

Pegasus Early Music and NYS Baroque

present

Curiouser and curiouser

Julie Andrijeski, violin and quinton

Sarah Stone, viola da gamba

Michael Beattie, harpsichord

Deborah Fox, theorbo

Sonata in e minor, op. 5 no. 7

Jean-Marie Leclair

(1697-1764)

Largo - Allegro

Sonata II for Pardessus

Jean-Baptiste Barrière

(1707-1747)

Andante – Allegro – Sarabanda – Aria

Les Voix Humaines

Marin Marais

(1656-1728)

Sonata VI for scordatura 5-string violin

Carlo Ambrogio Lonati

(1645-1715)

Largo – Spiritoso – Adagio - Allegro – Allegro & Variatio

Sonata XII for scordatura violin

Pietro Castrucci

(1679-1752)

Adagio Andantissimo -Adagio – Andante Partite

Sonnerie de Ste. Genevieve du Mont de Paris

Marin Marais

(1656-1728)

The program will run about 75 minutes, without an intermission.

*Photography and recording are not permitted by request of the performers;
thank you.*

Many thanks to Christel Thielmann for the generous loan of her viol.

Program notes

"I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole—and yet—and yet—it's rather curious, you know. . ." *Alice in Wonderland*

Today's program is an exploration of the **quinton**, a five-stringed instrument with violin and viol characteristics that made its appearance in France around 1730. Very little is known about the quinton; there are very few historical references to this instrument, and no specific music written for it. This program illuminates different paths, or perhaps more accurately, rabbit holes, taken to find and perform repertoire that may have been played on the quinton or on an earlier five-stringed violin-like instrument that emerged at the turn of the 18th century.

The quinton

Although we know basically what a quinton is (you will see two beautiful quintons during our performance, built by the most famous makers), questions remain concerning its hold and function. We can thank the 18th-century writer Michel Corrette for the most complete contemporary description of a quinton and its purpose in his treatise on playing its cousin, the pardessus de viole. Corrette writes:

“The *Pardessus de Viole à 5 cordes*, named by some Quinton, [is] a new musical instrument ... recently invented by Mr.***, ... a kind of androgynous instrument, set with 5 strings, which takes after the pardessus de viole and the violin.”

This description is somewhat misleading, however, since the 5-string pardessus, which existed alongside the quinton, is an altogether different instrument. Both instruments were prescribed the same tuning: the bottom three strings G-D-A (like a violin) the top two, D-G (like a viol); yet the pardessus is much more viol-like, with C-holes, large ribs and frets, and a flat back while the quinton has F-holes, narrower ribs, and a curved back like a violin. It is this difference in construction, and the possible lack of frets on the quinton, that leads some to think that contrary to what Corrette states the quinton could be held “da braccia,” like a violin.

It was at this time, upon the advent of Corelli's famous set of sonatas Op. 5 in 1700, that violins began to usurp the violas da gamba. Previously, violins were considered a lower-class instrument played by ruffians and professionals while violas da gamba were the more refined, noble, courtly instrument. Now, however, the Italian style was coming into vogue, and with it the more virtuosic violin music. The rise of the *Concert Spirituel*, a concert series presented during the Lenten season in a large hall in the Tuileries, also aided the violin's popularity, since the viols were simply not loud enough to fill the hall. Hubert LeBlanc, ardent advocate for the viol, wrote a warning to gambists: "Beware of endangering your ancient glory by performing your talents in a large site, as favorable to the violin as it is unfavorable to you."

Both the pardessus and quinton were instruments for women, as Corrette makes clear: '!... ladies ... will never play the violin, because the position of the latter doesn't suit them ... if they wish to perform concertos or sonatas, it is surely more appropriate for them to play the quinton.' Furthermore, the fair sex surely would not be able to shift to the higher positions: “. . . [women] have yet great pain in ascending on the first string . . . what is [easily] done without shifting on the first string of the quinton, as well as on the five-string pardessus.”

Another 5-stringed violin-like instrument predated the quinton. In 1701, Carlo Ambrogio Lonati (1645-c. 1712) composed a violin sonata in scordatura (an alternate tuning to the usual violin tuning in 5ths) for 5 strings tuned A-E-A-E-A, in Milan. A few of these earlier 5-stringed violins still exist, including a beautiful instrument by Joachim Tielke (Hamburg, ca. 1700), housed in the Orpheon Foundation Collection that was assembled by the late José Vasquez. Curiously, Tielke's instrument looks more viol-like than several of the later quintons; was this the instrument Lonati had in mind for his sonata? The question remains. In the absence of this instrument, however, the quinton will take its place in our performance today.

The Music

We now know a bit about the quinton and like 5-stringed instruments. But what did the quinton play?

- 1) Violin music. The quinton and pardessus were both designed to play violin music. To give our audiences a reminder of what the quinton is imitating, we begin with two movements from a sonata by Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764). Leclair was one of the most popular and virtuosic violinists of the 18th century and composed four books of violin sonatas. He appeared many times in the Concert Spirituel at the height of the Quinton's popularity.
- 2) Pardessus de viole music. The quinton was synonymous with the pardessus, so naturally music composed for pardessus would have been suitable to play on the quinton. Jean-Baptiste Barrière (1707-1747), composer and virtuoso cellist, is mostly known for his cello sonatas, but he also wrote a collection of sonatas for the pardessus. He, too, performed on the *Concert Spirituel*, in 1738, to great acclaim.
- 3) Music in violin scordatura. Although the quintons played on this concert were both constructed after 1750, Lonati's 1701 sonata in scordatura mentioned above seems a perfect fit. Lonati, a virtuoso violinist and singer born in Milan, led Queen Christina's orchestra in Sweden from 1673 to his death in 1712. Pietro Castrucci (1679-1752) was another Italian virtuoso violinist who settled in London as Handel's concertmaster. His final sonata in Op. 1 is also in an A-E-A-E scordatura tuning, perfect for the quinton.
- 4) French music with viola da gamba. In our finale, we honor the viol heritage of the quinton by pairing it with the noble viola da gamba in Marin Marais's (1656-1728) striking *Sonnerie de Sainte Geneviève du Mont de Paris*.

There is much more to discover and explore with the quinton. Its beautiful tone is reminiscent of the *viola d'amore* and is well suited to French violin and pardessus sonatas; yet we see in the Lonati sonata its versatility and possibilities in Italian, and even German, repertoires (apparently, the Emperor Leopold I wrote for the 5-string violin although I have yet to locate any). The journey continues, curiouser and curiouser....

Notes by Julie Andrijeski