

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Monteclair was a double bass player in the Paris Opera, and a composer of cantatas, serenades, instrumental concerts, a ballet, *Les Festes d'Eté*, and a well-received opera, *Jephthé*. He part-owned a music shop, and was a well known teacher who taught Couperin's children. He wrote four separate treatises on Music that were published in pairs - one book for adults, the other for children: the *Nouvelle Method* of 1709, the *Leçons de musique divisées en quatre classes en faveur des personnes qui commencent à apprendre et particulièrement des enfans ...* (1709); the *Principes de Musique* of 1739, and the beautifully named *Petite Method pour apprendre la Musique aux Enfants et même aux Personnes plus avancées en âge* (after 1739).

They are practical works, full of interesting details and music examples, including sections of *Airs de Danse* (dance tunes) which Peacock Press is publishing in a separate volume (Monteclair - *Airs de Danse* PAR-103). In the *Petite Method* he writes that: "nothing improves the understanding of the various mouvements and metres than playing *Airs de Danse*".

The *Principes de Musique* contains the section on the *Agréments* - French ornaments - that is reprinted here. It has some of the clearest and most detailed descriptions available. (For instance, see the *Glissé* on page 22 for a forgotten ornament.)

The language of the period is lovely, if sometimes hard to decipher. I would like to thank Gilles Aufray, the playwright, for his work on the text. For instance, *coulér* is "to flow", but in the particular way that a stream of water flows downhill or through a channel. This must help our understanding of the ornament, and, while it might be obvious to a French speaker, it is rarely mentioned in translations into English. The same applies to the *battement* and to much else as well. I must make it clear that any mistakes and misunderstandings are entirely my responsibility. In particular, there is the problem of translating *notes forte* and *notes faibles* (strong and weak notes) when the meaning seems to have shifted from any function in the metre to include main and subsidiary, and even just long and short, notes.

Andrew Robinson 2008

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English translation by Gilles Aufray

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Illus. 3 (bottom left) Mary Mobbs painting
Bristol University's Goble Fleischer copy.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:



photo by Rachel Clements

Dear Readers,

We have a great edition for you this time with the continuation of Paul Irvin's thought provoking article, some features on soundboard and lid painting, a very useful item on harpsichord maintenance and a bumper crop of reviews. There is also an account of the beginnings of the Aliénor competition.

Next time we should have something on Frescobaldi as well as Mendelssohn: now that's a wide range.

Please let me know what you'd like to be reading.

Thanks,

Micaela Schmitz