



# Grandeur ET Tendresse

## Airs from French Baroque Opera

Sunday, May 9, 2021 at 4:00 pm

Geoffrey Burgess and Margaret Owens, *oboes and recorders*

Stephanie Corwin, *bassoon*

Rebecca Humphrey, *cello* | Leon Schelhase, *harpsichord*

*Armide*, Overture

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)

Ritournelle from *Céphale et Procris*

Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre  
(1665-1729)

"La Cupis"

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

"Goutons un doux repos"

Michel Lambert (1610-1696)

"Vos mépris"

Michel Lambert

"Ombre de mon Amant"

Michel Lambert

"Air pour les divinités de la terre"

André Cardinal Destouches

from *Marthésie*

(1672-1749)

Minuet from *Première Concert, Concerts Royaux*

François Couperin  
(1678-1733)

From *Pièces en Trio* in C Major

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Fantaisie - Sarabande - Chaconne

"Air des Bacchantes"

François Couperin

from *Huitième Concert, Les Goûts-Réunis*

Sound Recording: David Walters | Videography: David Walters and Austin Greene

Produced and Edited by David Walters, LLC

# Notes on the Program

We begin (as any opera should) with an overture: this one to *Armide*, Lully's last *tragédie en musique*. The founder of the French opera tradition, Jean-Baptiste Lully also invented what came to be known as the *stile majestueux* (or majestic style) that we hear in the opening processional sections of his French overtures. Designed to announce the arrival of the king for his grand operatic celebration, the majestic opening is countered by a faster music in imitative style, often rounded out with a return to the opening solemnity. The vigorous rhythms of the middle section in the overture to *Armide* belie the depth of the tragedy it precedes.

The ritournelle from *Céphale et Procris* displays the elegant compositional style of Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, the only female composer active at the Paris Opéra in the 18th century. This music heralds the arrival of the eponymous heroine with allegorical figures exemplifying the feminine qualities of voluptuousness, pleasure, and grace.

“La Cupis” from the fifth of Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concert* represents a multi-layered association with opera. The title alludes to Marie-Anne Cupis, known as La Camargo, who had established a dazzling reputation as principal ballerina at the Opéra, and who Rameau likely got to know around the time he published his pieces for obbligato harpsichord and accompanying instruments just one year after the première of his first opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733. He later reworked “La Cupis” as part of his *La Temple de la Gloire*, a grandiose *opéra de circonstance* written in 1745 to celebrate a French military victory. Normally heard on flute and viola da gamba, our version with two oboes brings added piquancy and vocality to this exquisite music.

The ground bass, usually in the form of a slow stepwise descent repeated incessantly below the melodic parts, was the pervasive emblem of lament

found across many operas in intimate scenes where a character expresses loss or longing. *Goûtons un doux repos* and *Vos mépris* are prime examples by Lully's father-in-law, Michel Lambert, the father of French operatic vocal style. The sweetness of isolation amidst love's tempests, and the acceptance of suffering from a scorned lover are the emotions that Lambert captures with simplicity and grace. These are stand-alone airs but prefigure the operatic air. The richly-scored introduction and epilogue to *Vos mépris* display how instruments dialogued with and provided lavish frames for the vocal solos (here taken by the bassoon), a formula that is followed again in *Ombre de mon amant*.

This cry to the lover's specter is answered by creatures that rise from the nether regions in the *Air pour les divinités de la terre* from Destouches's opera *Mathésie*, concerning the queen of the Amazonian nation. The vigor of these superhuman women's dance presented in an arrangement for cello and continuo lead us to a wistful minuet from François Couperin's *Concerts royaux*, played on cello and bassoon.

Our final set comes from Marin Marais's *Pièces en trio*—the first book of trio sonatas to be published in France (1692). Although not written for the theatre, this music is by one of the most important opera composers in the post-Lullian period, and is itself strongly theatrical. The string of three dances we have chosen from the first suite could well have been lifted from one of his operas. The grand chaconne is a particularly fitting conclusion to the instrumental suite: imagine the whole company of singers and dancers assembled on stage for the operatic apotheosis. The musical scoring, with its vivid evocation of choreographic gestures, kaleidoscopic shifts of style, and the switches between oboes and recorders over yet another ground bass, provides moments for everyone to shine.

We send in the clowns with Couperin's playful *Air des bacchantes*, bringing our little drama to its happy conclusion.

—Geoffrey Burgess and Margaret Owens

# About Us

Kleine Kammermusik is dedicated to reviving the wealth of Baroque chamber music for winds and continuo. With paired oboes and recorders, and a supportive continuo group of bassoon, cello, viola da gamba, and keyboard, the group comprises a versatile blend of instruments suited to music from a wide range of contexts, from vivid outdoor celebrations and military fanfares to intimate chamber gatherings. Through innovative programming and imaginative use of space they create fresh and entertaining events with a distinctively historic flavor.

Kleine Kammermusik takes its name from a chamber ensemble at the Dresden court in the early 18th century. It is also the name of a collection of pieces by Telemann that he dedicated to four oboists. Intimate in nature and flexible in instrumentation, these pieces embody our approach to sharing music in creative ways that are both colorful and conversational.

Kleine Kammermusik's members are all leading exponents and hold prominent posts in early music groups across the country. Not only are they fine virtuoso players in their own right, but together they have developed an intuitive feeling for the musical style, and their rapport produces performances full of elegant control and superb artistry.

Kleine Kammermusik has performed and given workshops in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Providence, Connecticut, and Washington, DC. Their 2018-19 season included performances on concert series presented by the PhilaLandmarks, Capitol Early Music, and Ravensong, including a collaboration with Il Giardino d'Amore and baroque dancer Hubert Hazebroucq.

Kleine Kammermusik's debut recording, *Fanfare and Filigree: Chamber Music from Paris and Dresden*, was released on the Acis label and has received praise from *Early Music America Magazine*, *Colorado Public Radio*, and *BBC Radio*.

# Upcoming Concerts:



**Fuguing from Obrecht to Bach**  
*Piffaro with Kleine Kammermusik*  
Online Premiere Friday, May 28 at 7:30pm  
Available through June 3  
Tickets at [piffaro.org](http://piffaro.org)



**Amherst Early Music Festival**  
Online Concert  
July 2021 (Date TBD)



[www.kleinekammermusik.com](http://www.kleinekammermusik.com)

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