

**Sandra Mangsen** studied harpsichord at McGill University and musicology at Cornell. She has taught music history and early music performance at Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario), McGill, Temple University, and from 1989 at Western University in London, Ontario, where she retired as professor emerita in 2011.

Sandra has published widely on historical performance practice and performed in North America, England, Italy and New Zealand. This winter she plans to stop playing and get on with her book, *Music, Meaning and Markets: Keyboard Transcription in England, 1500 – 1800*.

As the last president of the Midwestern Historical Keyboard Society, she was instrumental in merging two existing historical keyboard societies, to establish the Historical Keyboard Society of North America, which held its initial meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio in March 2012. In 2011, upon moving permanently to North Bennington, she founded Bennington Baroque, with violinist Kevin Bushee of Shaftsbury.



I am grateful to the Park McCullough Association  
for the use of the Carriage Barn.

*Bennington Baroque* is also sponsored by the  
Bennington Cultural and Arts Council.

Next concert -----April 21, 2013, 3 p.m.  
Chamber music by Marais, Telemann, Rameau and others  
Mathieu Langlois, baroque flute  
Kevin Bushee, baroque violin  
Alice Robbins, viola da gamba  
Sandra Mangsen, harpsichord  
See [www.benningtonbaroque.com](http://www.benningtonbaroque.com)

## *Bennington Baroque*

Presents

## *Les Clavecinistes*

Sandra Mangsen, harpsichord

**At the Carriage Barn  
Historic Park-McCullough,  
North Bennington, VT  
November 11, 2012 -- 3 p.m.**

**Suite en la Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre**  
*Pièces de clavessin* (Paris, 1687) (1665–1729)

Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante 1<sup>e</sup>  
Courante 2<sup>e</sup>  
Sarabande  
Chaconne

**Suite en re Jean-Philippe Rameau**  
*Pièces de clavessin* (Paris, 1724) (1683–1764)

*Les soupirs*  
*La joyeuse*, rondeau  
*La follette*, rondeau  
*L'entretien des Muses*  
*Les tourbillons*, rondeau  
*Les cyclopes*, rondeau

-----Intermission-----

**Pièces tirées du troisième ordre François Couperin**  
*Pièces de clavecin*, 1<sup>e</sup> livre (Paris, 1713) (1668–1733)

*La ténébreuse*, allemande  
Première courante  
Seconde courante  
*La lugubre*, sarabande  
*Les pélerines*  
*La marche*, gayement  
*La caristade*, tendrement  
*Le remerciement*, légèrement  
*Les regrets*, languissamment  
*La favorite*, chaconne à deux tems

**Deux pièces en fa Jacques Duphly**  
*Pièces de clavecin*, 3<sup>e</sup> livre (Paris, 1756) (1715–1789)

Chaconne  
*Médée*, vivement et fort



**Airs sérieux et à boire (Paris, 1711)**  
**Les Pélerines**

**La Marche**

Au temple d'Amour  
Pélerines de Cythère  
Nous allons d'un coeur sincère  
Nous offrir à notre tour:

Les Ris, les Jeux, les Amours  
Sont du voyage,  
Les doux soupirs,  
Les tendres désirs.  
Sont le but de ce pèlerinage,  
Le prix en est les Plaisirs.  
[Au temple d'Amour...]

**La Caristade**

Au nom charmant de ces vives flâmes  
Qui causent aux âmes  
Tant de douceurs,  
Soyez touchés de nos longueurs,  
On lit dans nos yeux  
le besoin de nos coeurs

**Le Remerciement**

Que désormais des biens durables  
A jamais combient vos souhaits!  
Vos tendres soins, vos dons secourables,  
Nous soulagent dans ce jour.  
Puisse l'Amour  
Vous rendre en retour  
Encore plus charitables!



The harpsichord was built in 2012 by Robert Hicks of Lincoln, Vermont. It is based on an instrument by Benoist Stehlin (1760) now in the Smithsonian collection. Today it is tuned in an unequal temperament described by D'Alembert (1752) and J. J. Rousseau (1767), at A = 415 Hz (about a semitone below modern pitch).

## NOTES

This afternoon I am playing music by French composers on a new French double-manual harpsichord from the workshop of Robert Hicks (Lincoln, Vermont). Both the instrument and the music are delightful, and well matched. The harpsichord is based on an instrument by Benoist Stehlin (Paris, 1760), now in the Smithsonian collection. I have tuned in a temperament described by D'Alembert in 1752 (*Élément théorique and pratique de musique*) as interpreted by Pierre-Yves Asselin in his *Musique et Tempérament* (Paris, 1985). The musical examples accompanying that book were recorded in part on a French classical organ then newly installed in Redpath Hall at McGill University. We have so few opportunities to hear music in the tunings of the period that I hope you take full advantage of the flavors of the different keys. All the tonalities are playable in this temperament; however, it is far from the equal temperament we use ordinarily for pianos (but check out the recording "Beethoven in the Temperaments" by pianist Enid Katahn for two other options in four sonatas). D'Alembert's temperament is essentially a modified meantone, in which the four fifths C-G-D-A-E are narrowed (by a quarter comma, if you follow that – if not just use your ears – the comma is the amount by which you will be sharp if you go around the circle of fifths, tuning them all perfect, when you arrive back at your initial pitch – a temperament distributes this comma somehow so that the octaves will be in tune). Four of the remaining fifths are very slightly narrowed, while the others are just a tad wide. We end up with very "good" C#, F#, G# and B-flat and E-flat. Their enharmonic equivalents (D, G, and A flat; A and D sharp) are bearable, but not what one would call lovely. Thus some keys are more "in tune" than others; some keys sound sadder than others, some more noble, etc. There were many "well tempered" tunings in Bach's day; forget the idea that the Well Tempered Clavier was intended as a demonstration of the virtues of equal temperament. The keys have their differences! Remember as well that the only intervals in tune in equal temperament are the octaves, and even those are not in tune at the treble end of a piano. But I digress.

**Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre**, a child prodigy from a family of musicians and harpsichord builders, spent three years at the court of LouisXIV, her education overseen by Madame de Montespan. After the death of her husband, organist Martin de La Guerre, and ten-year-old son, she continued to reside in Paris, teaching and composing. Her extant works include an opera, both sacred and secular cantatas, keyboard and chamber music. I have drawn from the first collection (1687), devoted to keyboard solos. The opening prelude in the A Minor suite is *non mesuré*, that is without a regular meter or bar lines, which was quite common in seventeenth-century collections. Two decades later, François Couperin wrote out eight preludes in ordinary measured notation in his *L'art de toucher le clavecin* (1716), explaining that there were by then few people able to cope with the unmeasured notation.

**Jean-Philippe Rameau** is better known today as a theorist and composer of opera than as a keyboard composer. Born in Dijon, he spent three years in Paris (where in 1706 he published his first volume of keyboard music), before returning to Dijon and then to Lyons and Clermont, where he held prestigious organist positions for the next several years. In 1722 he returned to Paris and began to publish his keyboard music and treatise on music theory. It was only at age fifty that he began the last phase of his career, as a composer of opera. In his twenty-five stage works, his increasingly Italianate style, in contrast to the traditional French style of Lully, often sparked harsh polemics. Rameau's solo harpsichord pieces are grouped by key, although they are not labeled explicitly as suites, and often lack the "standard" allemande-courante-sarabande component. I have omitted four movements from the beginning and end of the D major/minor set. The contemplative *Les soupirs* (the long deep breaths of the lovesick, or the sad) and *L'entretien des Muses* (conversation of the Muses) contrast sharply with the lightweight *Follette* (harmless jokes and diversions), and the virtuosic *Joyeuse*, *Tourbillons* (wind gusts), and *Cyclopes*. In the latter, Rameau probably expected the audience to recall the one-eyed monsters in Lully's *Persée*, revived in November 1722. Rameau was proud of the technical demands in some of these pieces: rapid repeated notes, wide leaps, and arpeggios played quickly by alternate hands. Indeed, he claimed to have invented such *batteries*, although there were certainly others who made similar demands.

**François Couperin** *le grand*, as he was known—to distinguish him from his uncles François and Louis Couperin—deputized as an organist early in his teens, and formally inherited his father’s post at St. Gervais when he turned eighteen. He left four printed volumes of harpsichord music, the first appearing in 1713. He was *organiste du roi* in 1693 and in 1717 he replaced D’Anglebert as *ordinaire de la musique de la chambre du roi pour le clavecin*. Like Jacquet de La Guerre and Rameau, Couperin was much influenced by the modern cantatas and sonatas composed in the Italian style, which in Brossard’s view had overrun Paris early in the century.

Couperin’s own collection *Les goûts réunis* offers strong evidence of his appreciation of both Corelli and Lully. In his keyboard suites the traditional dances are more and more displaced by what we might call character pieces, or portraits, and there are many of the latter even in the first collection.

Some of these are not entirely of his own invention: *Les pélerines* is Couperin’s keyboard version of a set of three tunes published in the *Recueil d’aires sérieux et à boire* (1711), whose texts describe the happy pilgrims en route to Cythera, the island of love; their begging for alms en route; and their thanks for the gifts bestowed. The origin of these tunes and texts was likely in a theatre piece. If you want a visual image, think of Watteau’s *L’Embarquement pour Cythère*, which dates from 1717. If you want to try to fit the words to the melody, I’ve included the text below. But there is much gloom and doom in this *Ordre*: the *allemande* and *sarabande* both exploit not only the key of C minor (termed *obscur et triste* by Charpentier), but also the low register of the harpsichord. More than one commentator has suggested that the *allemande* is a *tombeau* (elegy) for the Dauphin, who had died in 1712. *Les regrets*, marked “languissamment” (languishing), continues in the same mood of gloom and nostalgia. *Les favorites* is one of my favorite *chaconnes*, a form much favored by François Couperin’s predecessors, but less in fashion in his own day. Most were in triple meter, which explains his specification “in duple time.” Like many of the pieces in Rameau’s set, it is “en rondeau” (ABACAD...A); note the consistently descending bass that underpins the *rondeau*, which we hear between each of the *couplets*.

**Jacques Duphly** is perhaps the least well-known of the composers represented on this program. Like most of the others, he was an organist and highly regarded by his colleagues. We have four volumes of harpsichord music, printed between 1744 and 1768. The F major set in the third book begins with several pieces for harpsichord accompanied by a violin. His *chaconne*, mostly sunny in F major, and exploiting the far reaches of the instrument’s range, includes the typical “*minore*” section in F minor, but we are returned to the major in the virtuosic closing section. *Medée* is of course a portrait of the mythological queen whose story is transmitted by Euripides (431 BC) and by several Roman writers, and used in several French operas and cantatas. Medea, having helped Jason through his trials in his quest for the Golden Fleece, is betrayed by him, which predictably brings out her nasty side. She takes revenge by poisoning his new love, and then kills their two sons as well. At least, that is one version. See if you can follow that story in Duphly’s music. In the first half, she plots and schemes, or perhaps Jason makes his way through the challenges; in the second there are two nasty landings on unlikely harmonies, followed by some pretty furious escape music, perhaps meant to remind us of her flight to Athens in the chariot sent by her grandfather, the god of the Sun

My point, really, is that French harpsichord music did not confine itself to the realm of sweet miniatures – there are some pretty serious pieces in this repertoire, and lots of mythological and operatic references. Yes, it can be precious, like Boucher’s beribboned sheep, but there is much more to it than that.

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