

Chatham Baroque & RENAISSANCE BAROQUE

In the Court of the King

MUSIC OF BACH AND MARAIS

Parker Ramsay

harp & harpsichord

Arnie Tanimoto

viola da gamba

Friday, April 5 • 7:30pm
Teutonia Männerchor

Saturday, April 6 • 7:30pm
Hicks Memorial Chapel
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary



23/24 SUBSCRIPTION SERIES

In the Court of the King

Music of Bach and Marais

Parker Ramsay *harp & harpsichord*
Arnie Tanimoto *viola da gamba*

Prélude Sainte-Colombe (c. 1640 – c. 1700)

Pièces pour le luth Robert de Visée (c. 1655-1732/3)

Allemande « La royale »

Courante

Sarabande

Gavotte

Masquerade en rondeau

Chaconne

La guitare royale Francesco Corbetta (1615-1681)

Caprice Chaconne

Pièces de Viole, Livre Marin Marais (1656-1728)

Prélude

Caprice

Allemande

Courant

Sarabande

Gavotte en rondeau

Gigue

Sallie du café

Chaconne

Intermission

Suite no. 4 in E-Flat, BWV 815 J.S. Bach (1685 - 1750)

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Gavotte

Menuet

Air

Gigue

Prelude ('Arpeggiata') C. F. Abel (1723-1787)

Adagio

Sonata in G Major, BWV 1027 Bach

Adagio

Allegro ma non tanto

Andante

Allegro moderato

PROGRAM NOTES

One of the downsides of loving art is the gradual process of interrogating the provenance of artifacts that draw you in. We love Dürer, but would his work have been so striking had he not studied in Venice? Shakespeare's language is transcendent, but where would he be without John Florio? And in recent years, questions have arisen as to where Bach might have been without his library.

One of the enduring enigmas about Bach is that he possessed a vast knowledge of an array of musical styles from all over Europe despite having never traveled to places like Italy, France, or even very far into Germany. His library included ancient and modern Italian masters, from Frescobaldi (whose *Fiori musicali* he copied) to Antonio Vivaldi (whose concertos he transcribed for the organ) and even to Pergolesi (whose *Stabat Mater* Bach reset in German to be made suitable for a Lutheran liturgy). This should not be so surprising; Italian music was alive and well all over Europe, especially as opera became a dominant musical form, giving rise to careers such as George Friedrich Händel's.

However, elsewhere in Bach's library sat works from France, which he and his older brothers studied and copied. When Bach set out how ornaments should be interpreted in his music, he lifted instructions directly from François Couperin's *L'Art de toucher le clavecin*. Organ works by Louis Marchand, Nicolas de Grigny, and André Raison appear, as well as keyboard transcriptions of works by Jean Baptiste Lully and Marin Marais, both famed composers in the court of Louis XIV. Unsurprisingly, these figures have shown to have had an influence on Bach's music: works such as his *Pièce d'orgue* nod towards organ traditions of France; *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*, an advent cantata, uses the dotted rhythmic French overture to announce the entrance not of the King of France, but of Christendom's monarch; and the opening St. Matthew Passion even includes quotes from Marin Marais's *Tombeau de Monsieur Meliton*, a musical eulogy for two violas da gamba.

What's fascinating is not just the extent to which Bach actively absorbed these styles and infused them in his music, but rather that he did so second- or even third-hand. Bach had no French teachers, but clearly spoke and understood French. This perhaps makes more sense if one considers the lingering dominance of French culture in the previous century, when France arose as a major European power following the cessation of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. When the elderly Bach would improvise on the piano before King Frederick the Great of Prussia (in order to court support and perhaps a position), he was playing in a court where the preferred language was most often French, the enduring symbol of erudition, sensibility, and power.

And yet Bach's music retains all those elements of originality, owing to the absorption of Italian string music, keyboard music from the Hanseatic provinces, and a Lutheran sacred music tradition in which he worked throughout his career. Indeed, elements of the court music of France – the dances, the operatic styles, the florid ornamentation – are all used at his discretion and as a matter of preference or taste. One can hear the courtly style, though Bach was not a courtier.

Tonight's program is not a strict exercise in performative musicology. Being performers rather than scholars, we have selected music in the spirit of illustrating what courtly music sounded like in France for performers on our instruments. The music of Marin Marais contains an effervescence that showcases an improvisatory impulse within the dance forms common in the era of Louis XIV, in which expression was sought in the color and timbre of the gamba's resonance. While little is known about the relationship with his teacher, Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe, one can hear a distinct freedom in compositional style passed from teacher to student, taken from Parisian salons in the court. Marais's colleague in the court, Robert de Visée, was known in his era for typifying a "royal" style on the lute, his suites garnering enough popularity to be published in transcriptions for other instruments. And yet his style was certainly shaped by his Italian teacher Francesco Corbetta, the "guitariste du Roy" – that is, the exiled King Charles II of England, and not Louis XIV.

A skeptic might note that the title of “French Suites” was added posthumously by Bach’s student Friedrich Wilhelm Marburg, while the pedant would reveal that it was reinforced by Bach’s biographer Johann Nikolaus Forkel. I say, where there’s smoke, there’s fire: the opening allemande of the Suite in E-flat’s exercise in arpeggiation beckons to the French *style brisé* – a style meant to imitate the sounds of a lute or harp, preluding as they tune up and test out various harmonies; the courant is slower than the sarabande, evoking the *loure* or slow gigue; the gavotte is stately, the air is flighty; and the gigue gives way to the heated, joyful exuberance as heard in Marais’s peppier giges.

The music of Carl Friedrich Abel bears testament not only to the influence of Bach, but also to his familial heritage. His father, Christian Ferdinand Abel, was also a gambist and had served in the court of Frederick I of Prussia before moving to Köthen, where he worked with Johann Sebastian Bach. Fruits of their labor together included the production of three solo gamba sonatas (BWV 1027-9), likely written to be used by the father to teach his sons (though the exact date of their composition is unknown). Upon Bach’s departure for Leipzig in 1723, Christian entrusted Bach with the education of his son at St. Thomas Church. At Bach’s recommendation, the young Abel would move to Dresden to serve in the court of the Elector of Saxony. Known as “the last gambist,” Abel was recognized for a wildly virtuosic and uninhibited performative style (often noted in conjunction with descriptions of his alcoholism), taking *galant* ornamentation and notions *affekt* to extreme degrees.

Our hope is that audiences will take away a refreshed perspective on the music of Bach and Marais. Rather than digging around to find proofs as to influence and stylistic reciprocity, we’ve opted to help illustrate the personal relationships surrounding some of the more beloved works of the canon. For now, we invite you to sit back, enjoy the show, and find us after the concert to say hello.

Parker Ramsay



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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Parker Ramsay *harp & harpsichord*

Parker Ramsay has forged a career defying easy categorization. Equally at home on modern and period harps, he pursues his passions for tackling new and underperformed works and bringing his instrument to new audiences. Recent and upcoming engagements include solo performances at Alice Tully Hall, the Miller Theatre at Columbia University, the Phillips Collection, Cal Performances, Shriver Hall, IRCAM, King's College, Cambridge, the Spoleto Festival USA, and the Center for the Art of Performing at UCLA.

His recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* was praised as "remarkably special" (Gramophone), "nuanced and insightful" (*BBC Music Magazine*), "relentlessly beautiful" (WQXR), and "marked by a keen musical intelligence" (*Wall Street Journal*). His last album, released in October 2022, features *The Street*, a new concert-length work for solo harp and text by Nico Muhly and Alice Goodman. In 2024, he will tour *The Street* with the Mark Morris Dance Company.

He has also collaborated with composers such as Marcos Balter, Saad Haddad, Josh Levine, Jared Miller, and Sarah Kirkland Snider. Alongside gambist Arnie Tanimoto, Ramsay is co-director of A Golden Wire, a period instrument ensemble based in New York. As an organist, he has performed at Washington National Cathedral, Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center, St. Thomas Church, 5th Avenue, and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. He has presented talks, performances, and lectures on period instruments at the Smithsonian Collection and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He has been published in *VAN Magazine*, *Early Music America Magazine*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

Raised in Tennessee, Ramsay began harp studies with his mother, Carol McClure. He served as organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge, before pursuing graduate studies at Oberlin and at Juilliard. In 2014, he was awarded First Prize at the Sweelinck International Organ Competition. He lives in Paris.

Arnie Tanimoto *viola da gamba*

Gold medalist and first-ever American laureate of the International Bach-Abel Competition (2018), Arnie Tanimoto has quickly established himself as one of the foremost viol players in the United States. He has performed and recorded in venues across North America and Europe with the likes of Barthold Kuijken, the Boston Early Music Festival Ensemble, and the Smithsonian Consort of Viols. Tanimoto is a core member of Mountainside Baroque and a founding member of the Academy of Sacred Drama. Alongside harpist Parker Ramsay, he co-directs A Golden Wire.

Tanimoto was the first-ever viola da gamba major at the Juilliard School, where he soloed on both viola da gamba and baroque cello. In 2017 he was awarded a Frank Huntington Beebe Fund Fellowship and subsequently finished his studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland. His principal teachers include Paolo Pandolfo, Sarah Cunningham, Christel Thielmann, and Catharina Meints. He holds additional degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music.

As a teacher, Tanimoto serves on the faculty at Princeton University, as well as maintaining a private studio. He also regularly teaches at the Mountainside Baroque Summer Academy and the Viola da Gamba Society Conclave.

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We greatly appreciate your support of Chatham Baroque!

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ABOUT CHATHAM BAROQUE

Each year, Chatham Baroque presents a series of captivating, historically informed performances, drawing from a vast repertoire of classical music styles, eras, and locales from the Medieval Period through the early 19th century. As one of the country's leading period instrument ensembles, the distinguished Chatham Baroque features Andrew Fouts (violin), Patricia Halverson (viola da gamba), and Scott Pauley (theorbo and baroque guitar). Each season, Chatham Baroque performs several concerts on its own, and presents concerts by renowned touring ensembles specializing in music of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, and early Classical Period. Chatham Baroque concerts are performed with period instruments, which are restored or replica versions from the time when the music was written. Concerts are held in a variety of settings across Pittsburgh from churches to concert halls, and performers actively engage audiences with lively commentary and insights into the music.

We are deeply grateful to the many individuals & organizations whose generous gifts make our performances, education & outreach programs, tours, & recordings possible. This list contains contributions received from January 1, 2023 to March 25, 2024.

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