

Program Notes

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In 1653 Louis XIV danced in *Le Ballet de la Nuit* alongside the composer, musician, and conductor **Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)**, and choreographer and dancer Beauchamp. The significance is that the talents of the artists crossed boundaries and each was proficient in the other's art form. Specifically, the musician choreographed dances and the dancer composed music. The dance and dance music that evolved from their early collaborations would later influence the movements of the Baroque music suite: courante, sarabande, bourée, menuet, gavotte, gigue, etc. All were dances with specific time signatures, rhythms, tempo ranges, "characters," and step vocabularies.

Ballroom and theatre dances were recorded in a system of dance notation devised by French dancing masters and first published in Paris in 1700, providing courts all over Europe easy access to the most fashionable French dances. The notation ensured French domination of this art form that evolved into Classical Ballet. The notation itself conveys floor patterns, music, steps, a clear marking for music measure divisions, and some indication of step timing within the measure. Instructions on specific dance style, arm movements, step execution, and ballroom etiquette were presented verbally in dancing manuals. The relatively simple steps used in the ballroom served as the basis for more difficult and elaborate steps used in the theatre. There are three notated dances to the Passacaille from *Armide*: two published in England and this version published in Paris in c.1713. The title indicates that it was danced by the celebrated Paris Opéra dancer "Mlle. Subligny en Angleterre de l'opéra d'Armide" (Miss Subligny in England in the opera *Armide*). The "Sarabande de Monsieur Beauchamp" is from an undated manuscript and provides a beautiful example of ornamented and rhythmically intricate theatrical dance technique. Louis XIV's personal dancing master, Pierre Beauchamp, may be referenced in the title. "Aimable vainqueur" is one of three surviving dances to a beautiful aria from the opera *Hésione* by **André Campra (1660-1744)**. This beloved ballroom dance was choreographed by Louis

Guillaume Pécour and published in 1701.

While modern audiences are generally more familiar with baroque chamber music, than baroque dance, the sonatas on this program by Handel and Corelli take on different meaning when juxtaposed directly with other danced pieces. After all, much of instrumental music has its origins in dance. The opus 5 trio sonatas of **George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)** were likely assembled by the London publisher John Walsh from a variety of different sources of Handel's theatrical music. In particular, in the G Major sonata, Op. 5, No. 4, the Gigue was taken from his opera-ballet *Terpsichore* (1734), which was written for the French dancer Marie Sallé, who had appeared in a performance of Rebel's *Caractères de la Dance* in London in 1725, directed by none other than Handel. The *Passacaille* and the *Menuet* were derived from *Radamisto* and *Alcina* respectively. The trio sonatas of **Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)** are not directly related to music written for dancing, and yet his chamber sonatas, as opposed to his church sonatas, largely consist of movements written in the style of dances, or at least bearing the names of dances. The *Allemanda* in his Op. 4, No. 8, with its *moto perpetuo* bass line does not have the repose one expects in an allemande, and the final *Sarabanda* is more like what we would expect from a gigue.

Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747) composed *Les Caractères de la Dance* in 1715, the year of Louis XIV's death. It is a choreographed *fantaisie*, which several famous ballerinas of the Académie Royal used to showcase their talents. Françoise Prévost was the first to interpret this suite of dances, giving each dance a plot on the theme of Love. Prévost's pupil Anne Cuppi de Camargo performed the piece at her Paris Opéra debut in 1726 as pure dance to exhibit her impeccable technique. Marie Sallé performed the piece first as a solo and later in 1728 as a duet with M. Antoine Bandieri Laval. Choreographies for *Les Caractères de la Dance* were not preserved in notation, so we have choreographed the *fantaisie* using the themes created by Prévost in 1715 as a guide.

- *Courante* - an elderly lover, mocked by a young coquette, asks Amour to let him "believe himself loved"
- *Menuet* - a child of twelve, already feeling the ardours of love, asks Amour to put her mother to sleep so she can meet her lover

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- *Bourrée* - a shepherdess in love begs Amour to open the eyes of a shepherd who disdains her charms
- *Chaconne* - a fop requests neither hearts nor favors from Amour, but only the reputation of being wealthy and lucky
- *Sarabande* - a deceived lover complains to Amour and requests advice
- *Gigue* - a mad young thing, sweeping up all hearts that come her way, asks Amour for a lovable shepherd who won't get worn out dancing with her
- *Rigaudon* - a wealthy fool assures Amour that "without sighing or languishing he has his choice of beauties" in view of his money
- *Passepied* - an abandoned lover requests Amour to give him strength to feign indifference in the hope that coolness will bring back his flighty mistress
- *Gavotte* - a young girl who has dismissed her lover cries and wishes for his prompt return
- *Loure* - a lover, disciple of Bacchus, asks Amour to let him go on drinking, since wine often induces love
- *Musette* - a young woman in love is happy she has no favors to ask, and renders homage to the God of Love

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764) was the foremost French violin virtuoso of his day and a noted dancer. He was appointed *ordinaire de la musique du roi* in 1733 by Louis XV, but his fiery, uncompromising personality made it difficult for him to accept obediently his place in the court's musical hierarchy. In 1737 he fought with his rival, Jean-Pierre Guignon, over the leadership of the king's orchestra. An agreement was reached that the two would take turns in alternate months as leader, but, after one month directing, Leclair resigned because he could not stand the idea of playing second to Guignon. Leclair's style remained unusually consistent throughout his career, so it is possible that he actually wrote much of his music early in his life, refining pieces bit by bit as it was time to publish them. Consequently, his style was daring in the 1730s but was beginning to be considered old fashioned by the time of the publication of

his Op. 12 Sonatas in the late 1740s, which were unusually scored for two violins without bass. After the breakup of his second marriage to the music engraver Louise-Cathérine Roussel, around 1758, Leclair moved to a seedy, and relatively dangerous, part of Paris. After living there several years, he was returning home late one night when he was stabbed in the entrance to his house and by such pure overwhelming rage killed. No one was ever charged, but the murderer was apparently his nephew, the violinist Guillaume-François Vial, with whom he had recently had a dispute.

Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) is best known for his learned counterpoint and his theoretical work *Gradus ad parnassum (The Steps to Parnassus)*, which was first published in 1725 in Vienna at imperial expense. It went through numerous printings and translations. This text was used extensively by Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven both in their training and teaching. The Trio Partita in G minor is one of twelve that he wrote for two violins and continuo. His idiosyncratic rhythms and syncopations add a unique flavor to his music. This is apparent in the final, Italianate *Passacaglia* of this Partita, which has an earthier, more rustic character than the courtly French-style passacailles heard elsewhere in this program.

Dances with a Spanish flavor became popular at the French court, not surprising since Louis XIV's marriage to Spanish-born María-Teresa was just one of many royal alliances to straddle the Pyrenees. Spanish characters appeared in the French theater and it became fashionable to dance Spanish *entrées* while playing castanets. French choreographers such as Raoul-Auger Feuillet not only notated the steps and the corresponding music to these popular dances, but also supplied specific castanet rhythms for the dancers. This version of *Les Folies d'Espagne*, or *The Follies of Spain*, is a compilation of existing *folie* choreographies by Feuillet and Louis-Guillaume Pécour, dancing master and choreographer at the Paris Opéra, set here to a stunning set of folia variations by **Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)**. With this sonata, issued as the closing piece in his Op. 1 sonatas, Vivaldi was accepting the challenge of Arcangelo Corelli and throwing down the gauntlet to others.