

MUSIC BEFORE 1800

Louise Basbas, director

Martin Bernstein, recorder
Justin Taylor, harpsichord and organ

Plein Jeu

[Suite du 5^e ton]

Pieces de différents Auteurs copiées par Alexandre-Guy Pingré

Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms.2372 (composed c. 1700)

Plein Jeu

Récit de Trompette

Dialogue

François D'agincour (1684 - 1758)

Jacques Boyvin (c. 1653 - 1706)

François D'agincour

Prélude

Variations sur les Folies d' Espagne

Pieces de Clavecin, 1689

Jean-Henri d'Anglebert (1629 - 1691)

Suite en Fa (22^e ordre)

Quatrième Livre de pieces de clavecin (published 1730)

Allemande le point du jour

L'anguille

Le croc-en-jambe

Les tours de passe-passe

François Couperin (1668 - 1733)

[Suite du 7^e ton]

Prélude

Second livre d'orgue contenant les huit tons à l'usage ordinaire de l'église...
(published 1700)

Duo

[Pieces de différents Auteurs...] Ms.2372 (c. 1700)

Récit de tierce en taille

Premier livre d'orgue... (published 1690)

Jacques Boyvin

François D'agincour

Jacques Boyvin

Les Tendres Plaintes

Pieces de Clavessin avec une methode (published c. 1725)

Gavotte & doubles

Nouvelles Suites de Pieces de Clavecin (published c. 1735)

Jean Philippe Rameau (1683 - 1764)

Sonata IX

Sonates a violon seul avec la basse continue... Ite Livre (published c. 1733)

Adagio

Allemande

Sicilienne

Gay

François Francœur (1698 - 1787)

This program is followed by an interactive Q and A with the performers.

The program will be available to online subscribers/ticket holders until July 15.

The video production is supported, in part, by a generous gift from Roger and Whitney Bagnall.

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Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



Virtual Concert 4 p.m. Sunday, June 27, 2021
Recorded at Corpus Christi Church, June 20, 2021

MUSIC BEFORE 1800
46th Season, 2020-2021

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February 14: *Forty-five years of New Performances of "Music Before 1800"* Louise Basbas and Henry Lee

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Recordings are available on Music Before 1800's YouTube channel

Virtual Concerts, Sundays at 4 p.m.

May 2: *From Russia with Love*
Diderot String Quartet

May 23: *Portraits et Caractères*
Aya Hamada, harpsichord

June 13: *Byways and Backwaters*
Peter Sykes, harpsichord

June 27: *Plein Jeu* Martin Bernstein, recorder
Justin Taylor, harpsichord and organ

Concerts will be available on demand until July 15

PROGRAM NOTES

This program is inspired by the keyboard. I've been fascinated by the ability Justin has for his hands to sing different lines: when he's playing solo harpsichord music, they sometimes move in different directions, at different speeds, struggling with one another. But in the end they're also in intense unity, as two hands of the same body. I wanted to try and achieve the same thing with him—chamber music playing based on the unity of solo playing, two as one.

I think that this notion exists in 17th-century music, even if it's somewhat hidden to us. It began to become apparent to me when we put solo keyboard and chamber music side-by-side. We started with the organ, an instrument which generated so much compositional energy. 17th-century French composers learned first to improvise at the organ, and it's there that many got their understanding of how different voices and colors fit together. There's a huge unwritten canon of music that organists improvised during masses, but when we looked closely at the written organ music that we do have, Justin and I found traces of a fluidity between chamber music and solo organ settings. I began to think that we weren't the first ones to see an analogy between the organist's body and a chamber ensemble. This observation launched our program.

We begin with a little suite from the town of Rouen, a day's ride from Paris. In 1701, **François D'agincour** took over from the aging **Jacques Boyvin** as Rouen's organist. The two musicians' pieces live side-by-side in a manuscript compiled by the astronomer-geographer-librarian, Alexandre-Guy Pingré. The manuscript testifies to what composing at the organ meant: D'agincour and Boyvin had written down numerous small movements, notating their improvisations, and marking the different "stops" for use at different moments in the mass. (Organs have "stops," sets of pipes, each with contrasting colors and characters.) Boyvin's and D'agincour's movements were grouped by tonality—but not into clearly defined suites the way we often think of (later) baroque movements. Instead, organ manuscripts provided a stock of material from which organists could pick and choose—and improvise off of—at appropriate places in the mass. Following Pingré, we've engaged in the practice of building organ suites ourselves, combining movements by two of Rouen's most gifted organists.

"Plein Jeu" is the name of a combination of organ stops ("stop" is "jeu" in French). The Plein Jeu notes sound rich, powerful, divine, and were often used for sonic openings. Plein means full, but also perhaps comes from an older French plain—undivided, integrated, unified. And to my 21st-century layman's ears, Plein Jeu also sounds like it means "full game," or "full of play."

So where is the chamber music in this solo organ writing? The *récits* are especially fascinating. *Récit* translates best as "story"—something which organists sought to recite. (They weren't alone in this pursuit: so much 17th-century music explicitly sought to speak, as singers recited poetry and instrumentalists imitated singers.) In these organ *récits*, Boyvin plays a strikingly vocal melody with his right hand, and he writes a bass line for his feet with chords in his left hand. The practice of improvising chords to give rhythmic and harmonic impulses to a bass line is called playing "basso continuo." So in these *récits*, Boyvin is essentially notating a continuo line for his feet and left hand to play in duo with his right hand. Song and bass: it looks like solo flute music. And these *récits* indicate the use of a different organ stop for the right hand, so that its melody sings out in a contrasting color to the powerful bass—a "trompette," for instance, the "tierce en taille," or another such stop. I can see Boyvin using the pipes into which his right hand was breathing as a wind instrument, singing a line and interacting with the other half of his body's bass playing. Reciting these pieces on my own organ pipe instantiates what Boyvin was imitating. But Justin and I also want to imitate Boyvin, whose single body held all of the movement's different parts. In these *récits*, Justin and I found a model for chamber music—one which we think can explain the "dialogues" and "duos" that Boyvin and D'agincour were staging between their limbs as well.

Justin then gave me the chance to see what two-handed unity can look like in the music of Jean-Henri d'Anglebert. D'Anglebert was a member of the first generation of officially appointed royal harpsichordists. One contemporary remarked that he and his colleagues played not by pressing keys, but by accessing the resonance of their instruments' strings. Justin shows us the art of touching a keyboard in ways that achieve that resonance.

D'Anglebert's unmeasured preludes are incredible examples of notated improvisations. To 21st century readers, they look like they have no indication of rhythm: we see handwritten pages of cascading circular notes, seemingly undifferentiated, and linked together by long graceful lines. But these are the written traces of an aural tradition, and through them Justin puts flesh back onto a 17th century improvisation. This sets the stage for D'Anglebert's version of "Les folies d'Espagne," the famous melody with its folk-dance origins, that gives harpsichordists a chance to improvise a series of increasingly fantastical ornamented variations.

D'Anglebert said that he wrote down most of his harpsichord music for Marie Anne de Bourbon, a daughter of Louis XIV who was also d'Anglebert's most talented student. After d'Anglebert's death, De Bourbon began studying with François Couperin ("le grand"). We like to imagine how she must have played, perhaps with a combination of d'Anglebert's improvisatory talent and François's grippingly virtuosic precision.

François's harpsichord music gives some of the most explicit examples of fluidity between chamber and solo settings. His *Concerts Royaux* were published at the back of his third book of harpsichord pieces, and François wrote that they could be played either on solo harpsichord or as chamber music, with almost any melody instrument and bass. On one of his solo harpsichord movements ("Le Rossignol en Amour," the nightingale in love), François noted that the piece could also be played by solo flute and continuo. I'm inspired by these indications. I think François felt that chamber playing could work like solo keyboard playing. But I'm also bored of flutists always having to imitate birds! So Justin and I made our own chamber setting of Couperin's *22e Ordre*, in which we get to imitate an eel ("L'anguille") instead. Our suite opens with "Le point du jour," the break of day; we also get to try our hands at a "Croc-en-jambe" (a trip-up), and some "tours de passe-passe" (hocus-pocus).

Couperin's harpsichord music takes us to 1730, when his daughter Marguerite-Antoinette took over as King Louis XV's official royal harpsichordist. The French keyboard school continued to change, generating, I now think, more and different chamber music as it did. By this time, **Jean-Philippe Rameau** had begun his career as an organist and harpsichordist. His first published compositions were for solo harpsichord—in "Les Tendres Plaintes," the right hand sings while the left hand pushes and pulls, together coaxing tender complaints out of the harpsichord's strings. The gavotte, inspired by a dance, gives Justin and Rameau a chance to improvise a series of "doubles," ornaments based on the original theme.

Rameau would go on to write many of France's most famous and popular operas in the 1740s. I don't think it's a coincidence that he only took to operatic composition and direction after forty years of solo keyboard playing. Often, Rameau literally rewrote his harpsichord movements as orchestral pieces. In his later *Pieces de clavecin en concerts* (harpsichord pieces "in concert"), Rameau composed trios for flute, viol, and harpsichord that were explicitly also intended as solo harpsichord pieces. I like to think that it was after understanding, deeply and intimately, how everything fit together in his own body that Rameau could turn to larger ensemble settings. Only then could he write music in which so many different lines sang, clashed, struggled in unity with one another.

We close with another mid-18th-century operatic composer, **François Francœur**. Like Rameau, Francœur turned to opera only in the 1750s, late in his career. He is our first non-keyboardist: he got his start as a twelve-year-old treble violinist in the Paris opera, and he left us these violin sonatas sometime in the 1720s. If we've learned anything from our keyboardists though, we'll return to this chamber music—intended for our set-up, treble and basso continuo—with a new perspective. We've tried to understand something about unified chamber playing, and about the intensely intimate, textual drama at the heart of 17th-century music, so we're excited to take that spirit and make new things out of it. I think it's what any good keyboardist would do!

Thanks for sharing this with us.

—Martin Bernstein

BIOGRAPHIES

Martin Bernstein has been heard with numerous ensembles throughout the world in venues ranging from 17th-century Italian palazzos to modern art museums in Reykjavik, Iceland, to the concert halls of New York City. He began studying recorder at age five, first with Charles Sibirsky and later with Nina Stern. At eighteen, he left New York City to study at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague with Reine-Marie Verhagen and Han Tol. Martin Bernstein holds the third prize from the 2019 Moeck/SRP International Recorder Competition, widely recognized as the most important for recorder in the world. He has won numerous other honors and awards, including first prize at the Mieke van Weddingen Competition in Belgium and second prize in the Young Talent Search hosted by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and Maurice Steger. He has also been featured on US National Public Radio. Bernstein serves on the faculty at several American early music festivals and workshops. He studied history and philosophy at Harvard University.

martinbernstein.instantencore.com

At the age of twenty-three, the Franco-American musician **Justin Taylor** won First Prize in 2015 at the prestigious International Musica Antiqua Harpsichord Competition in Bruges. He also won the Audience Prize, the Alpha Prize, and the EUBO Developing Trust Prize awarded to the most promising young European musician. He was nominated as one of the three finalists in the Instrumental Soloist Revelations category in the 2017 Victoires de la Musique. That same year, the Professional Critics Association awarded him the Musical Revelation of the Year Prize. His first disc, on Alpha in 2016, was *La Famille Forqueray: Portrait(s)*. It received the awards Gramophone Editor's Choice, Choc de l'année from the magazine *Classica*, and Grand Prix from the Charles Cros Academy. He recorded on pianoforte Mozart's *Concerto* No. 17 in G Major, K 453, with Le Concert de la Loge; the disc was released in 2017 on Aparté. Justin has also recorded a double disc of Bach works for Deutsche Gramophone for the BACH 333 integral. His second disc, *Continuum*, devoted to Scarlatti and Ligeti, appeared in 2018. With his ensemble, The Consort, he won the First Prize in 2017 at the Loire Valley International Early Music Competition. In residence at the Singer-Polignac Foundation, the young musicians of The Consort interpret varied repertory: Baroque trio sonatas, vocal music with the mezzo-soprano Eva Zaïcik, and classical chamber music with the fortepiano. He is sponsored by the Safran Foundation.

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