

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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There is also a portrait by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim at About.com, Online, accessed 10 July 2011, <<http://musiced.about.com/od/famousmusicians1/p/fmendelssohn.htm>>
 For free scores of lieder and piano music online see IMSLP
 <http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Hensel,_Fanny>
 Werner Icking Music Archive
 < <http://icking-music-archive.org/ByComposer/Fa.Mendelssohn.php#Hensel>>
 The Choral Public Domain Library has choral music at
 <http://www3.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Main_Page>

3) Louise Farrenc: from *L'illustration* 13 Jan 1855, p165, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
 For a portrait and scores of two quintets, visit IMSLP
 <http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Farrenc,_Louise>

4) Wilhelmina von Bayreuth, by Anna Dorothea Lisiewska-Therbusch.
 To view a portrait Visit "Women of Note", Online, accessed 10 July 2011,
<http://oboeclassics.com/~oboe3583/ambache/wBayreuth.htm>
 or "Wikipedia", Online, accessed 10 July 2011,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmine_of_Prussia,_Margravine_of_Brandenburg-Bayreuth>

5) Julie Candeille: from *Encycopedia dello Spettacolo*, Rome: Casa Editrice le Maschere, 1954.
 See a portrait at Wikipedia, Online, accessed 10 July 2011,
 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julie_Candeille>

6) Clara Schumann: 1878 portrait by Franz von Lenbach, Robert Schumann Haus, Zwickau.
 See a portrait at Wikipedia, Online, accessed 10 July 2011,
 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clara_Schumann>
 A portrait and free scores including her Konzertsatz, Lieder, Preludes & Fugues, etc. at IMSLP
 < http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Schumann,_Clara>

ÉLISABETH-CLAUDE JACQUET DE LA GUERRE

By Pamela Hickman

Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre was born in Paris in 1665 and died there in 1729. Her father, Claude Jacquet, from whom she received her first musical instruction, was a harpsichord maker and the organist of the *Église Saint-Louis-en-Île* in Paris, her great uncle was an instrument maker, her brothers Pierre and Nicolas were both organists and her elder sister, Anne, was a protégé of the Princess of Guise. Her mother, Anne de la Touche, had connections with the Daquin family; Élisabeth herself was eventually to become godmother to Louis-Claude Daquin (1694-1772, organist, harpsichordist and composer in the Baroque and Galant styles.)

At the age of five, Élisabeth-Claude performed for King Louis XIV. The Sun King and his court were so impressed by her ability on

the keyboard, as well as by her beautiful voice, that the king took "*la petite merveille*" (the "small wonder", as she was affectionately known), under his wing, supporting her financially. She spent several years in the court at Versailles. She was a favourite of Louis XIV's mistress of the time – Madame de Montespan, who supervised her education – and became a member of her entourage for three or four years. In 1677, a commentator for the French gazette and literary magazine *Mercure Gallant* wrote of the 12-13 year old Élisabeth: "She sings at sight the most difficult music. She accompanies herself and accompanies others who wish to sing, at the harpsichord, which she plays in a manner which cannot be imitated. She composes pieces, and plays them in all the keys asked of her."¹

In 1684, Jacquet married Marin de la Guerre, organist of the Saint Séverin Church, thus obliging the couple to return to Paris. He was the son of Michel de la Guerre, also an organist, the elder de la Guerre being involved in theatre and early attempts at opera. By the time she returned to Paris, Élisabeth-Claude had established herself as a composer and harpsichordist, and her reputation was to become only greater in Paris, where connoisseurs of music flocked to hear her perform on the harpsichord. She was an expert improviser, following improvisations and fantasias with songs, her playing displaying taste and her palette of harmonies rich, daring and varied.

By 1680, Jacquet had begun composing seriously; these very early works are lost. The first collection she published was Book I of the "*Pièces de Clavessin*" in 1687. Thought to be lost, a copy of it (possibly the only existing one) was found by scholar Carol Henry Bates in a library in Venice. There is also only one known copy of the Second Book of Harpsichord Pieces (1707). No ornament table can be found in either volume; the performer, however, can study ornamentation in other works by Jacquet and observe her use of ornament symbols.

In 1691, Jacquet de la Guerre wrote a ballet *Les jeux à l'honneur de la victoire* ("Games in Honour of Victory") a typical French ballet of the time, staging dramatic action, singing and dance. The musical score to this has also been lost, but the libretto exists and is dedicated to the Sun King. Jacquet was the first French woman to write an opera: her five act opera *Céphale et Procris*, opening with an allegorical prologue celebrating the glory of Louis XIV, was completed by 1694. The libretto, by Joseph-François Duché de Vancy, takes its inspiration from the myth as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Of the "*tragédie en musique*" or "*tragédie lyrique*" genres, it bears the influence of Lully, as may be expected, but it also bears the stamp of Élisabeth-Claude's own original ideas. Premiered in Paris the same year it was composed and performed in Strasbourg (1698), the opera was not well received and enjoyed a total of five performances at the time. (The king, it seems, had lost interest in opera and the opera genre had come under attack by Catholic religious authorities, who considered it too "sensuous" a form of entertainment.) Jacquet made no further attempt at writing opera, turning her attention to other forms.

Sébastien de Brossard (1655-1730), a clergyman and cathedral choirmaster living in Strasbourg, was an admirer of La Guerre. An autodidact, pedagogue and enthusiastic

collector of music, he was the author of the first dictionary of music. He had a predilection for the Italian style, which was becoming all the rage in France at the time. At that time, Jacquet produced her first set of sonatas, among the earliest examples of this form, her interest also lying in the Italianate style of writing. In 1695, she sent de Brossard a copy of her *Sonnate della signora de la guerre*, a volume consisting of four trio sonatas and two sonatas for violin and basso continuo. Brossard was impressed by Jacquet's liberal approach, in which she, for example, occasionally allowed the viol part to take leave of the bass line of the harpsichord. Two suites of harpsichord pieces, also suited to performance on the violin, as well as a series of violin sonatas, followed in 1707.

In the years 1708 and 1711, she published a set of 12 cantatas loosely based on dramatic Old Testament stories set to French texts; consisting of alternating recitatives and airs, with no choruses, they were the only published cantatas in France in that period. In 1715, Jacquet wrote three secular cantatas, all scored for soprano (or tenor), with obbligato instruments joining the continuo forces. The latter cantatas were dedicated to Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, a great music lover and amateur viol player, then living in France due to the defeat of his army during Spain's War of Succession. (All her previous works had been dedicated to King Louis XIV.)

Élisabeth-Claude's oeuvre includes contributions to collective anthologies of airs and drinking songs, as published by the Ballard family. She also composed music for the *Théâtre de la Foire* (a travelling theatre of actors, dancers, musicians, acrobats, animal trainers and puppeteers that visited the annual fairs in Paris.) Jacquet de la Guerre's last composition was a *Te Deum* (1721), a motet for full chorus, composed as a thanksgiving for King Louis XV's recovery from small pox. The work, her only religious work in Latin, was performed in the Chapel of the Louvre. Unfortunately, the score has been lost.

Jacquet de la Guerre's life was beset by two tragedies: her only son, a gifted child who was already performing and accompanying on the harpsichord from a tender age, died in 1695, in his tenth year. Her husband died in 1704. Now less in the public eye, but no less active in composing and playing, she gave private tuition and hosted concerts in the salon of her home, playing her own compositions and improvising on the three harpsichords she owned. Her private recital series drew many listeners, her public appearances becoming progressively

more sporadic until her retirement in 1717.

Jacquet de la Guerre's music is in the "*style brisé*" (this term was coined, it seems, in the twentieth century!), a style which transferred the gracefully "broken", arpeggiated style of 17th-century lutenists to the harpsichord, steering clear of thick chords and fully realized counterpoint, and allowing her the freedom to colour harmonies with "foreign" notes. She developed the unmeasured prelude (originating as a "tuning" prelude played by lutenists) into pieces fired with emotion, drama and virtuosic challenges.

These preludes have neither bar lines nor metre, so that note values are not absolute, thus encouraging performers to give personal expression and spontaneity to their reading and to vary each performance, creating an improvisatory approach to each work. The keys in which they are composed, each considered different in character according to Baroque musical thought, also have bearing on the performer's interpretation of character and mood.

Jacquet was in the habit of mixing stylistic ideas: she might begin a work with an unmeasured section, follow it with short measured sections as in the Italian toccata, then conclude it with an unmeasured section. Her approach was fresh; she addressed the styles of court dances and other forms common at the time, however, layering them with her own individuality, her enterprising use of dissonance and ornaments surprise and entertain performer and listener.

Following Jacquet de la Guerre's death in 1729, a medallion was issued in her honour, with her portrait on it; the inscription on it read "*Aux grands musiciens, j'ai disputé le Prix*" ("With the great musicians I competed for the prize"). Mademoiselle de la Guerre, as she was known, had also become recognized outside the borders of France. In the *Musikalisches Lexikon* published in 1732, J.S.Bach's cousin and friend Johann Gottfried Walther wrote of her career and oeuvre in much detail. Then, in 1776, Sir John Hawkins, in his *General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, referred to her as one of the greatest musicians France had produced, writing "So rich and exquisite a flow of harmony has captivated all that heard her."² One of the most renowned and prolific of the Baroque women composers, she displayed her compositional mastery in both vocal and instrumental idioms, her extraordinary gifts as a performer, her sensitivity and her flair. Her sonatas form a fundamental step in the development of French chamber music, her open-mindedness promoting the bridging of

French and Italian musical styles. Her music takes the listener into the "*Grand Siècle*" in France, and, at the same time, to the inner world of invention and imagination. A woman of outstanding creative ability, strong character and initiative, she led the life of a professional musician, supporting herself, performing, composing and publishing much of her oeuvre during her lifetime.

¹ Ed. Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: An Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (Harper & Row: New York, 1982).

² John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music in Five Volumes*, (T.Payne & Son: London, 1776).