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THE PROGRAMMATIC CLAVECIN PIECES
OF FRANÇOIS COUPERIN

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

There are two major purposes in selecting Couperin's programmatic clavecin pieces for study; to prove their importance in the evolution of programmatic music and to prove the value of their study by the modern pianist.

All of the pieces which are not in dance form, and some of the dance movements, bear descriptive titles. The only pieces selected for general evaluation are those bearing descriptive titles though they are no more valuable in consideration of pianistic techniques and complexities than those pieces by the same composer which bear only dance forms as their titles.

The reason for choosing to evaluate only those pieces bearing descriptive titles is that they ". . . are either entirely ignored or greatly underrated in the history of programme music."¹ The non-descriptive pieces, though gems of the style, are completely overshadowed by the finer dance movements of the Suites and Partitas of J. S. Bach.

¹Frederick Niecks, Programme Music in the Last Four Centuries (London, 1906), p. 10.

François Couperin represented the culmination of the French School of Clavecinists and his works ". . . achieved the first artistically satisfactory results in programme music."²

Method of Selecting Pieces

In determining the importance of Couperin's pieces in the evolution of programme music it is essential to discover particular musical devices utilized in expressing the titles. These devices will be discussed in Chapter IV (The Programmatic Content of the Pieces). To facilitate recognition of the devices, the titles of the pieces have been translated and where necessary a brief explanation of the evident or probable import of the titles is given.

Due to the enormous number of Couperin's programmatic pieces, a detailed analysis of each piece will not be attempted in this paper. Instead, a general survey will be made. The programmatic content of the pieces within the first and second ordres, Volume I, will be discussed since their content is exemplary of the constituent pieces of all the ordres. From the remaining ordres a few suites and individual pieces will be discussed due to their obvious programmatic interest. They appear chronologically in Chapter IV.

²Ibid., p. 31.

Representative forms will be pointed out in the above pieces, and where of particular interest, the melody, rhythm, and harmony will be mentioned.

Numerous books have attempted to classify some of the pieces into various categories. However, it is impossible to create sufficient categories in which to classify all pieces. Many titles have such ambiguous or totally obscure meanings that classification is impossible. Pieces with such inexplicable titles and with an obvious lack of programmatic content will be briefly mentioned in Chapter IV. Further reference will not be made to them unless they evidence a peculiar element worthy of mention in Chapter III, or in Chapter V.

Pieces bearing person's names as titles will also be treated in the above manner. These pieces may or may not be sketches of particular personalities. It is quite possible that such pieces were not intended to portray individuals, but to serve purely as tributes to those whose names the pieces wear.

Whatever the purpose of the pieces, Couperin admits in his Preface to Volume I of Pièces de Clavecin that he had an object in mind in composing each of the pieces and that different occasions furnished the ideas. Thus the titles

correspond to the ideas he had, but he begs to be excused from rendering full account for the ideas.³

³Shlomo Hofman, L'Oeuvre de Clavecin de François Couperin le Grand (Paris, 1961), p. 25.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL POSITION OF THE PIECES IN THE EVOLUTION OF PROGRAMME MUSIC

What began as an occasional jeu d'esprit in imitative or descriptive music in the fourteenth century grew into a standard modern art form, which reached its apogee in the works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century romantics.

Though programme music did not achieve artistically satisfactory results until the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries at the hands of the French clavecinists, Couperin and Rameau, there were attempts at such by French composers as early as Jannequin (1485-1560).

La Guerre, a descriptive chanson commemorating the Battle of Marignano (1515), by Jannequin, gave rise to innumerable "Battle" pieces in the sixteenth century and forward. Other popular subjects of that period were: the chase, animal voices, and bird voices (e.g., Le Chant des Oiseaux, Jannequin). Similar pieces were composed by Nicolas Gombert (1500-1556 ?), Lorenz Lemlin (early sixteenth century), Claudin de Sermisy (d. 1562), Pierre Certon (1510-1572), and numerous others.

The imitative pieces these men composed were free in form and similar to the fourteenth century Italian caccia, the first known descriptive music which used realistic devices, i.e., shouts, bird songs, horn calls, exclamations, and dialogue, in a primarily humorous vein with the aid of hocket and echo effects. There is a great similarity of subject matter used by the early Italian and succeeding French schools. Among those subjects used by the Italians were: a fishing party, market-place, party of girls gathering flowers, a fire, battle or any scene of animation, examples of which may be found in the Squarcialupi Codex.

The secular vocal pieces of the fourteenth-century Italian and sixteenth-century French schools are the most primitive type of programme music. They are purely imitative of tones and noises, not interpretive of moods and emotions. Nonetheless, the late fifteenth and sixteenth century did provide a higher type of programme music in the sacred compositions of Josquin des Prez, Orlando Lasso and Palestrina. These men mastered the expression of their texts as to contrition, jubilation, and devotion.

Meanwhile, descriptive secular music advanced in the madrigals of the period 1560-1590. A considerable amount of naive **text** painting (expressing simple pictorial ideas of the **text** in the music) and emotional expression, by breaking the text with rests, characterized these madrigals by Lasso,

Palestrina, Andrea Gabrieli, Cyprian de Rore, Philippe de Monte, Luca Marenzio and Thomas Morley.

The lute had been used to accompany motets and chansons from about 1450-1650 and arrangements of these descriptive vocal pieces were made for the lute. However, the first examples of original instrumental programme music are pieces for the virginal by English composers Hugh Aston (d. 1522), Giles Farnaby (1560-c.1600), William Byrd (1543-1623), John Bull (c.1562-1628), Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), and John Mundy (d. 1630).

The improvisatory style of the lutenist school carried over into the early clavecin school in the form of the prelude. Various dance forms were also transferred from the lute idiom to that of the keyboard instruments.

Spread chord formations, plucked string effects, and overlapping canonic entries were elements of lute technique preserved in keyboard music. The simulated polyphony of the lute style gave birth to a polyphonic mode of composition for the clavecin, which was much more capable of reproducing polyphony than was the lute.

The works of Chambonnières (1602-1672), founder of the French clavecin school, are generally regarded as an extension of the lutenist school. His finest pieces derive from the polyphonic elements of the lute idiom.

Though the English virginal school evidenced a few novel strivings in the realm of programme music, its principal interest showed itself in compositional forms derived from intricate technical devices (e.g., the especially popular variation form).

John Mundy's Fantasia (his second fantasia in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book) is an excellent example of one of the earliest programmatic virginal pieces. Brief sections of the piece are labeled "Fair Weather," "Lightning," and "Thunder," which are repeated in that order twice more. Each section utilizes a different but equally expressive motivic device in depicting the titles. A five-bar closing section is labeled "A Clear Day."

Niecks felt that Mundy's Fantasia failed as descriptive music, as he found the effects of "Thunder" and "Lightning" imperceptible without the titles.¹ Nonetheless, one finds that the second device which Mundy utilized for "Lightning" is similar to a device used by Beethoven in the fourth movement, "Thunderstorm," of his Sixth Symphony (Pastoral) (1809). Though Beethoven does not label this device as Mundy does, the similarity of context makes it seem probable that the same short and vigorous rhythmic motive would indicate "Lightning." (See Figure 1, below.)

¹Niecks, op. cit., p. 14.



Fig. 1--Comparison of motivic devices employed by Mundy and Beethoven.

Henry E. Krehbiel points out Mundy's third motivic device representing "Lightning" as being like the device Wagner employed for the same in Die Walküre (1854-1856).² (See Figure 2.)



Fig. 2--Comparison of motivic devices employed by Mundy and Wagner.

Within the compass of a five-year period beginning with the death of King James I in 1625, the chief exponents of English virginal music (Byrd, Gibbons, Dowland, Bull, and Mundy) died, and with them died the first era of significant keyboard music.

Between the close of this era (c. 1630) and the culmination of the French school of clavecin composers (c.1700), only two English virginal composers are worthy of mention:

²Henry E. Krehbiel, The Pianoforte and Its Music (New York, 1925), p. 73.

John Blow (1658-1708) and Henry Purcell (1658-1695).

Their keyboard compositions were not primarily programmatic ones but followed the pattern of the continental (especially French) dance suite.

The German clavier school, though small due to its preoccupation with the organ as principal keyboard instrument, bridged the gap in the evolution of programmatic keyboard music from 1630 to 1700.

Johann Jakob Froberger (1637-1695), who studied in Rome under Frescobaldi, was the first distinctively great German clavierist. One of the first attempts at programmatic writing by a German keyboard composer was an Allemande by Froberger which according to Mattheson purports to describe in musical tones twenty-six incidents of an eventful Rhine journey.³

Diedrich Buxtehude (1637-1707) is important in the chronology of programmatic clavier composers because of his attempt to express the nature and properties of the then known seven planets in a set of seven Suites. Expression of the same subject was attempted in the symphonic idiom over two centuries later in The Planets (1915) by Gustav Holst.

Another prototype of late nineteenth and early twentieth century programmatic music, particularly

³Ibid.

foreshadowing the works of Richard Strauss and his disciples, was a set of Four Chorale Variations (published 1683) under the title "Musical Death Thoughts" by Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706).

Couperin's immediate precursor in programmatic clavier music was Johann Kuhnau (1667-1722). Kuhnau carried his programmatic ideas to an amusing extreme more akin to those of Berlioz and Strauss than to Couperin, who illustrates his ideas in a more dainty and subtle manner. Kuhnau's Bible Sonatas (1700) suffice to illustrate the devices he utilized. His most clever device is seen in the Fifth Sonata telling the story of Gideon, savior of Israel, in which the theme representing the dewy fleece and dry ground is found in retrograde representing the dewy ground and dry fleece.

Couperin's German contemporaries whom he greatly influenced were Georg Muffat (d. 1704), Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741), Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), and Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Comparable to Kuhnau's Bible Sonatas is J. S. Bach's Capriccio (On the Departure of a Beloved Brother). Each section of the Capriccio bears a superscript revealing its content as section one: Arioso, Adagio, "Cajolery by his friends to dissuade him from his journey."

The French clavecin school, which reflected the spirit and manners of the court of Louis XIV under which it

developed, included Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (1602-1672), Louis Couperin (1626-1661), uncle of François Couperin le Grand, Henri d'Anglebert (1635-1691), Gaspard Le Roux (d.1707?), François Couperin le Grand (1668-1733), François Dandrieu (1684-1740), Jacques André Dagincourt (1684-1750?), Louis Claude Daquin (1694-1772), and Jean Phillippe Rameau (1683-1764).

Couperin's four volumes of Pièces de Clavecin, totaling 236 pieces, only 28 of which are not programmatically titled, were published in 1713, 1716-17, 1722, and 1730, respectively. These volumes give the clearest insight into the then most advanced instrumental programme music.

A comparatively small number of compositions by the other above-mentioned clavecinists are easily accessible in modern editions. Some of those which are available are Rameau's Le Rappel des Oiseaux, La Poule (imitates the cackling of a hen), Les Tendres Plaintes, L'Egyptienne, La Timide, Les Soupirs, La Livri, and Les Tendres Reproches.

Among the disciples of Couperin, Daquin and Dandrieu were the most faithful. The others tended toward discipleship of Rameau, who had departed from Couperin's linear style of composition into a more symphonic and harmonic style. The influence of Couperin was barely visible in the works of these men only twenty-five years after his death. The dance suite was superceded by the Italian

concerto form (allegro-adagio-allegro). With the advent of the classical forms the virtuoso keyboard style of Mozart became more evident. Couperin's contrapuntal style was supplanted by one built on simple chordal progressions with a melody in the upper voice accompanied by an Alberti bass.

Couperin's contemporary German followers, Bach, Fux, Telemann, and Georg Muffat, copied his light airy texture and contrapuntal styles. One generation later, Georg Muffat's son, Gottlieb, Johann Mattheson, and the theoretician, Johann Joachim Quantz, verbally upheld Couperin's style, yet composed in a more homophonic style yielding a much thicker texture than that of Couperin.

The latest examples of Couperin's influence in Germany are in the works of Bach's sons, especially C. P. E. Bach. Other evidences of his influence are seen in the works of Graupner, Krebs, Kirnberger, and Marpurg.

The contrapuntal tradition of Couperin, like that of J. S. Bach, was eclipsed by the overpoweringly popular Mannheim School, and the Viennese style of keyboard composition.

Though Couperin's classique style of presenting his musical ideas, whether programmatic or absolute, was soon outmoded, his programmatic ideas lived on to complete fruition at the hands of countless nineteenth-century composers. Though conveyed in a romantic and homophonic style,

the spirit of the linear composers and the French classical tradition was revived in the programmatic works of Berlioz, the late works of Fauré, and the works of Debussy and Ravel.

CHAPTER III

FORM

Structure of the Ordre And Its Relation to the Suite

The four volumes of Couperin's Pièces de Clavecin consist of loose aggregations of dance movements, rondeaux, and other short movements called by various genre names, many of which bear additional descriptive titles. Couperin refers to each group as an ordre. The number of pieces constituting an ordre varies from as few as four in the fourth ordre to as many as twenty-three in the second ordre.

The pieces within a given ordre are related tonally and occasionally are related programmatically. Frequently, a simple ordre will contain both dance movements and consecutive but unrelated programmatic pieces (e.g., the ninth ordre opens with Allemande a deux Clavecins, closes with Menuet, and includes eight intervening unrelated programmatic pieces). The works of Denis Gaultier (1603-1672), the most eminent French lutenist, Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, and Gaspard Le Roux, clavecinists, furnish multiple examples of dance pieces interspersed with similar programmatically-titled pieces.

Couperin frequently indicates that certain program-matically-related pieces are to be played as a suite. Table I on the following page lists those pieces which the composer has indicated to be played "de suite." Single pieces which are divided into sections marked "Première Partie," etc., are not considered suites and are excluded from Table I.

Occasionally two or more consecutive pieces are programmatically related and would seem appropriate played as a suite though Couperin did not indicate that their performance should be "de suite," (e.g., Quatorzième Ordre: Le Rossignol en amour, La Linote éfarouchée, Les Fauvètes plaintives, Le Rossignol vainqueur). In no instance is it apparent that a complete ordre should be played as a suite. It is the performer's option to determine and select appropriately related pieces to be played in a group.

Couperin's programmatic titles, particularly those of mythological derivation, were influenced by the titles Denis Gaultier used. Some of Couperin's titles can be traced to identical titles in Gaultier's La Rhétorique des Dieux, a collection of sixty-two lute pieces. Those titles adopted by Couperin are L'Atalante, La Diane, La Pastoralle and L'Héroïque.

Within La Rhétorique des Dieux, Gaultier grouped all of his pieces according to mode. Within these groups are

TABLE I
 PROGRAMMATICALLY TITLED PIECES
 INDICATED TO BE PLAYED
 AS SUITES

Volume	Ordre	Title of Suite	Titles of Pieces
II	7	<u>Les Petits Ages</u>	<u>La Muse Naissante</u> <u>L'Enfantine</u> <u>L'Adolescente</u> <u>Les Délices</u>
II	10	<u>La Triomphante</u>	<u>Bruit de Guerre</u> <u>Allegresse des Vainqueurs</u> <u>Fanfare</u>
II	11	<u>Les Fastes de</u> <u>la grande et</u> <u>ancienne</u> <u>Ménéstrandise</u>	<u>Les Notables, et Jurés-</u> <u>Ménéstrandise</u> <u>Les Vieieux, et les Gueux</u> <u>Les Jongleurs, Sauteurs;</u> <u>et Saltinbanques:</u> <u>avec les Ours, et</u> <u>et les Singes</u> <u>Les Invalides: ou gens</u> <u>Estropiés</u> <u>au service</u> <u>de la grande</u> <u>Ménéstrandise</u> <u>Désordre, et déroute de</u> <u>toute la troupe:</u> <u>causés par les</u> <u>Yvroques, les</u> <u>Singes, et</u> <u>les Ours</u>
III	15	(no title)	<u>Muséte de Choisi</u> <u>Muséte de Taverni</u>
III	19	(no title)	<u>Les Calotins et les Calo-</u> <u>tines, ou la Piéce</u> <u>à tretous</u> <u>Les Calotines</u>
IV	20	(no title)	<u>La douce Janneton</u> <u>La Sezile</u>
IV	22	(no title)	<u>Le Trophée</u>

TABLE I--Continued

Volume	<u>Ordre</u>	Title of Suite	Titles of Pieces
			<u>Premier Air pour la Suite du Trophée</u> <u>Second Air</u>
IV	23	<u>Les Satires</u>	<u>Chevre-pieds</u> <u>Vivement, et dans un goût burlesque.</u>

found some suites of programmatically related pieces (e.g., the second group, in the Dorian mode, contains Diane and Atalante; the twelfth group, in the sous-Ionien mode contains the "suite" Tombeau de Sr. Lenclos, La Consolation des Amis du Sr. Lenclos, and Leur Resolution sur sa mort, plus additional unrelated programmatic pieces, such as La Pastoralle, etc.

Prior to François Couperin's programmatic suites for clavecin, there seems to exist only a single pair of programmatically related pieces written specifically for the clavecin. They are Louis Couperin's Pièce qui a été faite pour contrefaire les Carillon de Paris, and Deuxième Carillon, both of which are in F major.¹

The nucleus of Couperin's ordre is occasionally the allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue as in the fifth ordre. These four dances were gradually becoming the

¹Oeuvres completes de Louis Couperin (Paris, 1936), pp. 144-145.

standard group of dance movements among which might be inserted other dances forming a suite. This restrained construction of the dance suite was followed by the contemporary German composers Froberger, Kuhnau, Buxtehude, Mattheson, Loeillet, and Bach, and by Corelli in his Italian Sonatas da camera which included four to eight pure dance movements. Even the French composers Chambonnières and Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) followed this conception of the dance suite. Meanwhile, Nicolas Lebègue (1631-1702) composed suites of five to fifteen pieces, Louis Couperin grouped three to twenty-three per suite, and Jean-Henry d'Anglebert combined fifteen to twenty pieces of one tonality.

The designation suite for a set of tonally related pieces was often omitted by the composer and added by the publisher purely as a means facilitating reference. In Gaspard Le Roux's Pièces de Clavecin (1705), the termination of one suite is obvious only by the termination of a given tonality, and the fact that the following piece is a prelude or allemande grave.

Couperin's programmatic pieces which are not basically dance movements are most often rondeaux, or a primitive form of the modern rondo. In the rondeau, the first theme is stated, followed by a short episode of allied but distinct material involving a simple modulation in turn followed by a restatement of the tune in its original form and key, this alternation repeated ad libitum, (e.g.,

Les Timbres, seventeenth ordre, Volume III). The evolution of the modern rondo form can be noted in Le Carillon de Cithère of the fourteenth ordre, Volume III. The most apparent difference between the old rondeau and the modern rondo is in the return of the first theme, which in the modern rondo is not always in its original form. The rondeaux of Nicolas Lebègue are the sole precursors of Couperin's programmatic rondeaux.

In structure, Couperin's ordres seem to be an amalgamation of the Italian sonata da camera and the sonata da chiesa, the latter containing strictly non-dance movements. The likeness to the sonata da camera may be seen in comparing Corelli's First and Fifth Sonates da camera a tre to Couperin's second and third ordres which include Prelude, Allemande, Corrente or Sarabanda, and Gavotta. The Couperin Preludes are not published with the ordres, but were composed at a later date and appear in L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, 1717.

The eight preludes in L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin are in the keys of the pieces of the first and second volumes of Pièces de Clavecin, and according to Couperin were composed to ". . . provide an acceptable announcement of the keys in which the pieces are going to be played, . . . (and) are useful, too, in loosening the fingers; and often,

in trying over instruments upon which one has not yet practised."²

The brevity of the preludes causes Hofman to cleverly describe their use as that of an "hors-d'oeuvre avant la pièce principale."³ In this manner, Couperin intends that a prelude may precede any piece or pieces of the same tonality, thus supplying the lack of such a piece at the first of an ordre or suite.

Rameau recaptured the suite à la Couperin in his Livres de Clavecin which contains complete or partial dance suites augmented by numerous free pieces.

Resumé of Previous Observations

Certain generalizations can be made concerning Couperin's method of organizing pieces within a given ordre. Comparatively viewing the four volumes of Couperin's clavecin pieces, one can observe certain perhaps inadvertent tendencies on the part of the composer to organize his ordres similarly to those of his precursors and contemporaries. Nonetheless, he did not disturb his own unique personal characteristics.

²François Couperin, L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, translated by Anna Linde (Wiesbaden, Germany, 1933), p. 28.

³Shlomo Hofman, L'Oeuvre de Clavecin de François Couperin le Grand (Paris, 1961), p. 56.

The first similarity of Couperin's organization of the ordre with that of the traditional suite is the tonal relationship of the pieces within the ordre. The key center established by the initial piece is maintained throughout the ordre though the mode fluctuates with the various pieces. The only ordre utilizing a relative key relationship rather than a parallel one is the twenty-fifth ordre, which opens in the key of E-flat major, after which the remainder of the pieces are in C minor or C major.

The structural similarity of the ordre and the suite lies in the frequent use of certain dance movements as the nucleus of the ordre as seen in the first, second, third, fifth, eighth, and ninth ordres.

According to tradition, the allemande is the first dance movement of a suite and may or may not be preceded by a prelude, toccata, fantaisie or other free introductory piece. Couperin employs the allemande as the initial piece in seven out of twenty-seven ordres (first, second, third, fifth, ninth, eighteenth, and twenty-seventh ordres). Couperin utilizes the allemande form in only two other positions, the second piece in the eighth ordre, and the third piece in the twenty-first ordre.

The majority of the initial pieces of the ordres are of moderate tempo, the closing pieces in quick tempo. A light, whimsical style prevails in the predominately

programmatic closing pieces (e.g. Les Amusemens, seventh ordre; Les Bagatelles, tenth ordre; Le Petit-Rien, fourteenth ordre; Saillie, twenty-seventh ordre). The remainder of the terminal pieces, which constitute the majority, are various exceptions to the above type, and exemplify Couperin's individuality in deviating from the traditional form of the suite.

Couperin's ability to conform where advantageous is seen in his composition of the eight preludes to accompany the pieces in the first two volumes. These early volumes also show more tendency toward the traditional structure of the dance suite than do the later two volumes in which Couperin shows himself master of an individual style displayed in unique combinations of forms.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROGRAMMATIC CONTENT OF THE PIECES

The Titles

Though Couperin has not left us explanations of the ideas behind his titles, translation of the titles and diligent study of their derivations illuminate musical devices which adequately express the titles, a knowledge of which is deemed essential in rendering adequate interpretations in performing the pieces.

The French titles of the pieces are (with rare exceptions) in the feminine gender. This was a common practice among French composers of the era, as can be seen in numerous other collections of clavecin pieces.

When the titles are based on person's names, the use of the feminine gender often obscures the identity of the person, e.g., the grave and closely wrought texture of La Couperin indicates a self-portrait of the master rather than a portrait of a feminine relative as the gender would indicate.

Similarly, Couperin was fond of camouflaging his subjects by inventing nouns from adjectives, giving them feminine endings and preceding them with the, omitting the

original noun subject. La Harpée is the best example of such a construction and is the only piece which bears an explanation by the composer. Couperin added Pièce dans le goût de la harpe which indicates that the missing noun is Pièce. On this basis, pure conjecture determines the original noun (subject) in the other titles.

Couperin has composed two principal types of programme music, that which interprets moods and emotions and that which imitates. The latter type of piece is in the minority and is not as aesthetically pleasing as is the former, which evokes in the hearer a mood sympathetic with that of the composer.

The imitative pieces may be broken down into two subtypes, those which imitate another style of instrumental composition such as La Mézangère (lute style) and La Harpée, and those which imitate tones and noises such as Les Timbres or Les Abeilles.

The Subjects

The first type of programmatic music mentioned above, which expresses the longings of the soul, is reflected in the titles such as Les Sentiments and Les Langueurs Tendres, and in those titles of mythological derivation, Les Pellerines, Le Carillon de Cithère, La Coribante, and others.

The subjects of Couperin's imitative pieces are limited to those which can be expressed by the available resources of the clavecin (ornaments, timbres, melodic shapes, textures, dynamics, etc.). The most frequently employed of these resources is the popular ornamentation of the period, used to depict birds, bees, bells, and other similar subjects.

Thus the success of Couperin's imitative music is dependent upon the resources of the stylistic period within which he composed. His achievement in the realm of programmatic keyboard music is analogous with that of the nineteenth and twentieth century symphonists who had at their finger-tips the multiple coloristic effects of the large modern orchestra with which to depict their programmes. Both explored the fullest extent of their resources and attained perfection in their respective media.

Volume I, Ordre I

L'Auguste.--His Majesty, though referring to the king, is always in the feminine gender. Therefore, it seems L'Auguste refers to Louis XIV for whom Couperin served as clavecinist and organist. This grand allemande preserves the dignity of le Roi Soliel.

La Majestueuse.--This majestic sarabande seems appropriately dedicated to Louis XIV as does the above allemande.

La Milordine.--The title of this gigue could be interpreted to represent a lady or socially-prominent woman, though the French use the word Milady as the feminine equivalent of Milord. La Milordine is probably another reference to Milord, the King, Couperin having given Milord the feminine ending to match the titles of other dance movements constituting a suite in tribute to Louis XIV.

Les Sylvains.--This rondeau is the first non-dance movement in the ordre. The title may indicate sylvan dieties and thus mark the change from the suite dedicated to the royalty to a group of programmatically-unrelated pieces, or the sylvan dieties may be a further attempt to flatter the royalty.

Couperin has divided the piece into two distinct sections, the first in G major and the second in G minor. He has also marked the beginning of each couplet of the first section causing the section to fall clearly into the pattern A:|| BACA. The section marked Seconde Partie seems to be three variations built on A, B and C of the first section.

The piece is written exclusively in the bass clef and is marked Majestueusement, sans lenteur and would aptly pay tribute to the royalty or the gods.

Les Abeilles.--In this rondeau the humming of bees is imitated by two obvious devices--the pivotal melodies, and the ornamentation (mordents and trills).

The form is a very simple rondeau, falling into three concise sections: A (eight measures, parallel period):|| B (eight measures, contrasting period) A (eight measures, parallel period).

The brevity of the piece, and the limited range of the melodic lines, permits a concise representation of the subject. The light texture of two voices (reinforced only occasionally by a third voice) allows the melodic lines to depict distinctly the humming of bees.

La Nanette.--A person?

Les Sentiments.--A beautiful melody suspended over ascending and descending arpeggiated chords in a thick homophonic texture yields the expression of the sentiments in a graceful, slow-moving Sarabande.

La Pastorelle.--The bergerie genre popular in both poetry and music of the period is exemplified in La Pastorelle. One other piece in the first ordre, La Fleurie ou La Tendre Nanette is similar in programmatic content. La Moissonneurs, Les Bergeries, and other pieces from the sixth ordre are of the pastoral genre.

Couperin published La Pastorelle first in 1711 as a vocal piece. In comparing the two arrangements of the piece one can see Couperin's differentiation of styles of

composition for the voice and keyboard. The clavecin arrangement evidences a definite regard for the clavecin as a contrapuntal instrument. As in most of Couperin's clavecin pieces, the texture is light due to two-voice construction, reinforced by octaves only at occasional points. In contrast, the accompaniment to the vocal version utilizes a three- to four-voice homophonic style; is simple in construction, and is relatively free from ornamentation. In both versions the naive tune in a slow $\frac{6}{8}$ meter characterizes the pastoral quality.

The piece is in simple binary form: A (four measures):|| B (eight measures):|| with a coda of four measures, exactly repeating the last four measures of the B section. Couperin frequently used this type of coda to conclude a piece, as in La Majestueuse which also gives a second coda (repeating the last four bars plus ornée que la première). In the vocal arrangement of La Pastorelle a clavecin introduction is provided by placing the coda also at the opening of the piece.

Les Nonètes.--Though Les Nonètes is not translatable, the sub-titles, Part I, Les Blondes (in minor), and Part II, Les Brunes (in major), apparently portray girls.

La Bourbonnoise.--This Gavotte may be in a style characteristic of the Bourbonnoise province of Central France, or it may portray a girl from that region.

La Manon.--A popular feminine name of the period. L'Abbé Prévost employed it in his novel of 1733, L'Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut, from which Massenet and Puccini drew their opera texts for Manon and Manon Lescaut, respectively. No connection can be established between the Couperin piece and the Prévost novel since Couperin published La Manon as a part of the first ordre of the first volume of clavecin pieces in 1713, and the Prévost novel did not appear in Paris until published in 1733.

L'Enchanteresse.--An abstract person may be portrayed in this rondeau, or possibly the title is a reference to the enchanting repetition of the rhythmic device of the dotted eighth and sixteenth.

La Fleurie ou La tendre Nanette.--The Flower or the gentle Nanette. The two titles are perhaps analogous in terms of beauty. The piece seems to be of the bergerie genre and the form and meter coincide with that of La Pastorelle.

Les Plaisirs de Saint Germain en Laye.--The fêtes champêtres held in the celebrated gardens of the palace are depicted in this rondeau.

Ordre II

La Laborieuse.--This Allemande depicts industry and painstaking care, both of which are felt in the weighty rhythms and carefully worked out modulations which encompass at least six different keys within the duration of only twenty-eight bars. La Laborieuse is one of Couperin's most mature works of the first volume of clavecin pieces, and prophesies the quality of composition seen in his late volumes.

La Prude.--The simplicity of this sarabande provides contrast to the more elaborate dance movements which precede it.

L'Antonine.--This simple piece in binary form is the first intervening non-dance movement within the suite of the second ordre. Though in the traditional feminine gender, the title indicates a portrayal of a masculine character, Anton.

La Charoloise.--This small piece, fourteen measures in length, is perhaps dedicated to a person from Le Charolais, a district in central Burgundy.

La Diane and Fanfare pour la Suite de la Diane.--Both pieces are appropriately based on bugle calls since Diane translates Reveille.

La Terpsichore.--The muse of dancing and choral song.

La Florentine.--According to Hofman, the title conceals Lully.¹ The dedication to Lully is conceivable since Lully was of Florentine origin and the piece is a highly developed dance form, derived from the dances of the ballets de cour which Lully composed.

La Garnier.--The title surely refers to Gabriel Garnier, joint organist of the Chapelle Royale and close friend of Couperin.

La Babet.--The Babette was a popular dance of the period.

Les Idées heureuses.--Pleasant Thoughts. The quasi-polyphonic lute style is reproduced here as in La Garnier with numerous tied notes and suspensions.

La Mimi.--An unknown person.

La Diligente.--Perpetual diatonic lines of sixteenth notes cleverly express the title.

La Flateuse.--The Flatterer.

La Voluptueuse.--A Voluptuous Woman. The principal interest lies in the form of the piece. The rondeau is stated

¹Hofman, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

only once, after which the three couplets follow consecutively, each bearing the indication Rondeau da Capo as was the original manner of printing the vocal rondeau. The majority of Couperin's rondeaux are written out in the more modern fashion, with occasional alterations in ornamentation, etc., appearing in the repeated rondeau.

Les Papillons.--Butterflies provide the subject for this programmatic piece typical as the closing piece of an ordre. Les Papillons is Couperin's only piece in six-sixteen time. The piece is in binary form and has the rhythmic feeling of a gigue.

Ordre III

La Ténébreuse.--Melancholy Allemande.²

La Luqubre.--Dismal, ominous Sarabande.

Les Pélerines.--The Pilgrims.

La Marche.

La Caristade--The Alms-giving.

Le Remerciement--The Thanksgiving.

Les Pélerines, the Pilgrims to Cithera, as disclosed in the text of the vocal version, published in 1712, is one of

²See pp.24,25 for the derivation of the omitted noun subject.

the finest examples of Couperin's most aesthetically pleasing programmatic pieces. In it are portrayed the longings of the souls of the people of the grand siècle.

The mythical Isle of Cythère became a popular subject through which to exemplify the struggle to achieve in art what life itself could not provide. Couperin's Les Pélerines (1712) inspired Watteau's painting L'Embarquement pour Cythère (1717) which in turn inspired the modern piano compositions L'Isle Joyeuse (Debussy), L'Embarquement pour Cythère (Poulenc), and A Watteau Paysage (Godowsky).

The miseries of humanity are forgotten in the gay first section, The March, in which the pilgrims embark for the blessed isle of refuge. Nostalgia is poignant in the second section which is in minor. The Thanksgiving is shown in a return to the major mode for the closing section.

Les Laurentines.--An order of nuns, or a species of flower.

L'Espanolette.--A little Spanish girl.

Les Regrets.--Regrets.

Les Matelotes Provençales.--Sailors from Provence, southeast France.

La Favorite.--The adjective favorite may refer to a person or to the piece.

La Lutine.--The Elf.

Ordre IV

La Marche des Gris-Vêtus.--A march dedicated to a famous French regiment which wore grey uniforms.

Les Bacchanales.--Devotees of Bacchus (Dionysus, Greek god of wine), or perhaps depicts the Bacchanalian orgy itself.

Enjouemens Bachiques--Playful mood of the celebrants.

Tendresses Bachiques--Gentle mood of the celebrants.

Fureurs Bachiques--Passionate mood of the celebrants.

La Pateline.--A person exemplifying characteristics of Patelin, a crafty, suave, and charming character of a fifteenth-century French farce.

Le Reveille-matin.--The alarm clock or morning reveille.

Ordre V

La Logivière.--A Name?

Allemande.

Première Courante.

Seconde Courante.

La Dangereuse.--Another of Couperin's invented nouns, this one from the feminine gender of the adjective dangerous.³

Sarabande.

Gigue.

La Tendre Fanchon.--The gentle Fanny (an easy-going girl in folk song).

La Badine.--Probably a coquettish girl.

La Bandoline.--Possibly a woman from Bandol near Toulon.

La Flore.--Goddess of Flowers.

L'Angélique.--The title may refer to Angélique Beaudet, wife of Nicolas Sezile to whom La Sezile is dedicated in the twentieth ordre, Volume IV.⁴

La Villers.--Christophe-Alexandre Pajot, Seigneur de Villers, to whom the first volume of clavecin pieces is dedicated, or perhaps the title refers to his wife, Anne de Mailly.⁵

Les Vendangeuses.--The wine harvesters, vintagers.

³Ibid.

⁴Wilfrid H. Mellers, François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition (New York, 1951), p. 361.

⁵Hofman spells the surname of the Seigneur de Villers Payet (L'Oeuvre de Clavecin de François Couperin le Grand, p. 27), whereas Mellers gives the spelling Pajot (François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition, p. 357).

Les Agréments.--The piece may have been intended as a study in ornamentation though the graces are fewer and less complex than those found in many other pieces. There are chains of suspensions, appoggiaturas, numerous trills and mordents, though no turns nor different types of graces simultaneously employed. It is possible that instead of, or in addition to the above implication of a study in ornamentation that the piece is intended as a satire on the social graces.

Les Ondes.--The Waves. This piece is highly successful in imitating the waves due to the abundance of sequential figures in both the rondeau and the couplets. The slow $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, predominance of the low register of the keyboard, and descending chains of sixteenth notes in the fourth couplet add to the aural picture of the waves.

Volume II, Ordre VI

Les Moissonneurs.--The Reapers.

Les Lanqueurs Tendres.--Tender languishing.

Le Gazouillement.--Warbling.

La Bersan.--André Bauyn, Seigneur de Bersan, or his daughter.⁶

⁶Ibid., p. 358.

Les Baricades Mistérieuses.--The Mysterious Baricades.
A study in suspended voices, the only solution to the title being that the continuous suspensions form a barricade to the basic harmony.

Les Bergeries.--The Shepherdesses.

La Commère.--The Gossip.

Le Moucheron.--The Gnat.

Ordre VII

La Ménetou.--Though Tessier thinks the title to be someone's name, Mellers translates it to be a little church or monastery.⁷

Les Petits Ages.--Short Epochs.

La Muse Naissante--The Birth of the Muse.

L'Enfantine--The Infant.

L'Adolescente--The Adolescent.

Les Delices--The Delights or Pleasures.

La Basque.--One of a people from the Pyrenées region on the Bay of Biscay.

⁷Mellers, op. cit.

La Chazé.--A name?

Les Amusemens.--The Amusements.

Ordre VIII

La Raphaéle.--The masculine name Raphael.

L'Ausoniéne.--An archaic, poetical name for an Italian.⁸

L'Unique.--Hofman thinks the adjective unique describes Louis Marchand, virtuoso organist and contemporary of Couperin, who also served as organist at the Chapelle Royale.⁹

La Morinète.--Daughter of the composer Jean-Baptiste Morin (1677-1745).¹⁰

Ordre IX

La Rafrachissante.--The Refreshing One.

Les Charmes.--The Charms.

La Princesse de Sens.--There was no Princess of Sens. The person to whom the piece is dedicated was probably a very fine, princess-like creature.¹¹

⁸Ibid.

⁹Hofman, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁰Mellers, op. cit.

¹¹Ibid.

L'Olimpique.--Olympian game.

L'Insinuante.--One who insinuates.

La Séduisante.--The alluring one.

Le Bavolet-flotant.--A peasant's cap or bonnet floating.

Le Petit-deuil, ou les trois Veuves.--Bereavement, or the Three Widows.

Ordre X

La Triomphante.--The Triumphant.

Part I: Rondeau. Bruit de Guerre--Noise of war.
Combat--Combat.

Part II: Rondeau. Allegresse des Vainqueurs--
Joy of the Conquerors.

Part III: Fanfare.

In composing La Triomphante, Couperin utilized the subject of battle which Jannequin had popularized in France nearly two hundred years before in a descriptive chanson, La Guerre, (1515). Though the medium had been transferred from vocal to instrumental, its purposes and characteristics remained basically the same, i.e., to imitate the sounds of battle, and express the excitement and various emotions thereof.

In the instrumental realm of battle pieces, the best known precursor of Couperin's La Triomphante is William Byrd's The Battell (My Ladye Nevell's Booke, 1591). Great

similarities can be found between La Triomphante and The Battell, especially when considering The Battell and the two pieces surrounding it as constituting a suite. The March Before the Battell, The Battell, and The Galliarde for the Victorie correspond to Couperin's three movements: Bruit de Guerre, Allegresse des Vainquers, and Fanfare.

Each piece or movement of both the Byrd and the Couperin suites is then divided into subtitled sections depicting various actions. The Byrd pieces have many more subtitled sections than do the Couperin, thus constituting a much longer suite. The Couperin battle pieces are longer than are the other pieces within his clavecin volumes.

The first part or piece of Couperin's La Triomphante is a rondeau titled Bruit de Guerre in which the metallic timbres and percussive effects of the harpsichord are employed to create the sounds of battle.

The third couplet of the rondeau is marked Combat. Here, repetitive arpeggiated sixteenths, static harmonies for the duration of as many as eight measures, drone bass, and extended sequences and trills emphasize the clash of arms. The fanfare-like rondeau returns to close the movement.

The above couplet, Combat, is comparable to the passage bearing Byrd's indication "the battels be joynd" within the section titled "The marche to the fighte" from The Battell. The following section, "The Retreat" is built upon a figure

resembling a trumpet call (8, 5, 3, 1 in C major) comparable to the fanfare-like return of the rondeau at the close of Couperin's first piece.

Couperin's second piece, Allegresse des Vainqueurs is the most musically satisfying of the suite, La Triomphante. The joy of the conquerors is made extremely obvious in the lilting 6:8 meter with upward climbing melody in the rondeau and first couplet. Similar upward-tending melodic lines also express joy in Byrd's The Galliarde for the Victorie. The second couplet of Couperin's Allegresse abounds with extended trills and the third couplet with chains of rapidly descending sixteenth notes.

The closing movement, Fanfare, of Couperin's suite is, of course, analogous to "The Trumpetts," of Byrd's The Battell, being based on the first five overtones of the harmonic series available to the bugle.

La Mézangère.--A fabricated noun referring to Mezangeau, the lute player and composer. The piece is in lute style.¹²

La Gabriéle.--Possibly refers to Gabriel Garnier, close friend of Couperin's, and joint organist of Chapelle Royale, as does La Garnier of the second ordre, Volume I.

¹²Ibid.

La Nointéle.--Jean de Turmenies, Seigneur de Noitéle [sic], or his wife.¹³

La Fringante.--A frisky, nimble girl, or the adjective may apply to the piece.

L'Amazône.--?

Les Bagatelles.--Trifles. A charming, nonsensical piece with which to close the tenth ordre.

Ordre XI

La Castelane.--An inhabitant of Provence or the Basses-Alpes.¹⁴ Perhaps Castelane is the feminine gender of the masculine position of governor of a castle.

L'Étincelante ou la Bontems.--The Sparkling One or The Diversion. Charlotte de Vasseur who married Louis-Nicolas Bontemps, first valet de chambre to the king, is considered by Mellers to be the subject of this piece.¹⁵

Les Graces Naturelles.--The Natural Graces. The dedication is as in the above piece. It bears the subtitle Suite de la Bontems, and consists of two movements.

La Zenobie.--?

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Les Fastes de la grande et ancienne Ménestrandise.--

The pretentious parade of the grand old Ménestrandise.

Act I: Les Notables, et Jurés-Ménestrandeurs--

The notables, and Jurors--Ménestrandeurs.

Act II: Les Vieieux, et les Gueux--The old

men, and the beggars.

Act III: Les Jongleurs, Sauteurs, et sal-

inbanques: avec les Ours, et les Singes--The jugglers, acrobats, and tumblers: with bears, and monkeys.

Act IV: Les Invalides: ou gens Estropiés au

service de la grande Ménestrandise--The disabled or crippled folk in the service of the grand Ménestrandise.

Act V: Désordre, et dérouté de toute la

troupe: causés par les Yvroignes, les Singes, et les Ours--Chaos, and confused flight of all the troupe: caused by the drunkards, the monkeys, and the bears.

The Ménestrandise was a musicians trade guild, founded in 1321, and sanctioned by King Louis in 1659. Couperin and a group of contemporary composers protested against the union which tried to prevent non-members from performing. They were successful in their appeals to the King in both 1693 and 1707.

The above group of satirical pieces was contributed by Couperin as a part of the propaganda war against the Ménestrandise. The members of the union and their head,

le roi de ménétriers, are presented as low characters, on a level with acrobats, strolling players with bears and monkeys, cripples, and beggars.

It is interesting to note that the five pieces or acts constitute a miniature ballet de cour perfectly in the form of the classical ballet. The first section of the traditional ballet was dedicated to the royalty. Couperin's first act is a march bearing the title Notables . . . Ménestrandeurs. Its pompous style evidences a kind of promenade.

The second section of the ballet sees a number of entries with grotesque dances. Here Couperin introduces the old men and beggars with their doleful, then ridiculous airs in the minor mode over an ostinato bass.

Quaintly masked musicians with lutes and viols to play instrumental interludes and to accompany the recitative and airs are seen in the third section of the classical ballet. Couperin's third act is a brief air again suspended over an ostinato bass. The jugglers, acrobats, and tumblers with bears and monkeys are the "musicians."

The climax of the ballet de cour was reached in the fourth section with the entrance of the King and nobles. At this point Couperin's humor reached its peak. He introduced the crippled and disabled folk in the service of the Ménestrandise. Obvious even without his indications,

the "dislocated" folk are depicted in $\frac{3}{2}$ time with the right hand in the treble clef with continuous syncopation over a hopping bass line marked Les Boiteux, the lame. The octaves in the bass hop upward by step from the last eighth note of the measure to the first half note of the next measure with rests occurring on the remaining beats of the measures.

The concluding section of the traditional ballet, the general dance and chorus, is reproduced in Couperin's fifth act with all the characters mentioned taking part in the chaos and confused flight. A profusion of running sixteenth notes over a tremolo pedal in 4:8 and then 6:8 marked Très vite closes the ludicrous scene. One final comment by Couperin, Les bequilles (crutches), points out the appearance of the hopping octaves in the bass, this time in much more of a hurry, without rests, and descending.

Ordre XII

Les Juméles.--Opera glasses.

L'Intime.--Intimacy.

La Galante.--The Lover.

La Coribante.--One of the mythical attendants of Cybele, who was supposed to accompany her with wild dancing and music while she wandered by torchlight over the mountains.

La Vauvré.--Presumably a name.

La Fileuse.--The name of a special type of instrumental piece with rapid figuration suggesting the motion of a spinning-wheel as fileuse is derived from the verb, filer, to spin.

La Boulonoise.--An inhabitant of the area of the Pas de Calais.

L'Atalante.--A heroine of Greek mythology, beautiful and fleet of foot.

Volume III, Ordre XIII

Les Lis-naissans.--Budding lilies.

Les Rozeaux.--Reeds.

L'Engageante.--The pleasing one.

Les Folies Françaises, ou les Dominos.--The French Folies, or the Masqueraders.

Premier Couplet: La Virginité, sous le Domino couleur d'invisible--Virginité, under the invisible masque.

2^e Couplet: La Pudeur, sous le Domino couleur le rose--Modesty, under the pink domino.

3^e Couplet: L'Ardeur, sous le Domino incarnat--
Ardour, under the red domino.

4^e Couplet: L'Esperance, sous le Domino vert--
Hope, under the green masque.

5^e Couplet: La Fidélité, sous le Domino bleu--
Fidelity, under the blue domino.

6^e Couplet: La Persévérance, sous le Domino
gris de lin--Perseverance, under the gray linen masque.

7^e Couplet: La Languueur, sous le Domino
violet--Languor, under the violet domino.

8^e Couplet: La Coqueterie, sous diférens
Dominos--Coquetry, under different masques.

9^e Couplet: Les Vieux Galans et les trésorieres
suranées, sous des Dominos pourpres et feuilles mortes--
The ancient gallants and the retired treasurers, under
purple dominos and dead leaves.

10^e Couplet: Les Coucous bénévoles, sous des
Dominos jaunes--The benevolent cuckoos, under yellow
masques.

11^e Couplet: La Jalousie taciturne, sous le
Domino gris de maure--Taciturn jealousy, under the
Moorish grey domino.

12^e Couplet: La Frénésie, ou le Desespoir, sous
le Domino noir--The Frenzy, or the Despair, under the
black masque.

Of the dozen couplets comprizing this chaconne, some contain highly obvious musical devices expressing the various human passions masquerading under appropriately colored dominos.

The transparent texture and simplicity of La Virginité and La Pudeur adequately express these virtues. Since modesty is given to be a feminine quality, Couperin places the latter couplet exclusively in the treble clef. L'Ardeur is characterized by a continuous dotted rhythm. Unbroken whirling figures characterize both L'Esperance and La Frénésie. Simplicity is again a programmatic device in La Fidélité.

La Persévérance is evidenced by the strength of the variation and the repetition of the falling interval from tonic to dominant or vice versa at the opening of each phrase.

La Langueur makes the most of the melting harmonies possible on the ground bass. It is unique in having a time signature of $\frac{1}{2}$ and is the only couplet which does not conform to the traditional triple meter of the eighteenth century chaconne.

La Coquéterie, sous diférens dominos is found in 6:8, 3:8, and 2:4 time, obviously showing its whimsicality.

Les Vieux Galans are vividly expressed with heavily marked beats in a tempo grave.

The light, airy texture, and brief alternating intervals of thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths, with the autograph indication coucou coucou imitate Les Coucous Bénévoles.

Powerful internal chromaticism expresses La Jalousie Taciturne.

L'Âme en peine.--The soul in punishment.

Ordre XIV

Le Rossignol en amour.--The nightingale in love.

La Linote éfarouchée.--The frightened linnet.

Les Fauvètes Plaintives.--The plaintive warbler.

Le Rossignol vainqueur.--The victorious nightingale.

La Julliet.--July.

Le Carillon de Cithère.--The bells of Cytherea.

Though tonally related to the other pieces constituting the fourteenth ordre, in regard to sound, Le Carillon is more closely related to Les Timbres of the seventeenth ordre and the subject matter is derived from the 1712 composition of Les Pélerines of the third ordre, Book I.

Le Carillon de Cithère is one of the most beautiful of Couperin's pieces imitating bells. Its principal programmatic devices are those most popular ones utilized in imitative bell pieces. It is almost exclusively written in the treble clef, and repeated notes are sounded at the octave, third, fifth, or sixth, interspersed with a melody of ascending or descending diatonic structure. Both devices can be found in Les Timbres (Couperin), The Bells (Byrd), La Campanella (Liszt), and Campanella (Medtner), the latter two pieces of nearly two centuries later.

The transparent texture of the Couperin piece adds to its bell-like quality. Two voices in simple but fast moving counterpoint predominate. Only occasionally a third voice is added to reinforce the harmony at cadence points.

Though miniature, the form of Le Carillon de Cithère appears to be a rather primitive rondo form, falling into the pattern A,B:|| A₁B₁A₂B₂::|| with the variants of the original themes progressing from the key of D major to A major and its dominant and back to the original key, all within the space of sixty-six measures.

Le Petit-Rien.--The little trifle.

Ordre XV

La Régente, ou la Minerve.--The ruling Minerva, Roman goddess of the art of peace and industry of war.

Le Dodo, ou L'Amour au Berceau.--The lullaby, or love of the cradle. Dodo is the French equivalent of "by-by" in English.

L'Évaporée.--A flighty girl.

Muséte de Choisi and Muséte de Taverni.--Couperin indicated these musettes to be played de suite. The titles may refer to a tavern in the Choisy-en-Brie vicinity.

La Douce, et Piquante.--A sweet and witty girl.

Les Vergers fleuris.--Blossoming Orchards.

La Princesse de Chabevil, ou la Muse de Monaco.--The princess of Chabevil, fifth daughter of the Prince of Monaco, a patron of Couperin.¹⁶

Ordre XVI

Les Graces incomparables, ou la Conti.--The incomparable charms, or Louise-Elisabeth de Bourbon who married de Conti in 1713.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid., p. 360.

¹⁷Ibid.

L'Himen-Amour.--Greek god of Marriage.

Les Vestales.--The virgins consecrated to Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth and its fire, whose duty it was to keep the sacred fire burning.

L'Amable Thérèse.--The amiable Therese.

Le Drôle de Corps.--A bizarre and grotesque creature.¹⁸

La Distraite.--The inattentive one.

La Létiville.--A name?

Ordre XVII

La Superbe, ou la Forqueray.--The superb one, or Antoine Forqueray (1671-1745), maître de musique to the Duc d'Orleans, and one of the greatest viol players and composers of his day.

Les Petit Moulins à vent.--The little windmills.

Les Timbres.--Little bells.

Les Petites Chrémières de Bagnolet.--The little milk maids of Bagnolet which lies a few miles from Paris.

¹⁸Ibid.

Ordre XVIII

La Vernéville and La Verneville.--A woman and her daughter?

Soeur Monique.--Sister Monique.

Le Turbulent.--The turbulent or stormy (life). One of the few titles in the masculine gender.

L'Atendrissante.--Tender or affectionate person.

Le Tic-Toc-Choc, ou les Maillotins.--Maillotins is another of Couperin's contrived words. The root from the old French is mail, meaning hammer. Couperin is possibly referring to the clattering hammers of the clavecin and the "tick-tocks" of the clock.

Le Gaillard-Boiteux.--The jolly, crippled fellow is portrayed in a dotted rhythm with the unusual time signature of 2:6 meaning 6:8. The piece is marked "Dans le goût Burlesque."

Ordre XIX

Les Calotins et les Calotines, ou la Pièce à tretous.--Two pieces which Couperin has indicated should be played de suite. The Calotins were members of a secret military society (La Calotte) which was formed in

1702 with the purpose of protesting the growing melancholy of the court; they wrote satirical verses and performed burlesque plays. After Couperin's day they were transformed into a serious military society.

L'Ingénue.--The artless girl.

L'Artiste.--The artist.

Les Culbutes Jacobines.--Jacobin somersaults. Jacobines refers to friars of the Dominican Order since the political party of the same name, denoting radical democrats, did not come into existence until 1789.

La Muse-Plantine.--One of Couperin's most inexplicable titles. Unless Plantin is someone's name, Couperin must have invented a botanical muse.

L'Enjouée.--The lively (piece), typical of those with which Couperin closes an ordre.

Volume IV, Ordre XX

La Princesse Marie.--Marie Leszczynska, fiancée of Louis XV. The third section of the piece is appropriately "dans le goût Polonois."

La Bouffonne.--A comedienne.

Les Chérubins ou l'aimable Lazure.--The cherubim or the kind Lazarus.

La Croûilli ou la Couperinée.--Is Couperin camouflaging himself behind a title in the feminine gender, or is he honoring his daughter, Marguerite-Antoinette, as both Hofman¹⁹ and Tessier²⁰ believe? Though the delicacy of the piece does indicate the feminine gender, the performer must decide for himself whom he shall portray.

Couperin signed the title page of his first organ masses "François Couperin, Sieur de Crouilly, organiste de St. Gervais." Though Couperin's biographers have proven none of the Couperins had a legitimate right to the title Sieur de Crouilly, François Couperin's father, Charles, is often referred to as sieur de Crouilly, and it is plausible that François Couperin took over the title after his father's death. François Couperin acquired a legitimate title, "le comte Couperin," from Louis XIV in 1696.

La fine Madelon.--The delicate Magdalen.

La douce Janneton and La Sezile.--Couperin indicates that these two pieces should be played alternately.

¹⁹Hofman, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁰André Tessier, Couperin (Paris, 1926), p. 70.

La Sezile may refer to Nicolas Sezile, treasurer of the Offrandes et Aumones du Roi, or to his wife, Angélique Beaudet.

Les Tambourins.--The title may possibly refer to tambourines as the musical instruments known today, but more probably the title refers to long slender drums, or tabors used in Provence, southeast France. These drums were especially popular with the troubadours who used the Provençal language from the eleventh to the middle of the fourteenth century. The aspirated pedal point occurring in both sections of the piece gives the imitation of the tabor drum.

Though Couperin indicates the movements of Les Tambourins as first and second airs with a Da Capo of the first air to close, the pieces are in 3:4 time, each beginning on the second beat of the bar, which indicates the possibility that they were intended to imitate the old Provençal tambourin dance, or its music. Whatever the intent, the pieces constitute a traditionally gay ending for the twentieth ordre.

Ordre XXI

La Reine des coeurs.--The queen of hearts.

La Bondissante.--The title may possibly be a noun derived from the verb bondir, to caper, especially since

the piece is marked gaiément (gaily). With such an indication and a meter of 6:8, one would scarcely consider the title's referring to one "left in the lurch" derived from the French idiom faire faux bond (to leave in the lurch).

La Couperin.--Though in the feminine gender, this piece is more likely to represent François Couperin himself than is La Croûilli ou la Couperinète due to the grave and closely wrought texture of the piece as opposed to the delicate and lighter texture of La Croûilli. Nonetheless, the piece has been attributed to both Couperin's wife and to his daughter, Marguerite-Antoinette.

La Harpée.--The harp (piece). Pièce is undoubtedly the missing noun since Couperin adds Pièce dans le goût de la Harpe.

La petite Pince-sans-rire.--Another equivocal title. Mellers supposes it to represent a woman "with a rather malicious turn of humour."²¹ Since the piece follows immediately after La Harpée, the first idea to come to mind on seeing the word pince is its possible reference to the plucked harp string. The pincé simple is used so few times during the piece that the title could not indicate a study in the execution of the pincé simple.

²¹Mellers, op. cit., p. 361.

Ordre XXII

Le Trophée.--The memorial of a victory.

Le point du jour.--Daybreak, or possibly the district with that name in the west of Paris.

L'Anguille.--The Eel.

Le Croc-en-jambe.--The trip-up.

Les tours de passe-passe.--Sleight of hand.

Ordre XXIII

L'Audacieuse.--An audacious woman.

Les Tricoteuses.--The reference may be to women who are knitting since tricot is a knitted fabric.

L'Arlequine.--A buffoon or comic character.

Les Gondoles de Délos.--The gondolas of Delos is another fantastic title derived from semi-reality with a turn toward the imaginary or fanciful. In reality, Venetian gondolas and the Grecian isle of Delos are completely unrelated.

Les Satires.--The satires.

Part I--Gravement ferme, et pointé.

Part II--Vivement, et dans un goût burlesque.

Ordre XXIV

Les vieux Seigneurs.--The old masters.

Les jeunes Seigneurs cy-devant les petits maîtres.--
The young masters, previously the petty masters.

The above two pieces contrast the old grand goût of the Lullian opera with the new divertissement.²²

Les dars-homicides.--Fatal darts.

Les Guirlandes.--Garlands.

Les Brinborions.--Trifles.

La Divine Babiche ou les amours badins.--The admirable lap-dog, or the playful affections.

La Belle (autre fois L'Infante).--A beautiful girl, once an infant, or La Belle may modify the noun pièce and L'Infante may have been an earlier title.

L'Amphibie.--Another mystifying title, possibly applicable to any small animal of the class of vertebrates, Amphibia. Nonetheless, the piece is of the longest and most noble of Couperin's pieces.

²²Ibid., p. 362.

Ordre XXV

La Visionnaire.--The imaginary.

La Mistérieuse.--The mysterious.

La Monflambert.--A very feminine piece, therefore surely depicting Anne Darboulin, the wife of Monflambert, the King's wine merchant.²³

La Muse victorieuse.--The victorious muse.

Les Ombres errantes.--The piece is marked Languissement and depicts wandering shadows or ghosts.

Ordre XXVI

La Convalescente.--The convalescent.

La Sophie.--Sophia.

L'Epineuse.--Probably a feminine player of the spinet.

La Pantomime.--Pantomime.

Ordre XXVII

L'Exquise.--The exquisite (allemande).

Les Pavots.--The poppies.

²³Ibid.

Les Chinois.--One practicing eighteenth-century chinoiserie, i.e., nonsensical formality.

Saillie.--Of the many definitions given this word, the most likely seems to be a witticism, as the piece is marked vivement and is the final piece in the ordre, apparently following the frequent style of the closing piece of an ordre.

CHAPTER V

THE PEDAGOGICAL VALUE OF THE PIECES

"Playing the clavecin is not merely a matter of digital facility; it is a question of learning how to interpret, with sympathy and taste."¹

It is hoped that the preceding chapter has helped to establish the correct interpretations of the programmatic content of the Couperin pieces by showing some of the musical devices utilized in the expression of the programmes, whether the devices be the harmonic structure, the musical figuration, the ornamentation, tempo indications, or meter.

In order to give a faithful rendering of Couperin's music and thus reveal all of its composite charm and freshness it is highly recommended that one study Couperin's L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin. Even Couperin himself exhorted his students "to lay aside any prejudices they may have" and follow the rules set down in his L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, which are "absolutely necessary if they are to attain success in the execution of my pieces."²

¹François Couperin, L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, cited in Mellers, François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition, pp. 291-292.

²Couperin, "Preface," L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin.

In L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, Couperin discusses the various ornaments, gives preliminary exercises for their execution, fingering for the difficult passages from the first two volumes of clavecin pieces, and includes eight graded and fingered preludes with comments on performing them in good taste.

The above work also serves as a pedagogical method incorporating many points which parallel modern teaching techniques. It is hoped that the student will have had the advantage of beginning his keyboard experiences with the Couperin method or that at least his study of Couperin's pieces will be guided by L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin.

In authoring a pedagogical method, Couperin initiated the modern fingering system, employing the thumb and fifth finger as we do today, if not more readily. Couperin's predecessors of the English virginal school emphasized the use of only the second, third, and fourth fingers.

Couperin stressed legato playing and its mastery by changing fingers on the same key.

As a guide for the execution of his ornaments, the student is referred to the table prefacing each volume of clavecin pieces. Further explanation and preparation for playing the ornaments is given in L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin, e.g., Couperin gives chains of thirds fingered 5-3, 4-2, etc., for playing simultaneous ornaments with one hand.

It has been observed that the trills and mordents are used as programmatic devices primarily in the pieces imitative of bells and birds. The aspiration³ and suspension⁴ are used in the tenderly expressive pieces and create a very effective rubato when employed by "personnes susceptibles de sentiment."⁵

On the expression of the programme by the cadence⁶ Couperin speaks himself that in his pieces are description, and expression of feeling, which renders excellence in his music that is lacking in the Italian Sonatas. He wishes that his indications Tendrement, Vivement, etc., could be translated so that foreigners could recognize this quality of excellence in his pieces.

In performing the clavecin pieces on the piano it is suggested that they be played at a slower tempo, the most important reason being because Couperin stated that the pieces with tender and delicate character should be played more quickly on the harpsichord than on other instruments

³Aspiration, , played .

⁴Suspension, , played .

⁵Mellers, op. cit., p. 307.

⁶Cadence translates as tempo or degree of speed, together with accent, phrasing, etc., in short, expression or feeling.

due to the short duration of its notes.⁷ Therefore, with the resonance and long sustaining power of the modern piano, the pieces should be played at a slower tempo in order to enjoy clarity of line and note.

Though difficult, it is hoped that the modern performer will adhere to Couperin's original fingering in order to achieve the proper phrasing which he has indicated with great care.

Couperin's fingering is analogous to that of Artur Schnabel, whose fingering at times seems overly complicated and mystifying. Perfect phrasing is always the answer.

It is hoped that the foregoing comments have to some extent secured the pedagogical value of Couperin's pieces and that some of the difficulties in performance by the modern pianist have been pointed up with suggestions for solving and finding aid in solving them.

The value of the study of Couperin's clavecin pieces by the modern pianist cannot be denied, even by those who wish to confine his clavecin works to the harpsichord. If not considered ends within themselves, the Couperin pieces surely can serve as stepping stones toward the more advanced contrapuntal works of J. S. Bach. The ornamentation of Couperin as well as his contrapuntal techniques of

⁷Couperin, op. cit., p. 24.

composition strongly influenced Bach. The student is referred to Wilfrid Mellers, François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition, p. 306, for a list of Couperin's ornaments and Bach's equivalents.

The discipline of interpreting Couperin, playing with rhythmic precision, and properly executing the ornamentation on the piano is an invaluable study from which the mental and digital discipline will surely benefit.

It has been the intent of this paper to arouse interest in Couperin's programmatic clavecin pieces by proving their importance in the evolution of programme music and their value for study by the modern pianist.

It is hoped that in reading the preceding chapters the pianist has recognized Couperin's worth and that in searching for variety in repertoire he will turn to this period of composition for works which are both pleasing to the ear and pianistic.

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