




Rameau

*pièces de clavecin
en concerts*

ENSEMBLE
Baroque NOUVEAU



A PROF. JOHNSON 24-BIT  RECORDING

Rameau pièces de clavecin en concert

Concert No. 4 11:26

- 1 La Pantomime 5:01
- 2 L'Indiscreète 1:41
- 3 La Rameau 4:42

Concert No. 5 13:08

- 4 La Forqueray 4:45
- 5 La Cupis 5:47
- 6 La Marais 2:34

Concert No. 1 9:45

- 7 La Coulicam 3:43
- 8 La Livri 2:34
- 9 Le Vézinet 3:27

Concert No. 2 17:45

- 10 La Laborde 5:35
- 11 La Boucon 4:52
- 12 L'Agiçante 2:34
- 13 Menuets 4:42

Concert No. 3 12:24

- 14 La La Poplinière 4:41
- 15 La Timide 4:59
- 16 Tambourin en rondeau 2:43

Baroque NOUVEAU

Charles Sherman, *harpsichord*
Anthony Martin, *violin*
Stephen Schultz, *baroque flute*
Josh Lee, *viola da gamba*

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Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concerts*

— A Player's Perspective

The title of this collection of five suites comprising 16 pieces that Rameau published in 1741 is perfectly apt, yet to an English-speaking listener over 250 years later it carries a misleading connotation. *En concerts* tells us that the pieces are solos for harpsichord but with other instruments playing along, concertedly. The pieces are not intended for concert performance as we know it today, nor are they concertos playing off the skill of a single virtuoso against a group of subsidiary instrumentalists. Rather, they are for the entertainment of a flexible group of players themselves, and perhaps a few privileged listeners in the same or an adjacent room. As we can see in the original score, the accompanying parts are full sized, not merely cues for the harpsichordist as in a present-day keyboard score.

LA COULICAM. I

Violon. S.

PREMIER

Rondement

Viole. S.

CONCERT

Clavecin.



This suggests that all players read directly from the harpsichord's music desk, as we can see in many illustrations from the 18th century.

There are advantages to such an arrangement over and above the intimacy of proximity. For one thing, ensemble is enhanced by a direct view of the hands of the harpsichordist at work, but even more importantly, a certain give-and-take approach to orchestration is made possible. It is easy to imagine the interaction among a group of musicians all reading from score as in the engraving seen here. Via a wink, a nudge, a quick indication with finger or bow, an impromptu instrumentation would

emerge “on the fly” with the possibility of further adjustments during repetitions.

The complete title of the original edition is *Pièces de clavecin en concerts, avec un violon ou une flute, et une viole ou un deuxième violon*. In his preface Rameau gives further hints that suggest varieties of instrumentation extending beyond the mere substitution of flute for violin. He includes four examples of how the pieces might be played as solos and suggestions for adapting others, writing that they all “lose nothing by being played on the harpsichord alone.” His second violin part, for use in the absence of the viol, is not merely a substitute, but indeed has some musical material not found in the gamba part. Thus we have tried to exploit all the possibilities suggested if not explicitly sanctioned by the original published material, resulting in what we hope is a

kaleidoscopic view of these suites, one that reflects the circumstances of their performance in the first part of the 18th century.

There is a curious disparity between the upper and lower accompanying parts. Rameau provides suggestions to a flute player on how to adapt the violin part to the range of the flute and how to treat the occasional multi-note violin chords. Perhaps reflecting the general level of playing in France, the upper part does not require any extremes of virtuosity. Not so, however, for the viola da gamba: Rameau's part offers awkward string crossings, dizzying leaps, and occasional unplayable chords. Rameau seems to acknowledge these impossible chords in his preface, where without apology or explanation he instructs the gambist which notes of the chords in *La Laborde* below to play or omit.



Why would the master orchestrator of the 18th century write music impossible to perform as notated? In pre-revolutionary France gambists and harpsichordists vied for the heroic position occupied by violinists in Italy, much as pianists and violinists were in competition for fame and fortunes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Music for solo viol was composed almost exclusively by gambists themselves, so that players' contributions to technique and expressive devices would appear in their own compositions as challenges to their rivals and successors. Likewise the keyboard repertory—Rameau, for instance, in the preface to his 1724 collection of harpsichord solos boasted of “*batteries* which are to be found only in my pieces, since nothing like them has appeared anywhere else.” By writing such difficult music for the gambist in 1741 was Rameau throwing down the gauntlet to his friend and rival Forqueray? And did Forqueray

attempt to return the provocation by publishing difficult arrangements for solo harpsichord of his viol pieces six years later in 1747?

Of course throughout Europe for the past four centuries the true heroes of musical performance have trod the operatic stage in costume while the instruments labored anonymously in the pit below. Rameau was successor to Lully as the leading composer of French opera, so writing chamber music for instrumentalists was a bagatelle, a demonstration of his versatility and an opportunity to re- or pre-cycle some of his better operatic tunes. The *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* are his only instrumental chamber pieces, but they represent the fertile powers of invention that make Rameau's operas fascinating even to present-day listeners. Eighteenth-century French opera was as much about dance as song; in fact, many a song was danced as well as sung on stage, and so it is part of the pleasure of listening to Rameau to imagine the choreography of each piece, whether as a solo, *pas de deux* or as a stage full of interweaving dancers, the patterns they make in space reflecting the patterns Rameau has woven into the medium of duration.

Some of the *Pièces* are titled as dances (*Menuets*, *Tambourins*) and others as theatrical or literary characters (*La Coulicam*, *L'Agaçante*, *La Timide*, *Pantomimes*, *L'Indiscrete*), but most, even though clearly dances or arias, are named for individuals or families of Rameau's friends, patrons, and colleagues. He himself writes in the Preface that he allowed some members of his circle to name pieces themselves, implying that they were not composed as specific portraits of those individuals but rather given to them as aural keepsakes. Thus, we performers do not need to know or infer personality traits or quirks based on the names of the individual pieces. As Albert Fuller wrote, "The titles are starting points for our listening fantasies; letting Rameau's imagery direct and then unleash our interior worlds may well be the closest way to join his genius today!"



It was just over twenty years ago that Albert Fuller wrote the liner notes for his third recording of Rameau's solo works, a recording produced and engineered by the same team that created this recording. Therein he recalled his first hearing of Rameau during a 1946 radio broadcast by Wanda Landowska: "From that second on," wrote Albert, "examples of heroes of artistic activity, from many times and places, have always acted, sung and danced in my private, interior theatre, delighting and ceaselessly beckoning me to follow in their train." Inspired for life, he became himself a hero of artistic activity, making the first ever recording of Rameau's complete solo works, founding the Aston

Magna Foundation for Music and instigating its historic first complete recording in America of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos on period instruments, creating the Helicon Foundation, and influencing countless students during over forty years of teaching at the Juilliard School in New York. Through all these shared pursuits of what he called "The Now of Then" Albert Fuller became the Godfather of Early Music in America. It is thus to Albert, without whom it would not have been possible, that this recording is gratefully dedicated.

—Anthony Martin

Charles Sherman, harpsichord, has long been recognized as one of the leading harpsichord soloists and continuo players in the country. He is a member of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Musica Angelica as well as the chamber ensemble Musica Pacifica; he has made numerous recordings with all these groups. For many years, he toured and recorded as a member of the Aulos Ensemble (NY). He has also performed with such acclaimed ensembles as the Philadelphia Orchestra, American Baroque, Handel & Haydn Society and Emmanuel Music (Boston). Mr. Sherman holds degrees in History and Musicology from The University of Chicago and in Harpsichord Performance from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Albert Fuller. His recordings appear on the Dorian, Musical Heritage Society, Koch International, Sono Luminus, and BMG labels.

*Harpsichord: John Phillips, Berkeley, California,
after Nicholas Dumont, 1707 (courtesy Glenn Voloshin)*

Anthony Martin's first performance as a baroque violinist was for Albert Fuller's Aston Magna Festival in 1973. Since that time he has been a founding member of many of the world's best known early music orchestras and chamber groups, playing violin or viola with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the Artaria Quartet, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, the Novello Quartet, Boston Baroque, the New Esterházy Quartet, and the Bach Ensemble. He has made countless recordings with these and other groups on at least 8 different instruments.

*Violin: Thomas Oliver Croen, Walnut Creek, California,
after Francesco Gobetti, 1717*

Stephen Schultz, flute, is solo and co-Principal flutist with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and performs with other leading early music groups such as Musica Angelica of Los Angeles, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Chatham Baroque, and American Bach Soloists. He founded and directs the chamber ensemble American Baroque, which performs both old and new music on period instruments. A graduate of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Holland, Schultz also holds several degrees from the California Institute of the Arts and the California State University of San Francisco. Currently he teaches at Carnegie Mellon University and the International Baroque Institute at Longy School of Music. As solo, chamber, and orchestral player, Schultz appears on nearly fifty recordings for such labels as Naxos, Harmonia Mundi USA, New Albion, Amon Ra, and Koch International Classics. In his latest release on the Dorian label Mr. Schultz plays all five flute parts of the Concertos for Five Flutes by Boismortier.

Flute: Rod Cameron, San Francisco, California, after C.A. Grenser, circa 1760

Piccolo: Robert Claire, Oakland, California, after J.B. Willems, circa 1750

Josh Lee, viola da gamba, performs on viols and double bass with some of the world's leaders in early music. He is an alumnus of the Peabody Conservatory and the Longy School of Music where he studied double bass with Harold Hall Robinson and viol with Ann Marie Morgan and Jane Hershey. He is the founder of the ensemble Ostraka, and he has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Carmel Bach Festival, Musica Pacifica, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Washington Bach Consort, Indianapolis Baroque Orchestra, Opera Lafayette, New Trinity Baroque, Musica Angelica and Hesperus. He has recorded for Dorian, NPR and Koch International.

*Seven String Bass Viola da Gamba: Edward Maday, Woodmere Bay, NY
after Barak Norman, circa 1692*

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Producers: John Phillips, J. Tamblyn Henderson, Jr.

Recording Engineer: Keith O. Johnson

Recordist: Sean Royce Martin

Editing/Mastering: Paul Stubblebine, JTH

Executive Producers: Marcia Gordon Martin, JTH

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Group Photo: Bob Adler

Albert Fuller photo: Christian Steiner

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Harpsichord Tuning: John Phillips

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