

Santa Fe CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

51ST SEASON

Saturday
5 p.m.

JULY 20

St. Francis Auditorium in the
New Mexico Museum of Art

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU (1683–1764)

Selections from Suite in D Major, Pièces de clavecin (1724)

This evening's program of French Baroque music opens with works by one of that era's greatest exemplars, Jean-Philippe Rameau. We remember Rameau as a harpsichordist and keyboard theoretician, but he would have been disappointed to hear that, as he wished above all else to succeed as a composer of opera. Very few of his operas are performed today, and Rameau's modern reputation rests on his harpsichord music. He wrote about 50 short pieces for harpsichord, and they were published in three volumes in 1706, 1724, and 1731. Those pieces—short, lively, and beautifully written for the instrument—are often in dance forms, but Rameau also wrote several pieces with evocative titles. Some of the latter are descriptive works, and some suggest specific moods.

The selections heard this evening from the *Suite in D Major*, which was published in Paris in 1724, are among his works with evocative titles. *La Joyeuse (The Joyful)*, in rondeau form, suggests feelings of joy with its cascades of descending runs. *Les Tourbillons (The Whirlwinds)*, also in rondeau form, evokes gusts of wind with its brilliant runs across the keyboard. *Les Niais de Sologne* references an agricultural area in the Loire Valley, and it's steady, pleasing, nicely proportioned music. Rameau composed two doubles (sets of variations) on this piece, and they're sometimes played as part of it.

Concert No. 5 in D Minor from Pièces de clavecin en concerts for Flute, Cello, and Harpsichord (1741)

In the early 1740s, as Rameau approached his 60th birthday, his composing of operas suddenly slacked off, and some have theorized that this may have been because of a dispute with the management of the Paris Opera. Rameau used this time to arrange several of his keyboard pieces for chamber ensembles: His title *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* indicates that these are "concert" versions of works originally composed for keyboard during the 1720s. Rameau envisioned performances using viols and other instruments but understood that these chamber versions might be played by different combinations of instruments.

Rameau didn't regard the *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* as chamber music in our modern sense, which involves musical parts of equal importance; rather, he saw them as works that retained the primacy of the keyboard. Rameau published the *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* not in parts but in full score, writing in the preface that this was "because not only must the three instruments blend but . . . the violin and viol must above all adapt themselves to the harpsichord, distinguishing what is merely accompaniment from what is thematic, in order to play still more softly in the former case."

Rameau divided these works into collections he called Concerts, and the Concert No. 5 in D Minor, which is scored for an ensemble of flute, cello, and harpsichord, consists of three brief

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pieces, each one taking its title from the name of one of Rameau's contemporaries in Paris.

The first piece honors Antoine Forqueray (1672–1745), a brilliant bass viol player in the court of Louis XIV. *La Forqueray* begins as a fugue but develops its material non-fugally. After an athletic beginning—the fugue subject is built on an octave drop and return—the music flows more gently at a section marked *Gracieux*. (Rameau offers his performers the option of repeating the entire movement.)

The second piece takes its title from a distinguished family of musicians in Paris that included violinist Jean-Baptiste Cupis (1711–88) and cellist François Cupis (1732–1808). *La Cupis*, in binary form, is marked *Rondement* (“Briskly”), but one is struck by a grieving quality in this music.

The last piece honors another bass viol player, Marin Marais (1656–1728). In *La Marais* (also marked *Rondement*), the music moves from the D Minor of the first two movements to D Major, and the Concert No. 5 concludes brightly.

JEAN-JOSEPH CASSANÉA DE MONDONVILLE (1711–72)

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor for Violin and Harpsichord from Pièces de clavecin en sonates, Op. 3 (1734)

Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville was born in Narbonne, in southern France, to a once-aristocratic family that had fallen on hard times; upon his marriage, he took his wife's family name as his own. He learned to play the violin as a boy and published his first set of violin sonatas at age 22.

Mondonville served as “master of violinists” in Lille from 1735 to 1737 and then made his way to Paris, where his talent was instantly recognized. He was named a violinist in the Concert Spirituel, which was one of the first series of public performances and presented its concerts in the Tuileries Palace. In 1755, Mondonville became the Concert Spirituel's director, and he held that position for 17 years, until his death in 1772. He composed not only for violin but for vocal ensembles as well; those works include some impressive large-scale motets and operas.

Mondonville published his Opus 3, a set of six sonatas for violin and harpsichord, around 1734. (He was in his early 20s at that point, and his move to Paris was still a few years away.) Contemporary listeners may think of his Sonata No. 1 in G Minor as a violin sonata, but Mondonville didn't. The title page of the original publication describes his Opus 3 as *Pièces de clavecin en sonates* and specifies that the works may be performed “avec accompagnement de violon”—which is to say that Mondonville's musical interest here is largely in the keyboard.

The first movement of the Sonata No. 1 in G Minor opens with a slow introduction titled *Overtura* and marked *Grave*. This makes for a firm beginning, and Mondonville specifies that it can be repeated. The music leaps ahead at the *Allegro*, and here the keyboard leads, joined by the violin along the way. The second movement, titled *Aria*, belongs almost entirely to the harpsichord; the violin accompanies throughout with a steady pulse of eighth notes that mirror and echo the keyboard line. The sonata concludes with a vigorous *Giga* that powers its way along a 12/8 meter. The energy here is unrelenting, right through to the emphatic concluding chords.

JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU (1683–1764)

Concert No. 1 in C Minor from Pièces de clavecin en concerts for Violin, Cello, and Harpsichord (1741)

Like Rameau's Concert No. 5, the Concert No. 1 in C Minor consists of three pieces, but here the works are scored for violin, cello, and harpsichord. The three pieces have very obscure titles, but all three appear to refer to powerful men. *La Coulicam* is said to refer to the subject of Du Cerceau's *History of Thamas Kouli-Kam, King of Persia*. *La Livri*, subtitled *Rondeau gracieux*, may be a memorial piece for Louis Saguin, the Count of Livri, who died the year before this music was published. (*La Livri* is one of Rameau's most popular keyboard works, and it's been arranged for numerous other instruments.) *Le Vézinet* is thought to refer to Adrien-Maurice, duc de Noailles, who was given title to the forest of Vézinet, west of Paris, and had the land cleared

for development by gardeners, farmers, and vintners. *Le Vézinet* has also been heard in many arrangements.

JEAN-BAPTISTE LULLY (1632–87)

Trios pour le coucher du roi, LWV 35 (ca. 1679)

The music heard so far on this evening's program was composed during the reign of Louis XV, but the final work, by Lully, takes us back further.

Lully was born in Italy (his birth name was Giovanni Battista Lulli), but he moved to Paris at age 14 and made his life and career there. He established that career very quickly: In 1653, at age 21, he entered into the service of Louis XIV. With the playwright Molière, he composed a series of comedy-ballets (some of which he also danced in), and later he composed about 20 operas. The circumstances of Lully's death have often been recounted: While conducting a performance of his *Te Deum* in January 1687, Lully struck himself on the toe with the cane he was using to beat time. An abscess developed, gangrene developed, and he died two months later.

Now, an aside: People like to have background music for their activities, and one of the most common examples is music performed during mealtimes. Telemann composed three books of *tafelmusik* ("table music") for use at civic functions in Hamburg, and a teenaged Beethoven wrote wind octet music that Elector Maximilian Franz of Bonn had performed while he ate. (More recent examples include Paul Schoenfield's *Café Music* of 1986.) Music has served as an accompaniment to other human activities as well. It's been suggested that the Russian ambassador to the Saxon court commissioned Bach to write music to help him go to sleep and that the result was the *Goldberg Variations*. Similarly, Lully composed his *Trios pour le coucher du roi* for chamber musicians to play while Louis XIV went to bed.

Lully apparently assembled this music over a period of time, composing new works and gathering previously written ones. The complete set of 47 pieces wasn't published until 1705, 18

years after Lully's death. (Some of the pieces have been revealed to be the work of Lully's student Marin Marais.) Written as trio sonatas—two melodic instruments over a continuo line of cello and harpsichord—these "trios" consisted mostly of dances (minuets, gavottes, sarabandes) and music composed in specific forms (rondo, passacaglia, chaconne, and so on). This evening's program features the *Trios pour le coucher du roi's* first three movements and its last. The first three, all brief and in binary form, are a *Symphonie*, *Sarabande*, and *Menuet*; the concluding movement is a spirited *Chaconne*.

ERIC BROMBERGER earned his doctorate in American literature at UCLA and for 10 years taught literature and writing courses at Bates College and San Diego State University. Then he quit teaching to devote himself to his first love, music. Bromberger, a violinist, writes program notes for the San Diego Symphony, the La Jolla Music Society, San Francisco Performances, the University of Chicago Presents, Washington Performing Arts at The Kennedy Center, and many other organizations. He was a pre-concert lecturer for the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 seasons.

