

Les Délices

Debra Nagy, baroque oboe
Julie Andrijeski, violin
Josh Lee, viola da gamba
Michael Sponseller, harpsichord

Caractères de la danse

Jean Baptiste Lully: Suite from *Psyché* (1678)

Ouverture
Les fleuves et dryades
Symphonie de la Plainte de Psyché
Les Forgerons

Jacques Martin Hotteterre: Deuxième Suite from *Premier Livre* (1715)

Prelude
Allemande l'Atalante
Sarabande La Fidelle
Petit Air Tendre
Gavotte en rondeau La Maillebois

Jean-Féry Rebel: *La Terpsichore* (1720)

Joseph Bodin de Boismortier: *Deuxième Balet* from *Balets de Village* (1734)

Louis de Caix d'Hervelois: Suite in A minor from *Troisième Livre* (1731)

Prélude
Allemande
La Sache
Menuet
Gigue
Musette

Rebel: *Caractères de la danse* (1715)

Program Notes:

Simultaneously signaling power and grace, refinement and discipline, the art of dancing held a singular status at the court of Louis XIV. Louis XIV elevated dancing to the level of high art, created the world's first ballet school (the *Académie Royale de la danse*), and turned a social pastime into a stylized professional pursuit. Les Délices' program tonight explores dance from its social roots in the ballroom to the idiosyncratic, highly expressive music written for the first prima ballerinas on the theater stage.

Dance was a ubiquitous element of the social fabric in 17th and 18th C France. Skill at dancing signaled one's social status and quality of education. Dance was not just a leisure activity; the refined steps and elegant physical deportment required strength, training, and – above all – discipline.

Dance was not taught in a class setting, per se. Instead, individuals and couples were instructed by dancing masters who not only taught the steps of dances, but also manners and etiquette. In a sense, they effectively taught “body language.” Lessons generally began with bows of introduction and respect. An English nobleman advised his son, who was taking lessons with the Paris dancing master François Marcel: “Let him make you go out of the room frequently and present yourself to him as if he was, by turns, different persons, such as a minister, a lady, a superior, and equal, an inferior.” Clearly dance instruction went “beyond the management of the heels,” to encompass '*ces petits riens* (those little things) which are more easily felt than described ... and without which you will never be anything.”

Dancing played a part at many of the King’s evening social events within his *appartements*, while *Grand Bals* (big ballroom presentations with large audiences) were reserved for special occasions or held for esteemed visitors. But for the vast majority of people who attended balls, dancing was purely a spectator sport. Once the audience was installed, only a limited rectangular dance floor was left. Most dances were for couples, and time permitted perhaps only 30 or 40 dancers in an evening (each couple would have the opportunity to dance twice; each time with a different partner). *Bals* usually opened with a bransle, followed by courantes, minuets, and passepieds (like a fast minuet). Group dances such as the *contredanse* allowed up to four people to dance at a time.

In this setting, even “social dancing” became a solo performance. Dancers who were not prepared for the intense scrutiny of highly critical courtiers were sometimes laughed off the dance floor. It should come as no surprise then that a teacher like Marcel could command 300 francs to rehearse dances meant for a court presentation or at a masked ball. In these cases, dancing masters often played the violin to accompany lessons.

Noblemen could acquire significant skill at dancing to the extent that they were featured in the operas and ballets presented at court in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. Of course, the most influential dancer of all was Louis XIV, especially in his role as Apollo, the Sun King. Louis danced in court ballets until his sudden “retirement” in 1670. In the meantime, however, he established the *Académie Royale de Danse* in 1661 – with a faculty of thirteen accomplished dancing masters – to define the principles of dance and train dancers for his court ballets and for the *Opéra*. In addition, the world’s one and only notation for dance originated at the French court and was codified by Raoul-Auger Feuillet. Many choreographies for both social and theatrical dance survive by Louis Pecour and others.

We begin this evening’s program with the overture and dance music from Lully’s popular *tragédie lyrique*, *Psyché*. Dance traditionally played a significant role in French court entertainments, but Lully effectively incorporated dance into the action of his operas (such as dance of the Forgerons) rather than simply inserting unrelated *divertissements* between the acts of plays. The famous Italian *plainte* from *Psyché* may not have been danced at all, but composed of expressive physical gestures in a form of pantomime.

In Greek mythology, Terpsichore was one of the nine muses, ruling over dancing and the dramatic chorus. Françoise Prévost (the dancer for whom Jean-Féry Rebel composed *La Terpsicore*) was endowed with such prodigious talent and expressive charge as to inspire Rebel to write several of his most original and creative works (the most famous of these is his *Le Cahos* and *Les Éléments*). Rebel dubbed these *tours de force* for a solo dancer “choreographed symphonies.”

While we no longer know the narrative that Prévost played out in her choreography to *La Terpsicore*, musically it’s a light-hearted romp that crackles with energy. By contrast, *Les Caractères de la danse* – a fantasia in which music and dance turn on a dime - survives with an extensive performance history. Prévost enjoyed tremendous success with *Caractères*, in which she depicted several romances. As Rebel sped through a succession of courantes, menuets, bourrées, chaconnes,

sarabandes, gigues, rigaudons, passepieds, gavottes, and musettes, Prévost introduced a wide variety of characters. The courante depicts the blunders of an elderly lover; the gigue inspires a young fool; a deceived lover dances a grave sarabande; a gracious young girl does the menuet; an abandoned lover mourns her lost happiness with a gavotte; and a happy lover renders thanks in the form of a musette. Françoise Prévost—that elegant, sensitive dancer who Pierre Rameau described in *Le maître à danser* (1725) as characterized by “grace, correctness, lightness, and precision” with the rare power to use “all forms at will”—gave life to these brilliant and varied steps. Her performance and choreography for this work was such a success that it became a standard “debut” piece for her prize pupils.

Rebel’s music for *Caractères* survives in both a “short” score, and in a full, orchestral five-voice scoring. Les Délices has created a fusion of these two versions for this weekend’s performances that brings both richness and color to our “trio” forces. Most French baroque music adapts itself easily to a variety of instrumental combinations, and Joseph Bodin de Boismortier’s *Balets de villages* (1734) is no exception. Performing forces could range from a trio (as we perform tonight) to a full orchestra consisting of violins, flutes, recorders, oboes, musettes (a highly-refined bagpipe) and vielle à roue (*hurdy gurdy*) plus bass instruments. The fun, folksy dance tunes of Boismortier’s *Balets* are set as a single movement comprising several dance forms that makes the work reminiscent of Rebel’s *Caractères*.

Dance forms and their signature rhythms continued to have a strong influence on all French instrumental music, even after some dance types ceased to be danced. As with Jacques Martin Hotteterre’s *Deuxième Suite*, virtually all instrumental suites open with a *Prélude*, which is often followed by an *Allemande* (a dance that fell out of favor by the mid-seventeenth century, continuing only in instrumental settings). The *Sarabande* – the slowest and most stately of the triple-time dances – also ranks among the most difficult to dance. The slow speed required supreme grace and balance as well as fancy, ornamental footwork (which is nicely echoed by Hotteterre’s own elaborate ornaments).

-Debra Nagy

Biographies:

Les Délices’ (pronounced *Lay DEH-lease*) polished, expressive, and dynamic performances of masterpieces and little-known works from the French Baroque have been garnering critical acclaim. Founded in Cleveland in 2006, Les Délices brings together artists with national reputations who share a passion for this exquisite yet seldom heard repertoire. Les Délices is committed to presenting premiere performances of important works and to adapting neglected masterpieces to their own performing forces: research, improvisation, and composition in historical styles are touchstones of the group’s approach. The resulting performances are new, beautiful, and authentic in their own right. Les Délices’ debut CD “The Tastes Reunited” was named one of the “Top Ten Early Music Discoveries of 2009” (NPR’s Harmonia), and their performances have been called “a beguiling experience” (Cleveland Plain Dealer), “astonishing” (ClevelandClassical.com), and “first class” (Early Music America Magazine). Les Délices has been featured on WCPN’s Around Noon and WKSU’s In Performance, NPR’s syndicated Harmonia and Sunday Baroque, and had their debut CD featured as part of the Audio-guide for a recent special exhibit at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art (Watteau, Music, and Theater). Les Délices recently returned from their first east-coast tour, which included their New York debut concert at the Frick Collection. In addition to touring engagements, Les Délices presents its own annual concert series in modern art galleries and at Plymouth Church, where the group is Artist in Residence. Visit www.lesdelices.org to learn more.

Debra Nagy has been called “a baroque oboist of consummate taste and expressivity” (Cleveland Plain Dealer) and a “musical polymath” for her accomplished performances on oboe and recorder. One of the nation’s most sought after early double reed specialists, Debra performs frequently with baroque ensembles and orchestras in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, Seattle, Denver, Philadelphia, and New York, in addition to Cleveland’s Apollo’s Fire. She has also been heard at the international Early Music Festivals of Boston, Berkeley, Regensburg, and Antwerp. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory, Debra was the first-prize winner in the 2002 American Bach Soloists Young Artist Competition, spent 2002-2003 in Brussels and Amsterdam as the recipient of a Belgian American Educational Foundation Grant, received a 2009 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and was awarded a 2010 Creative Workforce Fellowship from Cleveland’s Community Partnership for Arts & Culture. She received her doctorate in Early Music at Case Western Reserve University, where she currently directs the Collegium Musicum. Debra can be heard on the Capstone, Bright Angel, Naxos, Avie, Delos, CPO, and ATMA labels and has had live performances featured on CBC Radio Canada, Klara (Belgium), NPR’s Performance Today, WQXR (New York City), WCLV (Cleveland), WKSU (Kent), and WGBH Boston. Debra is an unabashed foodie and loves commuting by bike from her home in Cleveland’s historic Ohio City neighborhood.

Recently lauded for her "invigorating verve and imagination" by the Washington Post, **Julie Andrijeski** is among the leading baroque violinists in the U.S. Her unique musical performance style is greatly influenced by her knowledge and skilled performance of baroque dance, and she often combines these two mediums in the classroom, on stage, and at workshops. Ms. Andrijeski is a full-time Lecturer in the Music Department at Case Western Reserve University where she teaches early music performance practice, baroque dance, and directs the Case/CIM Baroque Orchestra and chamber ensembles. Before joining the Case faculty, Ms. Andrijeski was a full-time member of the early-music trio Chatham Baroque. Now, in addition to her teaching, Ms. Andrijeski regularly appears with many baroque groups including, among others, Quicksilver, Cleveland's Apollo's Fire, the New York State Baroque Orchestra, the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Cecilia's Circle, Spiritus Collective, and the King's Noyse. She has been on the faculties of the Baroque Performance Institute at the Oberlin Conservatory and the Madison Early Music Festival for over a decade, and joined the faculty of the Vancouver Early Music summer festival this year. Ms. Andrijeski received her Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Early Music from Case Western Reserve University in May 2006. Previous degrees include a B.M. in Violin Performance from the University of Denver (1985) and an M.M. in Violin Performance from Northwestern University (1986)

Josh Lee performs on viols and double bass with some of the world's leaders in early music. A graduate of the Peabody Conservatory and the Longy School of Music, Josh is the founder of Ostraka, and he has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Carmel Bach Festival, Musica Angelica, Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Seattle Baroque Orchestra, and Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. Josh's performances have been heard on National Public Radio's *Performance Today* and *Harmonia*, and he has recorded for Dorian, Koch International and Reference Recordings. Josh recently returned home from a US and South American tour of The Infernal Comedy starring acclaimed actor John Malkovich. Josh is a resident of San Francisco and director of the Viola da Gamba Society of America’s Young Players’ Weekend.

Michael Sponseller has appeared throughout Europe and North America with critical acclaim as a soloist, conductor, and chamber musician. Winner of the American Bach Soloists Competition (1998) and the Jurow International Harpsichord Competition (2002), he holds the distinction of being a two-time prizewinner at the Festival of Flanders International Harpsichord Competition (Bruges), as well as taking prizes in Montréal and Kalamazoo. Mr. Sponseller has performed and recorded frequently with the Handel and Haydn Society, Smithsonian Chamber Players, American Bach Soloists, New York Collegium, Apollo’s Fire and recently, the Carmel Bach Festival. In addition to holding degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Royal Conservatory of

Music in The Hague, Mr. Sponseller was a teacher of harpsichord at the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music. To continue to explore his interest in vocal and chamber music on period instruments, he founded Ensemble Florilege in 2007. Mr. Sponseller can also be heard on several recordings from Electra, Vanguard Classics, Naxos, Delos and Centaur.