

Guts Baroque Duo presents:
Les Maîtres du violon:
The Rise of the French Violin Sonata

Saturday, August 3, 2019, 7:30 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick, Maine



featuring:

Sylvia Schwartz, baroque violin
John Ott, viola da gamba

Program

Sonate 2 in G from *Sonates à violon seul*.....Jean-Fery Rebel (1666–1747)

Gracieusement
Detaché
Grave
Viste

Sonate 2 in e from *Sonates à violon seul, Livre I*.....François Francoeur (1698–1787)

Adagio
Allemande
Sarabande
Rondeau
Presto

Sonate 1 in B-flat from *Sonates à violon seul, Livre I*.....François Bouvard (ca. 1683–1760)

Adagio/Preludio
Vivace
Largo
Allegro
Adagio
Prestissimo

- Intermission -

Suite 4 in G Major from *Pieces de viole*.....Sieur de Machy (fl. 2nd half of 17th c.)

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gigue
Gavotte en rondeau
Chaconne

Sonate 3 in Bb Major from *Premier Livre de Sonates*.....Jean-Marie Leclair (1666-1747)

Adagio

Allegro

Largo

Tempo Gavotta

Sonate 2 in D from *Sonates pour le violon*.....Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729)

Presto

Adagio

Presto

Presto

Fin

Program Notes

Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747) was the son of a singer, employed in the French court. He studied violin and composition with Jean-Baptiste Lully, who soon granted him a position in the Opera and in the 24 Violons du Roy. He soon became the concertmaster of both groups. He dedicated many of his sonatas to his powerful patrons, including a Tombeau for his teacher Lully, who died tragically of gangrene in 1687. Upon the death of Louis XIV, Rebel gained the title of court composer for Louis XV, and soon after directed the Concert Spirituel, a concert series of sacred music for performance during Lent, when the Opera was closed. As Rebel grew older, he gave his positions as a court musician to his son François, also a talented violinist. He edited and published his compositions in collections later in life.

His second collection of violin pieces, published in 1713, was surprisingly forward-looking, resembling more the Italian sonatas of the late Baroque than the dance suites of his French contemporaries. They feature four individual movements which are not dances, each a complete idea. Today's program features the second of this set, in G major.

François Francoeur (1698-1787) was born into a musical family, as his father Joseph played bass violin (cello) in the 24 violons du roi. He and his older brother Louis both excelled at the violin, and quickly gained spots in the Opera, in the *Musique de la Chambre du Roi* and in the 24 violons. There he met and started working with François Rebel, the son of Jean-Féry. The two violinists became close friends and worked together for their entire careers until Rebel's

death in 1775. By 1739 Francoeur was the master of the Opera, and he and Rebel joint-composed several operas. Though his career at the Opera was full of major successes and major failures, his work was recognized to the point where Louis XV raised him to the rank of nobility in 1764. He continued composing for the Opera until his retirement following the death of his friend Rebel.

Francoeur published two books of violin sonatas in 1720, right when he received the royal privilege to publish music. His sonatas are more in keeping with the French style, featuring five dance movements rather than the typical four of an Italian *sonata da chiesa*. Today's program features the second sonata of op. 1. It contains a dark Adagio, an Allemande, a Sarabande, a Rondeau and a Presto last movement.

François Bouvard (1683-1760) as a child was a very gifted singer, and sang in the Opera in Paris from a young age until his voice broke. After that he spent some time training in Italy before returning to Paris as a composer. He wrote two operas and a number of smaller publications before returning to Italy in 1711. Though it is unknown what he did there, he apparently became a count of St. John Lateran, a title he referred to in his subsequent publications. By 1723 he returned to Paris, where he continued publishing music until 1750. After that he fell into ill health and died a pauper.

Bouvard's 8 violin sonatas were published in 1723, upon his return from Italy. Similar to Leclair's earlier that year, Bouvard's sonatas show a mix of Italian and French styles. His movements have Italian names but French delicacy and character, and there are five of them, labeled Adagio, Largo, Allegro, Largo and Prestissimo.

Sieur de Machy (fl. 2nd half of 17th century) had very little information about him survive, and even his first name is unknown. All that is currently known about him comes from the title page of his one published collection, *Pièces de violle, en musique et en tablature* (1685), and from the 1692 treatise by Jean Rousseau. Sieur de Machy lived in Paris and studied viol with the famous Nicolas Hotman, one of the first French masters of the viol, alongside Jean de Sainte-Colombe. However, while Sainte-Colombe was an innovator in developing new and better techniques for playing the viol, de Machy was a traditionalist, basing his viol technique on that of the lute. Rousseau, who studied viol with both in turn, reports a disagreement over the placement of the left thumb that caused a falling-out between the two. Sainte-Colombe was said to have won, as his students, in particular Marin Marais, became the leading players of the viol in France.

Machy's *Pièces de violle, en musique et en tablature* (1685) was the first published collection of viol music in France. As the title suggests, four of the pieces were written in music notation and the other four were written in lute tablature, a style of writing music that visually represents the strings and frets used to play the notes. The pieces are organized into dance suites, which were the most common form of French instrumental music in the late 17th and

early 18th century, and represent the *stile brisé* (broken), characterized by chords played one note at a time. Tonight's program features the fourth suite, in G major, the last one written in music notation.

Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764) was born in Lyons, and trained as a child in violin, dancing and lacemaking. As a young man, he traveled to Turin, where he took lessons with the great Italian violinist Giovanni Battista Somis. He traveled to Paris at least twice to publish collections of violin sonatas. Finally in 1733 he was appointed *ordinaire de la musique du roi* to Louis XV. By 1737, though, he quarreled with another violinist, Pierre Guignon, and left the court rather than having to work under him. He was quickly hired by the court at Orange in the Netherlands, where he spent five years before returning to Paris. He then spent the next few years in the service of the Duc de Gramont, a former pupil. In 1764 he was murdered, apparently by his nephew, violinist Guillaume-François Vial. His legacy remains as one of the first great violinists and composers for the violin in France.

His violin sonatas are influenced heavily by those of Arcangelo Corelli and his Italian contemporaries, but with a distinctive French sound, mixing the two styles into what would become the standard for French violin writing in the early 18th century. Today's program features the third sonata from Leclair's op. 1 collection, published in 1723.

Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729) was born to the Jacquet family, a family of musicians. By the age of 5 she was adopted into the household of Madame de Montespan, Louis XIV's most famous mistress, and sang and played harpsichord for the court until 1684, when she left the court to marry the organist Marin de la Guerre. She was given the Royal Privilege to compose and publish music, a rare honor in France, and was the first French woman to compose operas. She also published two volumes of cantatas, two volumes of keyboard music and one book each of solo and trio sonatas for the violin. Her works are revolutionary and forward-thinking, combining the Italian styles of her teachers with the tastes of the French high Baroque.

Her six violin sonatas were published inside her second volume of keyboard pieces, in 1707. They are some of the earliest and most celebrated French violin solo pieces. They are composed in the Italian style, with different movements with contrasting tempos, rather than in the French suite of dances that was popular at the time. Sonata 2 is in D major, though it freely changes from major to minor between movements. One of the shortest sonatas of this set, it has four movements, Presto, Largo, Presto, and Presto.

—John Ott

About Us

Cellist and gambist **John Ott**, a native of Los Angeles, received his Bachelor of Music degree in cello performance from UC Irvine in 2004, studying with Dr. Margaret Parkins, and in 2016 completed his Master of Music degree in Early Music, viola da gamba at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he studied with Jane Hershey. In between, he performed with Symphony Irvine, Dana Point Symphony, Montage Civic Orchestra, and South Orange County Chamber Orchestra, played in the string quartet Elegie Quartet, and played chamber music all over Los Angeles and Orange County. During his two years in Massachusetts, aside from his Longy ensembles, he performed with Boston Camerata and Boston Opera Collaborative. He has played with the Orange County-based early music group L'Esprit Baroque since 2014. He maintains a large teaching studio, primarily at Vienna Music Institute in Irvine, CA, and is the cello coach for three high schools in Irvine Unified School District.

Fascinated and deeply inspired by the relationship between music, movement, and dance, violinist and Dalcrozian-in-training **Sylvia Schwartz** is a passionate chamber musician in both modern and historical performance practices. A native of Boston, Sylvia has performed with Guts, L'Esprit Baroque, Eudaimonia, Harvard Baroque Chamber Orchestra, Harvard Early Music Society, New Bedford Symphony, New England Classical Singers, and Lizzie and the Flakjackets throughout the United States and Canada, in Estonia, Latvia, and at Shostakovich Hall in St. Petersburg, Russia. Sylvia holds a M.M. in Violin Performance from the Longy School of Music, where she studied violin with Laura Bossert and early music with Dana Maiben, Na'ama Lion, Vivian Montgomery, and Ryan Turner. She also holds a B.S. in Engineering from Olin College. Sylvia teaches for the Irvine Unified School District and at Vienna Music Institute in Irvine, California, and concertizes frequently with Guts and L'Esprit Baroque.

About Historically-Informed Performance Practice

The mission of Guts is to bring the music of the Baroque era to vivid life, recreating the distinct sound of the time in which it was composed. In tonight's program, Sylvia will be playing a baroque violin, constructed in 2016 by Douglas Cox to replicate a Guarneri violin of the early 1700's, with a long baroque bow made by Louis Bégin. John will play a viola da gamba constructed by Marco Ternovec to the size of early 18th century instruments, with a baroque bow made by Chris English. Both instruments are strung with pure-gut strings, the

way they would have been in the 18th century. Gut strings sound warmer, though quieter, than their modern metal equivalents, and baroque instruments are under less tension, so they sound more open, though not as projecting. Like most Baroque music, all of the music on tonight's program has a basso continuo line forming the foundation of the ensemble, typically shared by the cello or gamba and the keyboard, usually a harpsichord or organ. We are presenting these works without a keyboard instrument for this concert.

As performers, we will be adding ornaments such as trills and turns to the music as we play. The practice of decorating music was unique to the performer and to the circumstances of performance, and helped each musician put their own stamp on a piece of music. Decorating this way both adds to the expressiveness of the music and allows us to share our personalities as performers with our audience. Also, since the music of this time is generally imitating sung text, even though the music we are playing has no specific text we will be shaping our phrases and melodies as if they were sung with words.

For more information about upcoming concerts, recordings, and special projects, please visit us at gutsbaroque.com.

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Acknowledgements

Truly, any endeavor in the arts takes a village—in this case, spread across thousands of miles.

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Jane Hershey, for the gracious loan of the beautiful Ternovec viol John will play for this concert.
Hannah Davidson, for helping us pick it up and return it.

Douglas Cox, for the generous loan of his Opus 930, a 2016 Guarneri-model baroque violin.

Sylvia is currently raising funds to purchase the instrument, and is deeply grateful to the following people who have contributed almost \$8,000 as of July 28, matching her own payments, totaling 68% funding:

Benefactor (\$1,000+)

Philip & Katie Friedel

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