects but also the visual arts, literature, music and the stage were all to serve the young King as tools for his political ambitions, with the aim of marking him as an enlightened ruler and the most powerful of European kings.

French music had to present a clear profile of good taste, *le bon goût*. Louis XIV's director of music, the Italian-born dancer, composer and conductor Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–87) was the man for the job: a brilliant musician, he understood the King's desire for outstanding representations of the state, and articulated this ambition in a luxurious musical style and form – and Louis XIV had the

<sup>1</sup> The Champions were also a musical family; Jacques (c. 1601–72) was a harpsichordist and dancer as well as a composer, and his teacher was an important element in establishing the French harpsichord tradition. After a glittering career at court, as both dancer and musician, his fortunes took a turn for the worse, and he ended his life in penury.



Recorded on 6–7, 13–14 and 20–24 October 2013 in the von Nagel harpsichord workshop in Paris  
Engineer: Jonathan Ducasse  
Producer: Jochewed Schwarz

Booklet notes by Emer Buckley and Jochewed Schwarz  
Design and layout: Paul Brooks, paulmbrooks@virginmedia.com

Executive producer: Martin Anderson

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the eighteenth-century French tradition, with two 8' registers, one 4' and a *jeu de luth*. We would like to express our gratitude to Reinhard von Nagel for allowing us to play and record in his workshop and for organising a concert for us in such magical surroundings.

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Emer Buckley was born in Dublin, Jochewed Schwarz in Tel Aviv. Both discovered the harpsichord during their university studies, Emer at University College Dublin, Jochewed at the Music Academy of Tel Aviv University. Emer continued her studies in France and Italy and then moved to Paris to begin a career as soloist and continuo player. She also teaches harpsichord and continuo bass at the Conservatoire de Lille. Jochewed studied at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis and in Paris, later returning to Israel where she lives today, performing, directing and producing concerts. Emer and Jochewed met at the von Nagel harpsichord workshop in Paris, and despite living in different countries they take every opportunity of making music together.



Photo: Véronique Allio-Vitrac

Emer Buckley



Photo: Sivan Farag

Jochewed Schwarz

means to support art lavishly. But Lully's music – which favoured sophisticated dance-forms and was pre-occupied with large scale, 'multi-disciplinary' compositions such as *ballets de cour*, *tragédies en musique* or *tragédies lyriques* – was subject to various rules and regulations, to specific forms and frameworks, from the precisely fixed number of musicians participating in the various royal ensembles through the five-part structure used in large-scale compositions, to the complicated art of embellishment, it all had to melt into an unmistakably French whole.

In 1653 Louis Couperin became an 'ordinaire de la musique de la Chambre du Roi'. He was also appointed organist of the church of St Gervais in the centre of Paris, a post that was to remain in the Couperin family until 1826. After his death in 1661, his brother Charles, François Couperin's father, succeeded him as organist of St Gervais until his death eighteen years later, at which time his eleven-year old only son, François, was too young to inherit the post.

As a child François Couperin studied music with his uncle François (later referred to as Couperin *l'ainé*, 'the elder', to distinguish him from his nephew, *le grand*) and then with Jacques Thomelin.<sup>2</sup> Couperin most probably worked with other musicians too, among them Michel Richard Delalande,<sup>3</sup> Guillaume Nivers<sup>4</sup> and Nicolas Lebègue.<sup>5</sup> Around 1685, at age eighteen, François Couperin in turn became organist at St Gervais.

At Versailles Lully dominated the scene, cultivating French music – mostly his own. But outside Versailles a different style was gaining in popularity in the 1680s. Italian musicians, instrumentalists as well as singers, performed sonatas, concerti, cantatas and even operas which were much shorter than French compositions, composed of simpler, less highly ornamented melodies. And they did it in a very direct, natural but virtuosic way, improvising in a way that would leave their audience breathless. Even the French court never entirely neglected Italian music, or lost interest in Italian musicians.

Apart from his desire to promote a French style in art and crafts, Louis XIV was fond of Italian music. He even had a *cabinet italien*, a group of Italian singers specially invited to live and perform in Versailles. This example was gradually followed, sometimes even surpassed, by other members of the nobility, who

<sup>2</sup> Thomelin (1640–93) was organist of the *Chapelle royale* from 1678. He, too, came from a musical family.

<sup>3</sup> Like Lully Delalande (1657–1726) was employed in the service of Louis XIV, to whose daughters he taught music, acting as director of the *Chapelle royale* from 1714 until his death. He wrote the orchestral suites which served as *Symphonies pour les soupers du Roy*; his grands motets were also much esteemed.

<sup>4</sup> Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers (c. 1642–1714) was likewise an organist and composer, as well as a reputed theorist. He was organist of Saint-Sulpice from the early 1650s until 1702 and one of the four organists of the *Chapelle royale* from 1678.

<sup>5</sup> Lebègue (c. 1631–1702, born in Laon and based in Paris from the early 1650s, established a reputation as one of the finest organists in the city. He was the *titulaire* of the organ of Saint-Merri and enjoyed a reputation also as composer and expert on organ-building, acting as consultant all over France.

also employed Italian musicians. Moreover, musicians from all over Europe travelled to Paris to study, and perform and sell their published works. But Lully was a clever entrepreneur who knew well how to make the best out of his effective monopoly at court; as much a centralist as his mighty king, he was able to ensure that no one else at court presented music in different styles. And the debate over French and Italian music continued to rage long after Lully's death in 1688: fourteen years later the writings of François Ragueneau,<sup>6</sup> praising Italian music to the skies, would be bitterly criticised by Le Cerf de la Viéville.<sup>7</sup>

Also in 1688 the royal family of Stuart, James II and his queen, Mary of Modena, forced to flee England, settled in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in a castle put at their disposal by Louis XIV. Both Versailles and Saint-Germain-en-Laye are between 20 and 30 km from Paris. The Stuarts maintained a lively interest in the arts as they had done in their London residences. They provided sacred music in the church and chamber music for court ceremonies, balls and special occasions as well as music for everyday activities. But as Mary Stuart's favourite music was Italian, this simpler, more direct music, usually with smaller-scale instrumentation (trio sonatas, cantatas) was well represented here. Their music-director, the Italian Innocenzo Fede,<sup>8</sup> had come with the Stuarts from London, and travelling Italian musicians were often invited to their court.

The French monarch and the exiled Queen had a good relationship. Louis not only gave the Stuarts the use of the château but also granted them a generous pension of 50,000 francs a month. This allowance, in addition to the money Mary was able to raise by gradually selling her personal jewellery and the Crown jewels, provided for family requirements, supported many English exiles and also funded the arts, a necessary status symbol among royal families.

From around 1690 onwards, François Couperin worked for the Stuart court, probably teaching and playing harpsichord and organ in court festivities, and here he would have been in contact with Italian music and musicians. It was more or less at this time that he began composing his chamber music.

<sup>6</sup> The enthusiasm of Ragueneau (1660–1722), an ecclesiastic, biographer and historian, for Italian music can be explained through his exposure to it during a two-year sojourn in Rome, from 1698; back in Paris he published his *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la Musique et les opéras* in 1702.

<sup>7</sup> The first part of the *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française, où, en examinant en détail les avantages des spectacles et le mérite des deux nations, on montre quelles sont les vraies beautés de la musique* by Jean-Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville (1674–1707), published in Brussels in 1704, was a *Réfutation du Parallèle des Italiens et des Français, publié en 1702 par l'abbé Ragueneau*.

<sup>8</sup> Fede (?1660–?1732), another scion of a musical family, was first an organist and tenor in Rome and, from 1683, *maestro di cappella* of San Giacomo degli Spagnuoli when, thanks to connections through his uncle Giuseppe, he was appointed the director of the Catholic choir of King James II in London, where he arrived in 1686. Having followed the Stuarts into exile, he remained at St Germain-en-Laye until 1719, when he seems to have returned to Rome. He drew a pension from the Stuarts until late 1732 and so can be assumed to have died around that time. As his own music is in the Italian style with French influences, it seems to be a reflection of his own experiences.

Is the title *Les Nations* to be understood as presenting a 'national profile', a 'national style' in music? In three out of four cases the titles were added at quite a late stage, since the opening Sonatas were under different names on Couperin's table for more than 30 years, and all the suites are typical French suites. The French, Spanish, Imperial (the Holy Roman Empire, which at the beginning of Louis's reign was recovering from its defeat in the Thirty Years' War) and Piedmont (Savoy, an independent duchy; in 1720 the duke of Savoy became king of Sardinia and Piedmont) were the four political powers that influenced Couperin's world for many years. In the Europe of 1726, the first, turbulent quarter-century had just ended. European courts, although often closely related through marriage, had been fighting one another for many years. Colossal sums, as well as many lives, were spent to keep control over land and resources. These four national powers had finally ceased to fight, and a balance between them was more or less established. The 58-year old Couperin, troubled by health problems, could have tried to interest his auditors in a new message: like Italian and French tastes, the four nations, different and yet similar in many ways, should all be equally honoured and respected. Or was he perhaps trying to send a message of peace, too?

### The Programme and Recording

This first of the two CDs in this series presents *La Piémontoise* [1]–[14] and *L'Espagnole* [18]–[34] and a few other pieces: the *Menuet en Trio* from the First of the *Concert Royaux* [16] and the *Muzette* from the *Troisième Concert* [36], as well as 'Les Baricades Mistérieuses' [15], 'La Létiville' [17] and 'La Julliet' [35], from the Second and Third Books of the *Pièces de clavecin*.<sup>15</sup> Most of the pieces from the *Concerts Royaux* and the *Pièces de clavecin* are trio-compositions, which can well be played by a harpsichord duo, as Couperin suggested. Some were written on two staves, others on three and only one – the *Allemande* for two harpsichords – on four. This last piece is a rare example of a composition which has an elaborated bass, a beautiful written-out figured bass in two parts. Following this example, we played 'Les Baricades Mistérieuses', a piece of outstanding, endless beauty, in a way which – we hope – would give it yet another harmonic dimension.

The recording was made in the Atelier von Nagel harpsichord workshop in Paris. Harpsichord-building reached a peak in eighteenth-century France with builders such as Blanchet, Taskin, Colesse and Kroll. The splendid instruments used for this recording are both double manual harpsichords in

<sup>15</sup> The second disc (Toccatà Classics TOCC 0258) will contain *La Française* and *L'Impériale* from *Les Nations*, the *Forlane* that concludes the Fourth of the *Concerts Royaux*, as well as an *Allemande à deux clavecins* and the *Musètes de Choisi et de Taverni* also from the Second and Third Books of the *Pièces de clavecin*.

AVEÛ,  
de L'Auteur au Public.

*Il y à quelques Années, déjà, qu'une Partie de ces Trios a été Composée: il y en ut quelques Manuscrits répandus dans le monde; dont je me déffie par la Négligence des Copistes. De tems à autres Jen ay augmentés le Nombre; et je crois que les Amateurs du Vray, en Seront satisfaits. La Première Sonade de ce Recueil fut auscy la première que je Composay; et qui, ait été Comparée en France. L'Histoire même en est Singulière.*

*Charmé de celles du Signor Corelli, dont j'aimeroay Les Oeuvres tant que je Vivroay; Auroy que Les Ouvrages françois de Monsieur de Lulli, j'hazarday d'en Composer vne, que je fis exécuter dans le Concert où j'avois entendu celles de Corelli; Connoissant L'Apréti des françois pour Les Nouveautés-étrangeres, Sur toutes-choes; et me Déffiant de moy-même, je me rendis, par un petit mensonge-officieux, un très bon Service. Je feignis, qu'un parent que j'ay, effectivement, auprès du Roy de Sardaigne, M'avoit envoyé vne Sonade-d'un nouvel Auteur italien: Je Rangeai les Lettres de mon Nom, de façon que cela forma un Nom italien que je mis à la place. La Sonade fut devoris avec empressement; et j'en tiray L'apologie. Cela cependant M'encouragea, j'en fis d'autres, et mon Nom italien se Mâtura, Sous le Masque, de grands applaudissemens. Mes Sonades heureusement, prirent après de faveur pour que L'équivoque ne m'ait point fait rougir. j'ay Comparé ces premières Sonades avec celles que j'ay faites depuis, et ny ay pas changé, ny augmenté grand-chose.*

*J'y ay joint seulement de grandes Suites de Pièces aux quelles les Sonades ne Servent que de Préludes, ou despieces d'introductions.*

*Je Souhaite, que le Public-des-intéressés, en Soit content: Car il y à toujours des Contradicteurs, qui sont plus à redouter que les bons Critiques, dont on tire Souvent, contre leur intention, des avis très Salutaires. Les premiers sont Méprisables; et je m'acquie, d'avance, envers eux; avec vneur. Il me reste un Nombre avés Considerable de ces Trios pour en former dans la Suite un Volume auscy Complet que Celuy-cy.*

Couperin's preface to *Les Nations*, where he explains how he composed and played an Italian sonata under an alias

It would have been presented in Versailles and Saint-Germain-en-Laye as well as at concert performances for the wealthy in their private mansions – *hôtels particuliers* – in Paris. These compositions included four trio sonatas, among them the four-part sonata *La Steinkerque*, celebrating the defeat of William III of Orange by Louis XIV at the Battle of Steinkerque in 1692.

François Couperin's former teacher, Thomelin, passed away in 1693, leaving vacant one of the posts of *Organiste de la Chapelle du Roy* in Versailles and so, after a successful audition, Couperin entered the service of the King as one of the four 'Royal Church Organists'. A year later he was appointed *Professeur – maître de composition, et d'accompagnement de Monseigneur Le Dauphin*, the king's grandson, Louis, Duc de Bourbon, father of the future Louis XV.<sup>9</sup> Shortly afterwards Couperin had under his supervision the musical education of six other younger members of the royal family, establishing his reputation and gaining him many private pupils among the Parisian *grand monde* of that time. He was now extremely busy.

Two music shops opened in Paris in 1692 and 1697, since the purchase of printed music was gradually becoming more and more popular. People would gather in private homes, where composers could present what they had written and music-lovers what they had bought. Descriptions of such events reveal that these *salons* gave composers the opportunity to attract the attention of fellow musicians to their newly composed pieces as well as to present them to their students. Some of the *salon* owners were musicians, among them François Couperin himself; others were good amateurs who cared about music. There were also rich patrons, nobility and courtiers, who used music as a status symbol. Reports reveal that Italian music, with its small-scale demands, was also much appreciated in these private performances.

The Stuarts were waiting for a change in their destiny. For three years after the death of her husband in 1701, Queen Mary of Modena acted as regent in exile for her son, James III. Another decade would pass with the Stuarts vainly attempting to recover their thrones in Britain. In 1715 James III was obliged to leave France, as a result of British demands at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13). Mary remained in France, living in solitude and poverty, until her death in 1718.

From the beginning of the eighteenth century the Stuarts' financial means to support a group of resident musicians gradually swindled away. But they did manage to assemble a rich music-library. Manuscript collections of music by Alessandro Scarlatti, Stradella, Corelli, Carissimi and others were held there, mostly vocal music but also sonatas designed for domestic use.

During the last fifteen years of his reign, the aging Louis XIV was less available for the pleasures of Versailles, being pre-occupied with politics, economic matters and military conflicts, all of which left their mark on him and on French society, and influenced life at court. At the end of the War of the Spanish

<sup>9</sup> His son and grandson having died before him, Louis XIV was succeeded by his great-grandson.

Succession, in 1714, Louis XIV succeeded in confirming the coronation, in 1700, of his grandson as Philip V of Spain. But France had to assure the allies<sup>10</sup> that there would be no unification of the Spanish and French kingdoms. As previously, there was a heavy price to pay for long years of fighting through an increase in the national debt. Other adversities crowded in. Contagious diseases – smallpox and measles – took their toll of human lives, including both the King's son and grandson. Unusually bad weather caused famine. The arts lost much of their lustre in Versailles. Fewer musicians were engaged, and instead the courtiers had to take part in performances of already existing French compositions. Italian music, once taboo, was often played in the private royal chambers, with the King's consent.

It was only in 1713 that François Couperin was granted the *Privilège du Roy*, the royal consent allowing him to print, publish and sell his music. Couperin's first printed chamber-music collection was for the voice: the *Leçons de ténèbres* (1714). Then followed the *Concerts Royaux* in 1722, and *Les Goûts-réunis ou Nouveaux Concerts* in 1724. In 1725 came *Le Parnasse*, containing two *Apothéoses*, tributes to Lully (French, if by adoption) and Corelli (Italian) and a musical essay on the unification of the French and Italian musical styles, a subject that had concerned him for nearly thirty years. In 1726 he published *Les Nations*, a collection of four *Ordres*, each consisting of a trio sonata followed by a suite: *La Française* in E minor, *L'Espagnole* in C minor, *L'Impériale* in D minor and *La Piémontoise* in G minor.

His main interest, musically but perhaps also commercially, lay with harpsichord music and over the course of almost two decades he brought out what would become a four-book collection, containing more than 230 pieces of music for solo harpsichord, arranged in the form of suites, which he also called *Ordres*; the four books were published respectively in 1713, 1717, 1722 and 1730. In 1716 Couperin published his famous treatise on harpsichord-playing, *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*. In 1717 he purchased the post of royal harpsichordist, *claveciniste de la Chambre*, from the son of Jean-Henri d'Anglebert.

Louis XIV died in 1715, after 72 years of reign. The new king, Louis XV, as his great-grandfather before him, was only five years old. A regent had therefore to be appointed: Philippe II de Bourbon, a special figure on the French cultural and musical scene from around 1690 until his death in 1723. He was a nephew of Louis XIV, the son of his younger brother who had the title Duke of Chartres, later Duke of Orléans. Philippe was a composer (he wrote two operas) and also played the flute, viol and harpsichord; he often collaborated with distinguished French composers and took part in performances of music. He was especially fond of Italian music. Having served in Turin and Venice as an excellent military commander,

<sup>10</sup> The Grand Alliance, founded in 1686 as the League of Augsburg, was a coalition of European powers intended to halt the expansionist policies of Louis XIV. Over the years, until its dissolution in 1721, its members included Austria, Bavaria, Brandenburg, the Dutch Republic, England, the Holy Roman Empire, Ireland, the Rheinland Palatinate, Portugal, Savoy, Saxony, Scotland, Spain and Sweden.

LES NATIONS  
SONADES; et Suites de SIMPHONIES  
EN TRIO.  
*En quatre Livras Séparés; pour la Comodité  
des Académies de Musiques;  
Et des Concerts particuliers.*

PAR  
MONSIEUR COUPERIN.  
*Organiste de la Chapelle du ROY; ordinaire  
de la Musique de la Chambre de sa MAJESTE,  
pour le Clavecin &c.  
Prix en blanc 10<sup>l</sup>  
pour les quatre parties.*

A PARIS.

L'AUTEUR au coin de la rue neuve des bons Enfans,  
proche la place des Victoires.  
Chez Le Sieur BOWIN à la Règle d'or, rue Saint Honoré,  
vis-à-vis la rue des Bourdonnois.

Avec Privilège du Roy.  
1726. *Gravé par L. Buis.*

*Steinkerque*, *La Sultane* and *La Superbe* (the second names are those given by Couperin for the printed edition). Unfortunately they survive only in two non-autograph manuscripts: one, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, contains four works in open score and the other, in the Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon, contains four part-books of six compositions. The four-part edition of *Les Nations* bears no indication of instrumentation. The part-books are simply marked: *I. Dessus*, *2e. Dessus*, *Basse d'archet*, *Basse chiffrée*. But an announcement of the forthcoming publication of *Les Nations* in the important French magazine *Mercur de France* (1727) mentions a work for two violins, viol and continuo bass. In the printed edition of *Les Nations* there are numerous discrepancies between the *basse d'archet* part and that of the keyboard *basse chiffrée*, the former containing a considerable number of ornaments not found in the keyboard part. These discrepancies are logical when the music is played by an ensemble, the viol part thus taking on a more ornamental role than the keyboard continuo, the primary function of which is rhythmic and harmonic. When the music is played on two harpsichords, these discrepancies become a source of confusion and unwanted dissonance. We therefore made the decision to unify the bass ornaments for the purpose of this recording.

The rivalry between Italian and French styles is mentioned in Couperin's collection of suites *Les goûts-réunis ou Nouveaux Concerts* (1724). Here again is music to be played on all instruments, 'à l'usage de toutes les sortes d'instruments de musique, augmentés d'une grande Sonade en Trio intitulée Le Parnasse ou l'Apothéose de Corelli'. In the preface Couperin declares that

Italian and French tastes have shared for a long time (in France) the Republic of Music; as far as I am concerned, I have always esteemed what deserved esteem, without excepting either composers or nations.

An Italian sonata – *suonata da chiesa* – was a four-movement instrumental composition with clearly defined sections, usually slow-fast-slow-fast, each presenting a different musical idea or dance-pattern, with varied moods and atmosphere. This type of composition was popular and used, as its name suggests, both for religious ceremonies and in concerts. It would not be baseless to assume that what Couperin heard, as he describes in his preface to the collection, were pieces of Corelli's Op. 1 or Op. 3, published in Rome in, respectively, 1681 and 1689.

Each of the four *Sonades et Suites de Simphonies* of *Les Nations* opens with such an Italian *suonata*, followed by a French dance-suite with the usual succession of allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue. All four suites contain a pair of courantes: a slow, noble courante followed by a faster, livelier one. 'Modern' dances such as the bourrée, gavotte or menuet complete the suites. The rondeau, a song-like piece with a refrain, is also present, as is the larger-scale chaconne or passacaille built on a repeated bass pattern.

he met many musicians whose patron he would later become. In his household French and Italian musicians worked side by side. Philippe, who was living in the Palais Royal, had the royal family – and the entire court – move from Versailles to Paris. The young Louis XV was installed in the Tuileries palace.

In Paris, music – as well, of course, as literature, the visual arts, dance and theatre – attracted the attention of rich and noble French citizens. The various palaces as well as all the major churches employed musicians, with many opportunities to perform and play. In the Parisian *salons*, in private mansions, people would enjoy dinners in the company of family and friends, always with some distinguished guests, prominent musicians who were among the courtiers in Versailles. After listening to new music, they perhaps tried playing it 'on the spot', as a pastime to enjoy in good company, or danced to it, chatting and gossiping as they drank wine and admired the new sounds and tendencies. Unlike Versailles, Paris welcomed musicians from all over the world: there was much music to listen to, and musical styles were able to blend more easily with one another.

By 1726 Louis XV (born in 1710), crowned only four years earlier, was again living in Versailles. Musical activities in court had not fully resumed. The king had little interest in them but the Queen, the Polish Marie-Catherine-Sophie-Félicité Leszczinska, a harpsichordist herself, was very fond of music, although unfortunately unable to support a large-scale musical household. In Paris a new kind of concert was invented: the *Concert spirituel*, established by Anne Danican Philidor.<sup>11</sup> The performances presented a varied repertoire, including choral and orchestral works, solo pieces and chamber music, and were open to all. It was probably in *salon* concerts or in the *Concerts spirituels*, that Couperin and his pupils, family members or friends, played Couperin's chamber music on two harpsichords.

### Performing Trio Works on Two Harpsichords

The most important source suggesting Couperin's chamber music be played on two harpsichords is his own preface to the printed edition of his *Concert Instrumental sous le titre d'Apothéose composé à la mémoire immortelle de l'incomparable Monsieur de Lully* (1725). The *Apothéose* is a trio sonata for two melodic instruments, with separate parts for the bowed string and keyboard continuo, a scoring identical to that of *Les Nations*. The preface makes it clear that Couperin himself performed the music in this way:

<sup>11</sup> Anne Danican Philidor (1681–1728) was a member of yet another family of French musicians, the Danicans or Danican Philidors (the name is Scots in origin, being derived from Duncan). The *Concerts spirituels* he founded (Anne is here a male name) were one of the world's first series of public concerts and lasted from 1725 to 1790; they were intended to provide entertainment when the major Paris venues were closed during periods of religious observation. Anné's much younger half-brother François-André Danican Philidor (1726–95), an important composer of *opéras comiques*, was also renowned as a chess master.

This trio, as well as the *Apothéose de Corelli*, and the complete book of trios which I hope to publish next July, may be played on two harpsichords, as well as on all other instruments. I play them this way with my family and with my students, and it works very well, by playing the *premier dessus* and the bass on one harpsichord and the *second dessus* with the same bass in unison on the other one. It is true that this requires two copies of the score instead of one, and also two harpsichords. But I find that it is often easier to assemble these two instruments than four working musicians. Two spinets in unison will do just as well (although of slighter effect). The only thing to which attention must be paid is the length of the notes because of the ornaments which must fill them out; bowed instruments sustain the sound whereas the harpsichord cannot do so; therefore the *cadences* or *tremblements* and other embellishments must be very long; and if this is the case the performance will appear no less agreeable, especially as the harpsichord has a brilliance and clarity scarcely found in other instruments.

The same idea appears also as a footnote to ‘La Julliet’ 35 in the Fourteenth *Ordre* in the Third Book of harpsichord pieces:

This piece may be played on various instruments. But also on two harpsichords or spinets: that is to say the *Sujet* with the bass on one, and the same bass with the *contre-partie* on the other. The same is true for the other pieces in trio scoring.

In the Third Book Couperin also mentions that the two *Musettes* of the Fifteenth *Ordre* may be played as ‘*pièces croisées*’, that is, by two players using a double manual harpsichord with the coupler withdrawn, one player on the lower manual playing the top part and the bass line, the other playing the second melodic part on the upper manual, ‘but these musettes are suitable for all sorts of instruments in unison.’

The tradition of playing a work in trio scoring on two harpsichords is affirmed in the *Pièces de Clavessin* by Couperin’s contemporary, Gaspard Le Roux,<sup>12</sup> who in 1705 published a collection of seven harpsichord suites. The preface mentions that they may be performed by other instruments and also on two harpsichords: ‘The majority of these pieces work well for two harpsichords, one playing the *sujet*, the other the *contre-partie*’. On the lower half of each page of the collection Le Roux prints three separate lines under the solo harpsichord part, i.e., two melodic lines, *sujet* and *contre-partie*, plus a figured bass line which can be used for the keyboard continuo if the work is played by a mixed ensemble. As mentioned in his preface, the last six pieces of the book have separate written-out second harpsichord parts, so that players can follow his examples when making their own arrangements.

<sup>12</sup> For someone responsible for one of the most important collections of French harpsichord music, Le Roux (c. 1660–c. 1707) left surprisingly little biographical evidence: apart from the music itself, there is only a single reference to him in contemporary documentation.

The idea that music could be played by all available instruments was current throughout the eighteenth century, with composers keen to reach as large an audience as possible.<sup>13</sup> Couperin mentions this latitude both for the chamber-music and the solo-harpsichord pieces. For ‘Le Rossignol en amour’, from the Fourteenth *Ordre*, in the Third Book, for example, he suggests a flute to replace the right hand of the harpsichord part: ‘This nightingale is superlative on the Flute when it is well played.’

Of course, the possibilities and limitations of the instruments must be taken into account, and the playing adapted accordingly. In the preface to his *Concerts Royaux* Couperin mentions the use of various instruments, even naming the fellow musicians who played with him at court:

The pieces which follow are of a different nature to those I have published up to now. They are suitable not only for the harpsichord but also for the violin, flute, oboe, viol and the bassoon. I had written them for the small chamber concerts to which Louis XIV summoned me almost every Sunday of the year. These pieces were performed by Messieurs Duval, Philidor, Alarius and Dubois: I myself played the harpsichord. If they are as much to the taste of the public as they were to the late King, I have enough of them to publish several further complete volumes. I have arranged them according to keys and have kept the title by which they were known at Court in 1714 and 1715.

The printed edition of *Les Nations* appeared in 1726. Three *Sonades* out of four are almost identical to his earliest ‘Italianate’ trios: *La Pucelle*, *La Visionnaire* and *L’Astrée* from around 1690. His preface explains that the changes he made were few and unimportant: ‘I have added only the large suites of pieces for which the *Sonades* only act as preludes or as kinds of introduction.’ Couperin further explains that he became interested in the Italian sonata because he was ‘Charmed by those of Signor Corelli, whose works I will love as long as I live, as well as the French works of Monsieur de Lulli’. He then adds that he composed such a sonata which he performed in – we presume – a salon where music by Corelli was also heard. Being reluctant to reveal himself as the composer, knowing how critical of foreign music his French audience might be, he tells the reader that he chose to use a fake composer’s name, an anagram of his own, inspired by one of his relatives who worked as a musician at the court of Sardinia (he doesn’t give the name itself). The music was well received, Couperin continues, and he continued to compose sonatas. Seven such sonatas have come down to posterity<sup>14</sup> with different names: the above-mentioned *La Pucelle/La Française*, *La Visionnaire /L’Espagnole*, *L’Astrée/La Piémontoise*, *L’Impériale* and *La*

<sup>13</sup> The idea was revived in the early twentieth century with Percy Grainger’s concept of ‘elastic scoring’, which allowed his compositions to be performed on whatever instruments were to hand.

<sup>14</sup> One wonders what happened to the ‘very considerable number of these trios’ enough of which remained, as Couperin states in his preface, ‘to form a volume as complete as this one.’