
CONCERTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Autumn - Winter 2016

Friday 4 November 2016

1.10pm

Playfair Library Hall, Old College

Mark Summers · viola da gamba

John Kitchen · harpsichord

Programme of works by DOLLÉ and COUPERIN



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Suite in G major (1737)

Charles Dollé (fl. 1735–1755)

Prelude
Allemande La Mantry
Le tendre engagement
Rondeau Le Gruer
Sarabande
La Badine

Suite in E minor (1728)

François Couperin (1668–1733)

Prelude
Allemande légère
Courante
Sarabande grave
Gavotte
Gigue
Passacaille ou chaconne

The first half of the eighteenth century was a time of change for French music. The autocratic Louis XIV died in 1715, paving the way for a more pluralist taste to take hold. Italian music was becoming ever more popular and its influence was starting to be heard more often in the work of French composers. Some resisted, others adapted, and a few made explicit attempts to unite the two traditions. A particular feature of this change was the place of the viol in music-making. It had been a favourite of Louis XIV, but it did not fit with the Italian violins and could not compete as tastes evolved. The viol slowly fell into obsolescence, and many players transferred to the louder cello.

Not much is known about Charles Dollé beyond him being a 'maitre de viole' who worked in Paris. He produced six publications between 1737 and 1754, the majority of which were pieces for the pardessus (a small viol that allowed ladies of taste to play violin music). His Op. 2 contains three suites for bass viol and continuo. These are very much part of the French viol tradition whose master exponent, Marais, had died in the decade before. A hallmark of the style is the mixing of melody and bass line in the solo part, and this can be heard throughout this first suite in G major. It is possible to detect some developments: many duets within the solo line, rich octave doublings between solo and bass and an increased tendency to use high positions on the lower strings (something that the Forquerays would take to an extreme in their 1747 *Pieces de viole*).

François Couperin is notable for his extensive keyboard works and his attempts to combine French and Italian music. The corpus of *Pieces de viole* may have been his last compositions and here he shows that despite not playing the instrument himself, he could write music that sounds equal to that of the famed masters such as Marais (equal in sound but often more awkward to play as it sits less easily under the hand). This first suite, like Dollé's, shows some development of the already mature French viol tradition. Some of the movements are much freer and with fewer constraints, especially in the treatment of the bass line. The prelude shows a surprising sparseness in the bass and a disinclination to follow the obvious pattern when there is the suggestion of the beginning of a sequence, something that invites expressive affect. The allemande has numerous examples of jumping down from the melody but not to the bass, rather to a third inner voice that harmonises the bass or provides skeletal melodic counterpoint. The courante and sarabande have a lightness that offsets the darkness of the key, the gavotte's phrase lengths become a subtle plaything, the gigue pushes a more strident sound and the final passacaille/chaconne lifts us (mostly) into E major for the most overtly virtuosic writing of the suite.

Mark Summers has been playing the viola da gamba for over twenty years, learning mainly from Alison Crum with extra lessons/masterclasses from Peter Wieland, Sarah Cunningham, Richard Boothby, Suzanna Pell and Jordi Savall. He has performed across Europe, with a number of appearances on radio. A particular speciality is playing contemporary solo repertoire, commissioning and recording a number of pieces, with a solo album is due for release in 2017.

Alongside performing, Mark has a varied academic career, earning degrees and working in the areas of music, information science and copyright law. He is currently completing a PhD at the University of Sheffield, examining the performance of improvised music with computers.

After 27 years as a Senior Lecturer in Music in the University of Edinburgh, **John Kitchen** has now retired from teaching, and is an Honorary Fellow in the Reid School of Music. He continues as University Organist, as Director of the Edinburgh University Singers, and he will continue to be involved with the Raymond Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments at St Cecilia's Hall when the Hall reopens in spring 2017.

John is also Director of Music of Old Saint Paul's Episcopal Church and Edinburgh City Organist with duties at the Usher Hall. He gives many solo recitals both in the UK and further afield, and also plays regularly with several ensembles, covering a wide range of musical styles. In addition, he is much in demand as a continuo player, accompanist, lecturer, writer, adjudicator and reviewer.

John has recorded extensively for both Priory and for the Edinburgh-based label, Delphian Records (which was named Gramophone Label of the Year 2014). His most recent Delphian CD *Gaudeamus igitur*, released in June this year, was recorded on the recently-restored McEwan Hall organ in the University of Edinburgh. John was awarded an MBE 'for services to music' in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours.

FORTHCOMING CONCERT:

Tuesday 8 November, 1.10pm

Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square

Paul Grant (baritone) and Michael Pandya (piano)

Programme to include

BRAHMS Vier Ernste Gesänge and

FAURÉ L'horizon Chimérique

Admission Free