

More from the Court of the Sun King

Ancient Music for Meditation & Relaxation,
Played on the harpsichord by David Buice

September 24, 2020

- Program -

Solo keyboard transcriptions by Marie-Rose Forqueray-DuBois (fl. c. 1747),
of chamber music by Antoine Forqueray (1671 – 1745)

La Couperin

Sarabande, *La D'Aubonne*

La Marella

La Sylva

Jupiter

La Forqueray.....Jacques Duphly (1715-1789)

Harpsichord by Richard Kingston, 2000, after late 18th-century Parisian examples

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Antoine Forqueray was recognized as one of the preeminent gambists of his day, known for his virtuosity of technique, depth of expression, and blending of French and Italian musical styles. *La Couperin* is a “tribute piece” honoring François le grand, while the sarabande *La D'Aubonne* may refer to a *courtier* from the historic Swiss town. *La Marella* is a game like hopscotch; the dark tone here perhaps suggesting games played by adults rather than children. *La Sylva* is one of the most sensitive pieces of any era, while *Jupiter* can be heard as Vulcan at the forge, pounding out lightning bolts to be hurled by Jove, or, alternatively, as the encounter between Leda and the swan.

Both *La D'Aubonne* and *La Sylva* feature an unusual calligraphy, in which the right and left hand parts are deliberately not aligned, the placement thereby indicating which hand should take the lead in attacking the notes. This may be seen as part of a natural, notational evolution from the unmeasured preludes for lute and harpsichord of the seventeenth century.

The Forqueray pieces were, in their original form, works for viola da gamba and *basso continuo*. Most likely, they were transcribed for solo harpsichord by Forqueray's daughter-in-law, the noted harpsichordist **Marie-Rose Forqueray-DuBois**, although they were published under her husband's name. While Forqueray *fil*s was regarded a fine gambist and music publisher, it is doubtful that his expertise extended to such well-written transcriptions for harpsichord, and the publication probably reflects more the chauvinistic tenor of the times.

It may be for that reason that **Jacques Duphly's** musical portrait *La Forqueray* takes on so easily a rather melancholy air, reflecting not so much the temper and technique of Forqueray *père* as the stolen glory of *Madame de Forqueray*.

~ David Buice

The Trebel/Kingston Harpsichord

In 1976 the Trebel Piano Company built a single-manual harpsichord for the Philippine Presidential Palace; Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were known for their love of music, including that of the Baroque. The case, interior bracing, stand, and bench were all made from native Philippine mahogany, and the case and stand were elaborately decorated with traditional Philippine carvings.

Trebel pianos and harpsichords were manufactured at the Trebel factory in the Taytay municipality of the Rizal province; the company name comes from that of its chairman, the late Robert "Bert" del Rosario: "Bert" spelled backwards, plus the first two letters of his wife's name (Eloisa).

Trebel keyboard instruments were exported world-wide; the company was known for its ornate harpsichords as well as for the OMB or One-Man-Band, a combination piano/synthesizer with bass pedal keys. A music school – emphasizing microphone singing – developed by the company in the late 1970s led to the invention of the Karaoke machine; interesting "degrees of separation" between Baroque-inspired keyboard instruments and a sing-along system that still inspires passionate enthusiasts (and detractors!).

Before the departure of the Marcos family from the Philippines in 1986, the Presidential Harpsichord was gifted to a retiring United States Embassy staff member; by the mid to late 1990s, the instrument found its way to the North Carolina *atelier* of internationally recognized master harpsichord builder Richard Kingston.

In 1998, before its rebuilding by Richard Kingston, the Trebel harpsichord was purchased by harpsichordist David Buice, who was then living in Atlanta, Georgia; the *refait*, or rebuilt harpsichord was completed in the summer of 2000, in time to begin concerts, recitals and masterclasses the following season.

According to Richard Kingston, the Trebel builders "got the case dimensions right for a late eighteenth-century Parisian instrument, but beyond that, they had no idea what they were doing." Kingston rebuilt the harpsichord "from the ribs up," retaining the intricately hand-carved case, stand and bench. (None of Imelda Marcos's legendary 2500 pairs of shoes were discovered inside the instrument when the original soundboard was removed.)

The resulting *refait* instrument is a single manual harpsichord in the late eighteenth-century Parisian style, with two eight-foot choirs of strings and two mutes; one mute, for the "front eight" (the choir of strings plucked closer to the player), is split at middle c, allowing for two-keyboard effects on a single-manual instrument. The range is five octaves and two notes, FF - g^{'''}, and the keyboard shifts as needed to play at "modern" pitch, at one half step below modern pitch, or at one whole step below modern pitch.

As this *refait* harpsichord approached its tenth birthday, Richard Kingston claimed it as *one of my masterpieces; when I told* [fellow harpsichord builder] Willard Martin *that it turned out to be one of the best sounding instruments I had built, his comment was, "See, it just goes to show, we don't really know what we're doing." He was, of course, referring to those aberrations that defy our empirical knowledge gained through much trial and error. For instance, a heavy, dense wood like mahogany for the case is not supposed to sound good. So much for that idea. Actually, it turned out the way I expected, but better, even though I was flying by the seat of my pants!*



On the next pipe organ fundraising recital, Thursday, October 29: *More Poets & Madmen* – David Buice plays solo organ music by J. S. Bach, Pablo Bruna, Dietrich Buxtehude, Diego da Conceição, François Couperin *le grand*, and Louis Marchand, on the Casavant pipe organ at Central Lutheran Church, Everett.