

WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 22 June 2022 7.30pm

Jean Rondeau harpsichord

Thomas Dunford lute

CLASSIC *f*M Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

Robert de Visée (c.1655-1732)

Suite in D minor (pub. 1686)

*I. Prelude • II. Allemande • III. Courante • IV. Sarabande •
V. Gavotte • VI. Menuett I & II • VII. Bourrée • VIII. Gigue*

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Les Voix Humaines (pub. 1701)

François Couperin (1668-1733)

Prélude No. 1 in C from *L'art de toucher le clavecin* (pub. 1716)

La Ménetou (pub. 1716-7)

Le dodo, ou L'amour au berceau (pub. 1722)

Le réveil-matin (pub. 1713)

La ténébreuse (pub. 1713)

La favorite (pub. 1713)

Jean-Henry D'Anglebert (1629-1691)

From *Suite No. 3 in D minor* (pub. 1689)

Prelude • Sarabande grave

Antoine Forqueray (1671-1745)

La Portugaise (Marqué et d'aplomb) (pub. 1747)

La Silva (très tendrement) (pub. 1747)

Jupiter (Modérément) (pub. 1747)

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In Jan Brueghel the Elder's *Taste, Hearing and Touch*, one of a pair of paintings depicting the five senses, a lutenist sits by a table strewn with lavish dishes, peacock pie among them, while a two-manual harpsichord rests nearby. He and a duo of cherubic choristers are performing for two young women, one cradling a mink, the other about to eat an oyster. On close inspection, Brueghel's allegory of the senses is filled with action: its right half bustles with the clockwork choreography of servants replenishing the feast; the lutenist himself is clearly animated in performance, his gaze fixed on the viewer while his fingers dart around the instrument. The artwork's contrast of repose and movement mirrors the 17th Century's rich repertoire of compositions for lute, viol, harpsichord and guitar, which includes music for quiet contemplation and music for dance, works to elevate the soul and works to make hearts beat faster.

This evening's programme evokes the pleasures of meditative stillness and expressive movement, and of imaginative play with both. 'Our playing goes far beyond dialogue,' notes Jean Rondeau of his partnership with Thomas Dunford: 'for us, it is not about responding to each other so much as it is about questioning and inviting our listeners to join us in this exploration with no answer or resolution.' Their opening work encompasses motion and tranquillity, states channelled by **Robert de Visée** into his Suite No. 7 in D minor. De Visée, a chamber musician to Louis XIV of France, was a guitar virtuoso and fine performer on lute, viol and theorbo. His Suite, written in the 1680s for guitar, was transcribed for theorbo and included among works by diverse composers in the compendious Vaudry de Saizenay manuscript of 1699. It follows the formal structure of courtly dances, among them the allemande, courante, sarabande and gavotte. Rondeau and Dunford, reflecting Baroque practice, transform de Visée's solo work into a duet for harpsichord and archlute.

Marin Marais, a Parisian shoemaker's son, probably studied with the virtuoso viol player Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe. Around 1679 Marais joined Louis XIV's elite company of musicians, the *musique de la chambre de roi*. His first book of pieces for viol, published in Paris in 1686, was followed by four more over the next 39 years. *Les Voix Humaines*, among his finest compositions, was included in book two of his *Pièces de viole* (1701). Its gentle reflections on human dignity transfer with ease to solo lute.

Louis XIV's court at Versailles, for all its glory, remained largely free from foreign influence. The Sun King's death in 1715 opened the door to new thinking at court and the swift absorption of fresh fashions from Italy, home to some of the most exciting contemporary developments in music. Ten years after Louis's funeral, **François Couperin**, composer, harpsichordist and organist of the Chapel Royal, asserted that the new blend of Italian and French musical styles represented 'the perfection of music', a proposition reflected in his mature works.

Couperin's ideas about harpsichord playing appeared in print in 1716 with the publication of *L'art de toucher le clavecin*; the volume invites players to test his performance instructions on compositions such as the 'Première Prélude', an enchanting piece that sounds like an improvisation. 'La Ménétou', an increasingly lively rondeau, comes from the composer's *Second livre de pièces de clavecin* (1716-7); his third book of harpsichord pieces, meanwhile, contains the tender lullaby 'Le dodo, ou L'amour au berceau' ('dodo' being a French term of endearment for a baby), where Cupid appears to be rocking the cradle. Strong passions rise in 'Le réveil-matin' ('The alarm-clock') and the allemande 'La ténébreuse' ('The dark one'), both from the *Premier livre de pièces de clavecin* of 1713, while 'La favorite', also from the first book, offers a portrait in the form of a grand duple-time chaconne of the elderly Madame de Maintenon, who had married Louis XIV in secret in the 1680s.

Jean-Henry d'Anglebert, a member of the school of harpsichord composers associated with François Couperin's father Louis and Jacques Champion de Chambonnières, became harpsichordist to Louis XIV in 1662. The Suite No. 3 in D minor, from his *Pièces de clavecin* of 1689, opens with an unmeasured *Prélude* of intense concentration, comprising melodic ideas that come and go like free-flowing thoughts, and includes a *Sarabande* of irresistible seriousness.

Forqueray, like François Couperin and Jean-Henry d'Anglebert, belonged to a musical dynasty. The Forquerays became established in Paris in the 1670s with the arrival there of Antoine 'le père', who subsequently joined Louis XIV's *musique de la chambre de roi*. Antoine taught his prodigiously gifted son Jean-Baptiste so well that he became jealous of his success and eventually had him confined to prison. In 1747 Jean-Baptiste published a selection of pieces for viol under his father's name together with transcriptions of them for harpsichord; it is possible, however, that Jean-Baptiste composed the works himself or most likely updated Antoine's work with adventurous harmonies. The *Pièces De Viole Mises En Pièces De Clavecin*, whoever their author, make high demands on their performers: 'La Portugaise', for example, from Suite No. 1, projects perceived Portuguese qualities with its crisp rhythmic patterns, while 'La Silva' appears to suspend time, with help from Jean-Baptiste's performance instruction: 'To play this piece in the way I should like it played, it should be noted how it is written, the right hand being hardly ever quite together with the left'. The final movement of Forqueray's Suite No. 5, the rondeau 'Jupiter', preserves the sonorous warmth of Antoine's viol composition while adding extravagant flourishes to both hands and encouraging its performers to add more.

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