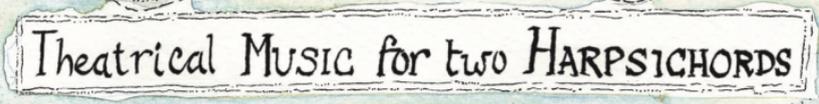




DIVINE NOISE



resonus



Theatrical Music for two HARPSICHORDS



MENNO VAN DELFT ~ GUILLERMO BRACHETTA

Divine Noise

Theatrical music for two harpsichords

Guillermo Brachetta *harpsichord*

Menno van Delft *harpsichord*

Harpsichord after Henri Hemsch, 1736 (MFA Boston), by Titus Crijnen,
Amsterdam, 1995

Harpsichord after François Etienne Blanchet, 1730, by Titus Crijnen,
Sabiñan, 2013

About Guillermo Brachetta:

'[...] his playing is fluent, his characterisations lively and idiomatic'

Gramophone

About Menno van Delft:

'[...] perfect evenness and fluidity – and supple shapeliness, too'

San Antonio Express

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

Platée (1745) Suite

arr. for two harpsichords by Guillermo Brachetta

1. Ouverture	[5:34]
2. Air Pantomime	[2:52]
3. Contredanse	[0:50]
4. Rigaudons	[2:33]
5. Passepieds	[2:24]
6. 'Soleil, fuis de ces lieux'	[2:10]
7. Tambourins	[1:45]
8. Air pour des fous gais	[2:06]
9. Air pour des fous tristes	[1:17]
10. 'Aux langueurs d'Apollon'	[4:23]
11. Menuets dans le gout de vielle	[3:30]
12. Airs	[2:09]
13. Ritournelle	[1:18]
14. Chaconne	[6:44]
15. Loure	[3:24]
16. Entrée	[1:51]
17. Musette	[1:31]
18. Passepieds	[1:26]
19. Tambourins	[1:48]
20. 'Chantez Platée, égayez-vous'	[3:37]

François Couperin (1668-1733)

La Paix du Parnasse (1725)

Sonade en trio

21. Gravement	[2:00]
22. Vivement	[1:59]
23. Rondement	[1:50]
24. Vivement	[2:04]

Gaspard Le Roux (c. 1660-1707)

Suite in F major (1705)

25. Prélude	[1:10]
26. Allemande Grave	[3:01]
27. Courante	[1:35]
28. Chaconne	[4:19]
29. Menuet	[2:12]
20. Passepied	[0:49]
Total playing time	[74:26]



Divine Noise: Theatrical music for two harpsichords

[...] that great and varied effects may be produced by duets upon two keyed instruments, has been proven by several ingenious compositions [...] ¹

With these words, Charles Burney reveals his predilection for two keyboards sounding together over four hands on one instrument, but admits that:

The inconvenience of having two harpsichords or two piano-fortes, in the same room, and the short time they remain exactly in tune together, have prevented frequent trials, and even the cultivation of this species of music, notwithstanding all the advantages which, in other respects, it offers to musical students.

(Both we and our recording engineer can well testify to this remark and confirm that the amount of time two harpsichords actually remain in tune together is shockingly brief!)

The first instances of music written for two keyboards date back to the early-seventeenth century in England with examples by Thomas Tomkins, *Fancy for two to play* and Nicholas Carlston's *A Verse for two to play*. These works, though possessing ingenuity and grace, would remain isolated examples

for roughly a century. It wasn't until the turn of the eighteenth century that we again find compositions intended for this 'species of music' in Bernardo Pasquini's fourteen *basso continuo* sonatas, seven of which were intended for two keyed-instruments.

Burney goes on, telling us that '[...] ingenious compositions have been published in Germany'. Here we immediately recognise a reference to the Bach circle: Johann Sebastian Bach and his sons and students, whose works for two harpsichords (or more!) count among the best written for this combination.

From the second half of the eighteenth century, examples start to be more numerous both in music expressly written for two keyboards, or transcribed from a different combination of instruments. We should not fail to name the *Symphonie* and the *Quatuor* for two grand harpsichords by Armand-Louis Couperin, nephew of François, and several sonatas for two instruments by Niccolò Jomelli, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Joseph Haydn, or the anonymous transcription for the same combination of the string quartets Op. 28 by Luigi Boccherini.

It was, however, during the nineteenth century that the repertoire would expand and become ubiquitous, especially when professional and amateur musicians alike

started transcribing symphonic works by Mozart, Haydn or Beethoven for domestic use. A large part of these transcriptions show more love for the job rather than skill, but the end pursued was basically a simple (yet importantly democratic) one: to bring to everybody's homes a repertoire otherwise limited physically and temporarily just to the concert hall, and to open the possibility for a broader public to listen and perform music of which they had previously been deprived.

The cheapening and simplification of printing systems, the necessity of composers and editors to maximise profits and the popularisation of music as a medium for social exchange until now reserved for the professional ambit, produced a boom in this practice that (although often pirated and poorly executed) would introduce a new repertoire that could be played in the intimacy of the music room. Luckily, some composers have given us magnificent examples of how to do it successfully, and the three represented on this recording left precious instructions and indications on how to adapt music for one or two harpsichords.

The Divine

In this sense the most valuable study case

from a musicological perspective is that of Gaspard Le Roux (c. 1660-1707), who published in 1705 his *Livre de Pièces de Clavessin*, a collection of works grouped by tonality rather than suites. For six of the pieces, Le Roux wrote a very elaborate second harpsichord part, whereas for the rest of the book, he provided a second voice, enabling in this way a performance of the complete book on instruments other than the harpsichord, with possibilities for a trio sonata as well as arrangements for two harpsichords.

In his preface to the collection, Le Roux explains:

Most of these pieces have a better effect on two harpsichords, one playing the subject, the other the countersubject. We will see the examples on the six pieces that are at the end of the book.

Little is known about the life of Le Roux. His contribution to the keyboard repertoire consists only of this collection, which shows a transition between the previous generation of Louis Couperin and Henry D'Anglebert – who are represented in Le Roux's unmeasured preludes (albeit much shorter and less elaborate than those by his predecessors) – and dances of more modern scope, as shown principally by his exuberant allemandes.

Francois Couperin (1668-1733) has left us a magnificent example of music written for two harpsichords with his 'Allemande à deux Clavecins' from his *Second livre de pièces de Clavecin* (1717).

During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), the dominant musical figure in France was that of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) who, with a ruthless hand, devoted a great deal of his energy and considerable powers to wipe all trace of Italian influence from the French musical scene. It is somewhat ironic that the one responsible for shaping the pure French taste at the expense of any other was an Italian born in Florence, originally named Giambattista Lulli. After the death of Lully, no one inherited from him enough power as to quell the overwhelming taste for Italian musical fashions.

Couperin, a personality reputedly well-mannered and of peaceful nature, struggled between the two currents of the recalcitrant french style from the reign of Louis XIV and the more distended rococo style of his successor, Louis XV, and proposed a compromise of both styles. This would be represented by his two big heroes: Lully, the champion of pure French taste, and Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1714), a composer of enormous influence in the

oeuvre of Couperin, who perfected the trio sonata so openly admired (and experimented with) by Couperin.

In the preface to *Les Nations* (1726) Couperin states:

Charmed by the sonatas of Signor Corelli, whose works I shall love as long as I live, just as I do the French works of Monsieur de Lully, I attempted to compose one myself which I (then) had performed in the concert series where I had heard those of Corelli.

In a Paris still averse to French musicians composing in the Italian style, Couperin states he disguised his name using an Italianised anagram (Cuperino? Perucino?) to justify his style during those concerts. In the same preface he adds:

My sonatas, fortunately, won enough favour for me not to be in the least embarrassed by the subterfuge.

Les Goûts Réunis (1724) consists of ten concerts and is a continuation of the four previously published with the title *Concerts Royaux* in 1722. These works explicitly indicate the freedom and flexibility given to the players regarding their organisation for different instrument combinations. The collection ends with a grand trio sonata called *L'Apothéose de Corelli*, in which

each movement is subtitled to describe the ascension of Corelli, from the feet of Mount Parnassus to the place the gods have reserved for him at the top.

In his following large trio sonata, *Concert Instrumental sous le Titre d'Apothéose composé à la mémoire immortelle de l'incomparable Monsieur de Lulli*, the composer has Apollo going down the mountain to invite Lully to share the place with his rival, Corelli, who welcomes him.

This trio, as well as l'Apothéose de Corelli and the complete book of trios that I expect to present next July, can be performed on two harpsichords or on other instrumental combinations. [...] the harpsichord has a brilliance and clarity we can hardly find on other instruments.²

The *Apothéoses* end with the beautiful sonata recorded here, named **La Paix du Parnasse** (The Peace of Parnassus), in which the first voice is called 'Lulli et les muses françaises', and the second, 'Corelli et les muses italiènes'. This shows to us that the coexistence of both styles is not just possible, but also desirable.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) was an enigmatic personality and, despite his fame and importance both as a

composer and as a theorist, very little is known about his personal life.

He was not very talkative and seldom spoke of himself. The first half of his life is absolutely unknown, and he never imparted any detail of it to his friends or even to his wife.³

There are several contemporary reports regarding his ostracism, and Jacques-Fabien Gautier Dagoty (1717-1785) said that '[...] the emptiness [Rameau] found in society made him avoid it'. Rameau was more proud of his works as a thinker than as a composer. In later life he told Chabanon that he '[...] regretted the time devoted to composition because it had been lost to research into the principles of [his] art'. Rameau was socially impaired, had a loud voice and, as described by Sébastien Mercier, '[he had] a sharp chin, no stomach, flutes for legs'. Chabanon continues: 'His stature was extremely tall, he was lean and skinny and more like a ghost than a man'. Rameau wasn't at all interested in conversation if the subject discussed was something other than music. But then,

He did this with so much fire that his mouth would become dry and he had to eat some fruit to enable himself to go on.⁴

Rameau used to walk alone through the Tuileries and Palais-Royal and on one occasion



he was addressed by Chabanon. Far from rebuffing him, Rameau welcomed the company and said that he would '[...] always enjoy being addressed and taken out of his empty, idle existence'.

His heart and soul were in his harpsichord; once he had shut its lid, there was no one home.⁵

It is difficult to explain how one of the most asocial and introverted personalities of eighteenth-century Paris came to become the epitome of dance music, arguably the most social music genre imaginable.

With *Les Indes Galantes* (1735) Rameau left a very interesting example of operatic music adapted to the harpsichord. This work was such a big success that it led him to prepare a transcription of its dances for the keyboard, preventing less capable amateurs from doing it and anticipating unauthorised versions, thus securing for himself the revenues of this popular opera.

If gods existed, they would be much more understandable and likeable if they resembled those from **Platée**. Between drunkenness and eroticism, they show no remorse in posing a practical joke on the main character (the ugly and powerless frog who gives the title to the opera) just to give Jupiter's wife, Juno, a lesson in trust.

We owe the libretto to Adrien-Joseph Le Valois d'Orville (1715-1780), who in turn adapted it from a ballet by Jacques Autreau (1657-1745). D'Orville shows us the gods of Parnassus in a trivial light and as ruthless beings capable of anything in the pursuit of a simple bet. This poor behaviour gave Rameau the excuse to show (probably to compensate for a weak plot) a formidable mastery in his dexterity as a composer of dance music with an opera full of ballets. One of the pinnacles of *Platée* is the aria 'Aux langueurs d'Apollon', a very Italianate and extremely virtuosic aria written for a role not present in the original libretto that was specifically requested by Rameau to Le Valois d'Orville.

The opera is full of scornful moments and caricature, such as the longest chaconne ever written by Rameau, with obsessive repeats and the express indication to be played and danced in a way that would annoy the patience of the main character, Platée.

The Noise

If we had to choose a combination of two instruments that would best imitate the palette of a complete orchestra, this would be that of two keyed-instruments. Taking this as a departure point and profiting from

the examples mentioned above is why we decided to embark on this recording; giving a glimpse of different styles of French music adapted to the spectacular and sonorous world of two harpsichords, the most representative of all musical instruments from the baroque. To achieve this goal we have used different techniques:

In the case of Le Roux, we used his own pieces for two harpsichords as a model and departed from his rendering for three voices. This preserves its idiomatic writing and especially the characteristic style *brisé* from the 'Allemande'. An interesting challenge was posed by the unmeasured prelude. For this short piece, we chose to leave it as it is for the first harpsichord, whereas the second improvises basso continuo around it, again in a very lute-like fashion.

For Couperin, we gave the second voice (Corelli) and the bass to the second harpsichord while the first instrument plays Lully's part with fully textured continuo in the left hand, mostly without bass.

Platée posed many more challenges, being a work on a grander scale, written for voices, orchestra, and choir. Here, the instrumentation used by Rameau consists of strings, oboes,

bassoon, and flutes: a relatively small orchestra (compared to other operas by Rameau that request brasses, a second bassoon, clarinets or a percussion section). We decided to texturise the arrangement so its theatrical nature would become more apparent in contrast with the other works of this album, which have a more chamber music-like approach. Searching for an operatic effect and more exaggerated gestures, we added extra voices and small counterpoints here and there. The most taxing cases were without doubt the three arias here recorded (tracks 6, 10, and 20) — dramatically important moments in the plot and musically unavoidable.

We hope to have complied with the spirit of the three composers here represented, each one of them with such a contrasting style, and at the same time, so idiosyncratically French. From mocking gods showing off their repentant infallibility in front of an impotent Platée through the profound respect bestowed by Couperin in elevating Lully and Corelli to the heights of Mount Parnassus (probably to teach the gods a few lessons in wisdom and humility), is that we wish to share with you our love for the sound of two grand French harpsichords sounding together: that Divine Noise.

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Notes

¹ Charles Burney (1726-1814), *Sonatas or duets for two performers on one piano-forte or harpsichord*, 1777. Preface.

² François Couperin, *L'Apothéose de Lulli*, 1725. Preface.

³ Michel Paul Guy de Chabanon (1730-1792), Rameau's *Eulogy*.

⁴ Hugues Maret (1726-1786), Rameau's *Eulogy*.

⁵ Alexis Piron (1689-1773) [Jean Malignon, *Rameau*, p.16].

Acknowledgements

A very special gratitude is due to Fabián Brachetta for creating the unique cover and for the love and dedication he showed in doing it. We would also like to thank Siebe Henstra and Pieter-Jan Belder for providing us the wonderful instruments used for this recording. We are most grateful to Rudi Wells for his beautiful photography (regardless of his subjects), and to Ian Osborne and Mara Oosterbaan for copy-writing the text on this booklet and suggesting improvements so generously and kindly. Special thanks is due to Adam Binks for his support and the liberty he gave us to realise this album, and our sincere gratefulness to all the wonderful people that suggested, judged, advised and expressed their views so strictly, warmly, critically and freely.





Guillermo Brachetta

Guillermo was born and grew up in Argentina and, albeit not a typical Argentinian, he still retains certain national characteristics including the love for cooking, the vehemency for debating and the passion for making music. Guillermo settled in The Netherlands in 1995 in order to perfect his skills in at least one of those disciplines.

He graduated from the Conservatory of Amsterdam and has collaborated as a soloist and basso continuo player with many renowned orchestras including the Residentie Orkest, Nederlands Kamerorkest and The New Dutch Academy. It is, however, in making chamber music that Guillermo's unique improvisational skills and his "supple gravitas" on the harpsichord can be properly enjoyed.

His celebrated debut solo recording, *Ciaconna*, was released on Resonus Classics. A co-founder of successful Ensemble Fantasticus, he has recorded albums with this critically acclaimed baroque trio.

Outside Fantasticus, Guillermo has a lifelong mission to rediscover and promote the neglected work of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. To achieve this aim, Guillermo founded Collegium Wilhelm Friedemann Bach together

with his former teacher, Menno van Delft.

Guillermo is also active as a researcher and music editor, working in close cooperation with Cambridge University Press and other international institutions, having prepared first editions of numerous works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

www.brachetta.com



Menno van Delft

Menno van Delft, born 1963 in Amsterdam, studied harpsichord, organ and musicology at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam, the Royal Conservatory in The Hague and the University of Utrecht. Amongst his professors were Gustav Leonhardt, Bob van Asperen, Piet Kee, Jacques van Oortmerssen and Willem Elders. During his studies Menno sang Gregorian chant in the Schola Cantorum Amsterdam under the inspiring and formative leadership of Wim van Gerven.

In 1988 Menno was a finalist at the C.Ph.E. Bach Competition in Hamburg and won the clavichord prize. Subsequently he made his debut at the Holland Festival Early Music Utrecht. He has given concerts and master classes throughout Europe and the USA and made numerous recordings for radio and television. He has been a guest at several Bachfeste of the Neue Bachgesellschaft.

As a continuo player and soloist Menno performs with Marion Verbruggen, Jaap ter Linden, Pieter Wispelwey, Bart Schneemann, Lucia Swarts and Jacques Zoon and with the Nederlandse Opera, Al Ayre Español, the Nederlands Blazersensemble, Cantus Cölln, the Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest, the Nederlands Kamerkoor and the Nederlandse Bachvereniging. He has recorded for labels

such as Globe, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, Chandos, Channel Classics, Capriccio, EMI and Decca. For Globe he recorded J.S. Bach's six violin sonatas with Johannes Leertouwer and the Musical Offering with the Schönbrunn Ensemble. He also recorded J.S. Bach's Kunst der Fuge and Keyboard Toccatas and took part in a CD project with the complete keyboard works of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, which received a 2003 Edison and the Deutsche Schallplatten Kritik Preis. In 2004 the first of a series of recordings on important historical clavichords was released by Teknon, of sonatas and variations by J.G. Müthel, recorded on the 1763 J.A. Hass clavichord from the Russell Collection in Edinburgh.

In 1992 Menno founded Das Zimmermannsche Caffee, and with his vocal ensemble, Jan van Ruusbroec, he performs late renaissance music of composers like William Byrd, Peter Philips and Sweelinck. He is a founding member and soloist of the New Dutch Academy.

Besides performing, Menno regularly lectures and publishes on topics such as early keyboard repertoire, performance practice and tuning & temperament. Since 1995 he has taught harpsichord, clavichord, basso continuo and ensemble playing at the Conservatory of Amsterdam (formerly the Sweelinck Conservatorium)

www.mennovandelft.com



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Recorded in the Ouderkerk, Bunnik, The Netherlands on 28-31 May 2014

Producer, Engineer:& Editor: Adam Binks

Recorded at 24-bit / 96kHz resolution (DDD)

Cover image: by Fabián Brachetta

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