

Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (ca1601- ca1672) is considered the father of the French harpsichord School, a style of playing that reached its zenith in the works of François Couperin and Rameau. He was the first musician to hold the position of Harpsichordist of the King.

To the pay of six hundred livres (pounds) he added, around 1650, a pension of one thousand écus (crowns) drawn on the royal treasury, which is an indication of the esteem he then enjoyed. He published two books of works for solo harpsichord in 1670, and a number of other pieces survive in various manuscripts. In addition to his activities as a composer Chambonnières was also an accomplished teacher. Among his pupils were many of the most important players and composers of the time: the three Couperin brothers, Hardel, one of the Gautiers, d'Anglebert, Lebègue, Cambert and Nivers. Chambonnières showed the desire, never realized, to seek his fortune at the court of Queen Christina of Sweden. To this end, Constantijn Huygens was enlisted to pave the way for him there. Meanwhile, his current position at the French court was jeopardized by a nearly successful plot to force Chambonnières to resign in favor of his student Louis Couperin. The loyal refusal of Louis Couperin to displace Chambonnières could only have sprung from high personal regard. In 1662 he finally found himself abruptly deprived of his pension. As a result he sold his post to his pupil d'Anglebert for 2000 pounds. Chambonnières held his engagements, but the services were covered by d'Anglebert; Chambonnières no longer appeared at court, in the concerts or the ballets.

Chambonnières was famous early in his life. Mersenne described his playing as distinguished by delicacy and subtlety of touch, fleetness without display, and imaginative embellishment: "each time he played a piece he mingled in new beauties *ports de voix*, passages and various ornaments, with *doubles cadences*".

A little later Mersenne praised him even more highly: "After listening to the harpsichord played by the Sieur de Chambonnières ... I can only express my feeling by saying that one should hear nothing afterwards, whether one desires lovely melodies and fine accompanying parts mingled together, beauty of rhythm, fine touch or lightness and speed of hand ... it can be said that this instrument has met its ultimate master."

The works of Chambonnières have been preserved for us in two engraved volumes and in several manuscripts.

The Bauyn Manuscript (ca1690) is considered one of the most important sources of French keyboard music of the seventeenth century. This single source brings together 350 pieces, most written for the harpsichord, and is organized into three sections, the first consecrated entirely to Chambonnières, the second to Louis Couperin, and the third to various composers like Froberger, Hardel and du Mont. The pieces in the ms are grouped to mode, and within each modal grouping are further organized accordingly to dance forms.

Some of the Doubles have been taken from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire in Paris. These doubles are published in the complete Chambonnières edition published by the Broude brothers (edited by P. Brunold and A. Tessier). I have adhered to the French customary grouping; allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue. Even though Chambonnières is not known to have formally used the word "Suite" he

does group his dances in this order. Optional pieces include the chaconne, pavane, gaillard, volte, brusque and menuet.



Chambonnières ornament table

d minor Suite

Allemande La Loureuse

Courante*

Double de la Courante*

Sarabande*

Pavanne*

Sarabande*

Gigue la Madelainette

G major Suite

Pavane l'Entretien des Dieux

Courante

Double de la Courante**

Sarabande Jeunes Zéphirs*

Double de la Sarabande Jeunes Zéphirs**

Menuet

Chaconne*

Gigue*

C major Suite

Allemande Le Moutier*

Double Allemande Le Moutier by L.Couperin*

Courante Iris

Double de la Courante Iris by d'Anglebert**

Sarabande de la Reyne

Gigue La Verdinguette

Double de la Gigue La Verdinguette attributed to d'Anglebert**

g minor Suite

Allemande dite l'affligée*

Courante

Sarabande

Gigue

F major Suite
Allemande
Courante*
Sarabande O Beau Jardin attributed to d'Anglebert**
Double de la Sarabande O Beau Jardin attributed to d'Anglebert**
Chaconne*
Chaconne*

All pieces were taken from the engraved books except where noted:

* Bauyn Manuscript

** ms Réserve 18 223 Bibliothèque du Conservatoire Paris

A note on the recording:

The harpsichord used in this recording was made by in 1996 in Amsterdam by Joop Klinkhamer after an instrument by Ruckers-Goujon (1632/1742) currently in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. In its present state, the original is strung very lightly to preserve it; our instrument conforms more to 17th century stringing practices which makes it suitable for earlier harpsichord repertory since its tonal palette is both dark and transparent with clear articulation. 2x8' 1x4' FF-ff'' A=392.

Every technical effort was made in this recording. Producer David Bowles and engineer David Tayler tried to recreate the feeling of sitting in front of the instrument as it was being played, with the image hovering slightly higher than the speakers. In addition, we felt it was necessary to have an absolutely transparent texture, in which the inner voices of the music can be clearly heard without any metallic ring to the overtones. Two matched pairs of Schoeps microphones were used in conjunction with a Mytek 8X96 AD converter in four tracks at 88.2 kHz/24 bit. A high speed preamp was used to capture the transients in the sound and provide superior imaging, and the tracks were combined and edited using the Sadie system. The imaging is so sharp that you can hear the bass notes coming from the right side of the harpsichord, just as in a live acoustic!

Recording Production, Digital editing and Mastering: David v. R. Bowles

Engineering: David Tayler and David v. R. Bowles

Tuning: Andrew Lagerquist

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