

MARIN MARAIS (1656 - 1728)

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SOPHIE WATILLON, *basse de viole*

FRIEDERIKE HEUMANN, *basse de viole*

XAVIER DIAZ, *théorbe & guitare baroque*

EVANGELINA MASCARDI, *guitare baroque*

LUCA GUGLIELMI, *clavecin*

ut pictura musica

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notes en français
english commentary

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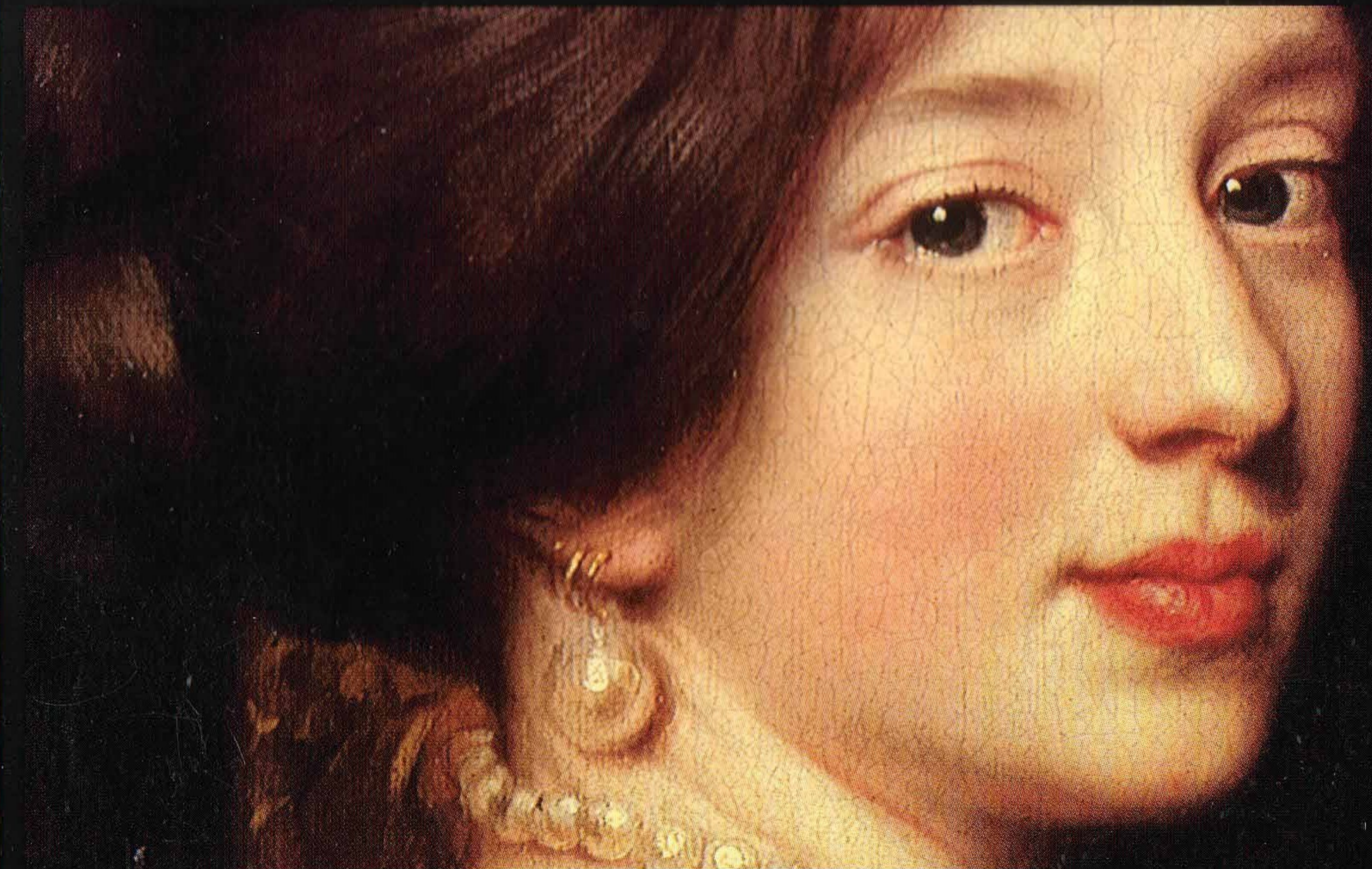
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MARIS La Rêveuse, & autres pièces de viole
Sophie Watillon

Alpha 036

MARIN MARAIS

La Rêveuse, & autres pièces de viole



SOPHIE WATILLON



illustration : Claude Lefebvre

Portrait des enfants de l'artiste, vers 1672 - Dijon, musée Magnin

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Le commentaire de cette image par Denis Grenier est en page 9 du livret.

M^r de Sainte-Colombe (XVII^e siècle)

5'16

1. "*Chaconne rapportée*" à deux violes esgales (extr. Concert XLVIII^e siècle : "*Le Rapporté*")

Marin Marais (1656-1728)

2. *Prélude en harpègement* - rondement (extr. V^e Livre, 1725) 2'35

3. *Fantaisie* (extr. III^e Livre, 1711) 1'02

4. *Grand Ballet* (extr. III^e Livre, 1711) 4'33

5. *Caprice* ou *Sonate* - lent, très légèrement (extr. IV^e Livre, 1717) 4'37

6. *Muzette* (extr. IV^e Livre, 1717) 2'14

(deux basses de viole, théorbe, guitare baroque et clavecin)

7. *Couplets de Folies* (extr. II^e Livre, 1701) 16'44

(deux basses de viole, théorbe, deux guitares baroques et clavecin)

8. *La Rêveuse* (extr. IV^e Livre, 1717) 5'15

(basse de viole et théorbe)

9. *Dialogue* - légèrement (extr. V^e Livre, 1725) 3'02

10. *Plainte* - lentement (extr. III^e Livre, 1711) 3'22

11. *Chaconne* (extr. V^e Livre, 1725) 3'08

(deux basses de viole, théorbe, guitare baroque et clavecin)

12. *Tombeau pour M^r de Sainte-Colombe* (extr. II^e Livre, 1701) 7'15

(basse de viole et théorbe)

SOPHIE WATILLON, *basse de viole*

FRIEDERIKE HEUMANN, *basse de viole*
 XAVIER DIAZ, *théorbe & guitare baroque*
 EVANGELINA MASCARDI, *guitare baroque*
 LUCA GUGLIELMI, *clavecin*

Enregistré en mars 2002

Eglise de Franc-Warêt à Namur (Belgique)

Enregistrement & montage numérique : Hugues Deschaux

Photographies : Robin Davies

Instruments :

- Basse de viole à 7 cordes, copie B. Norman (1697) réalisée par F. Bodart (2001).
- Basse de viole à 7 cordes, copie N. Bertrand (c.1690) réalisée par F. Bodart (1986).
- Basse de viole à 6 cordes, copie modèle italien, début XVII^e siècle, réalisée par C. Derenbach (2000).
- Théorbe, copie G. Tieffenbrucker, réalisée par J. Bosser (2000).
- Guitare baroque, réalisée par P. Biffin (1997).
- Guitare baroque, copie modèle italien, Venise XVII^e siècle, réalisée par J. Cepelák (2000).
- Clavecin, copie J.H. Hensch, réalisée par A. Bonza (1991).

Sources :

- "*Concerts à deux violes esgales du Sieur de Sainte-Colombe*" transcrits et édités par P. Hooreman, Société Française de Musicologie - Paris, 1998.

- "*Pièces à une et à deux violes, composées par Marin Marais, Premier Livre - Paris, 1686*".

Fac-similé de l'exemplaire conservé à la Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon.

Basse-continûes du Premier Livre des pièces à une et à deux violes - Paris, 1689.

Fac-similé de l'exemplaire conservé à la Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

- "*Pièces de viole, composées par Marin Marais, Deuxième Livre - Paris 1701*".

"*Basse-continûes du second Livre de pièces de viole - Paris 1701*".

Fac-similés des partitions conservées à la Bibliothèque du Conservatoire de Genève.

Claude Lefebvre

b. Fontainebleau, baptised 1632; d. Paris, 1675

Portrait of the artist's children, c1672

Oil on canvas, 102 x 83 cm

Dijon, Musée Magnin

The family played an important part in the life of the Parisian musician Marin Marais, son of a cobbler, father of nineteen children, four of whom (three sons and a daughter) also became violists. Born twenty-four years earlier, Claude Lefebvre belonged to an established dynasty: his father was a painter, as were at least four of his brothers. The family was the cornerstone of life in France before the Revolution, for it was there that the arts, painting or music, were learned and passed on from generation to generation, before the existence of the academies. The family is also at the centre of this picture, regarded as the artist's finest work. With paternal affection, Lefebvre depicts his daughter Catherine and, we presume, his youngest son (but the child could be his grandson). Holding him in place with one hand, she combs his thick golden locks. A routine operation, or perhaps they are expecting a visitor. She pauses to look up, her face serene and confident. The girl is wearing a sumptuous robe of rich, lustrous material, decorated with golden ribbons, over a chemise edged with guipure. The boy, sitting on the table, dressed in crimson with a white, lace-trimmed pinafore, gazes intently at the viewer. A mirror in the background dimly reflects the girl in profile and the pearl choker at her throat. A very large pearl earring gleams in her right ear. Ingres took up the same idea two centuries later.

Familiar from childhood with the courtly elegance of Primaticcio, Lefebvre was a pupil of Eustache Le Sueur and of Charles Le Brun, who encouraged him to take up portrait painting. In this mature work, the influence of the early paintings of Philippe de Champaigne is still perceptible in the Flemish precision of the brushstrokes and the perfectly realistic rendering of details, fabrics and textures. But the rich carnations and the contrasts of dark and light colours call to mind Van Dyck. There is a mixture of naturalness and assurance, a delicate balance that is commonly found in French painting as if it came instinctively to the artist; an indefinable grace. A musician to Louis XIV, *Ordinaire de la Chambre du Roi pour la viole*, Marais (and others) carried on the work of Jean-Baptiste Lully, who was born the same year as Lefebvre. And that period was dominated by Nicolas de Largillière, who, like Marais, was born in 1656. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that these men, whether they lived during the first half of the Sun King's reign or the second, shared the same aesthetic values. Despite the sycophantic positions assigned to them at the Louvre, then at Versailles, both the painter and the composer managed to preserve a certain freedom in their art. While meeting the requirements of the Apollonian ritual, they found room in their works for thought and poetry, fancy and imagination, intimacy and lyricism. Lefebvre's painting shows a father's tenderness, his love for his family (for which he was well known), and the viewer, drawn into the work, is invited to share those feelings with the artist. The same is true of the music of Marin Marais.

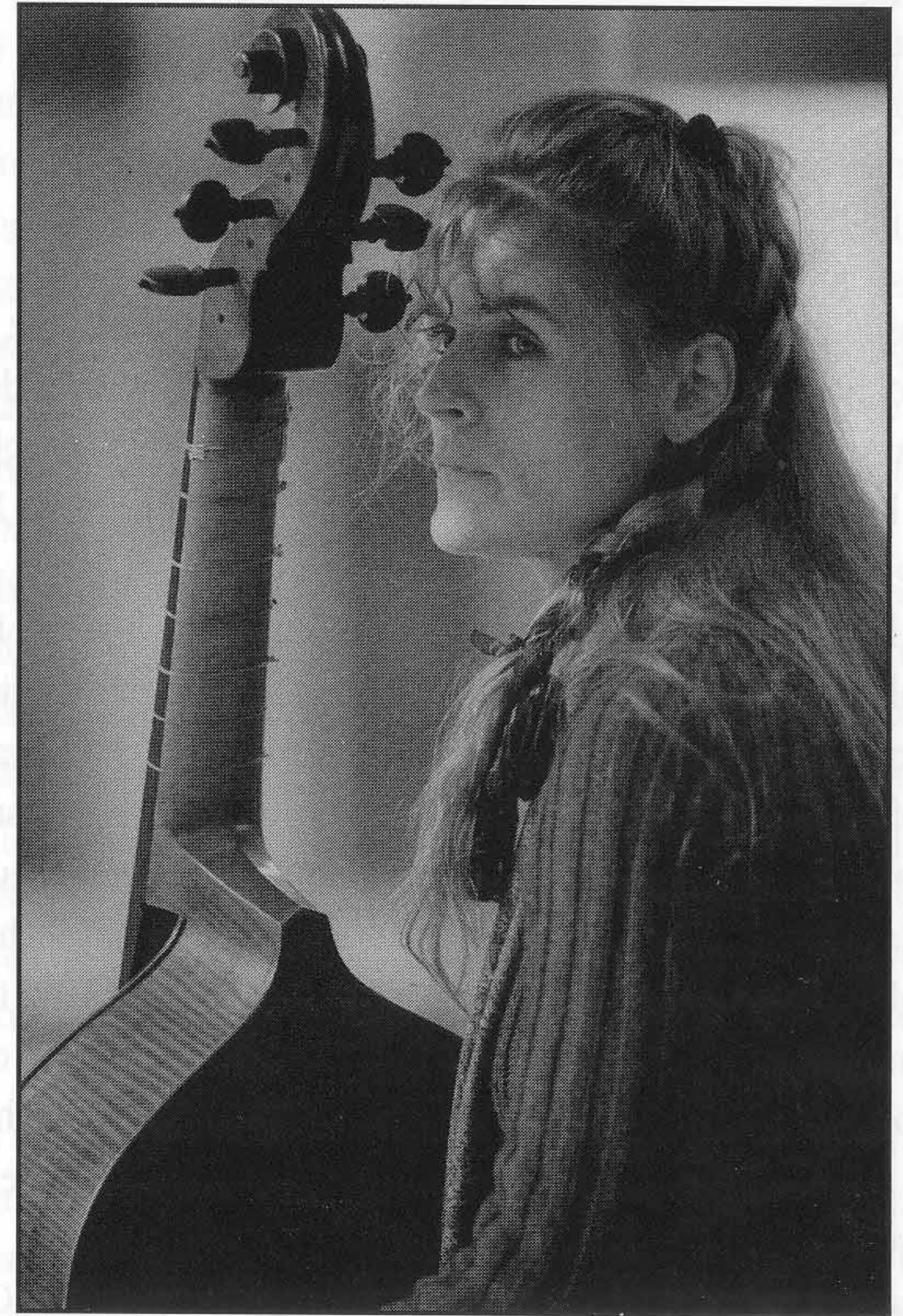
More attached to the music of France than to that of Italy, Marais was an advocate of the viol rather than the violin, whose brilliance was disagreeable to *le goût français*,

which was more restrained, less extroverted, more sober than its Italian counterpart. But that did not prevent him from appropriating the wild rhythms of the *folia* – *Folies d’Espagne* – which he intersperses with the dreamy half-light of meditation on the human condition. Marais cultivates refinement, delicate, elegiac moods, expressed with subtlety and restraint. And the nostalgia for passing time recorded by the painter in the dim reflection in the mirror appears to belong to the same world. Great precision, alternating with freedom of style, ‘harpégements’ and humour, show the versatility and scope of the allusive register. The colours of the music, intensified by darker tones, are matched by its changing moods, from unconcealed joy to languorous melancholy and the strong, cheerful tones of the human voice. In the serenity of art – both painting and music – man glimpses everlastingness, he perceives a glimmer of hope; metaphysical questions are laid to rest.

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ut pictura musica

Music is painting, painting is music



Marin Marais
(1656-1728)

Pièces pour la viole

Today, as in his lifetime, Marin Marais is recognised as one of the great figures in the French school of bass viol performers and composers of the Grand Siècle¹. Yet for just over two centuries his name was forgotten, as was the instrument that brought him fame throughout Western Europe. It was not until the twentieth century that Marin Marais and the bass viol were finally resuscitated.

Marais's life was not particularly remarkable. Times were not easy for a man born into the lower social strata, but he was a respectable man, who exercised his profession to the best of his ability and saw that his family was safe from want. His career was more impressive. Born the son of a cobbler, he could have adopted his father's trade; instead he worked his way up to the privileged and most enviable position of violist to King Louis XIV.

Marin Marais, son of Vincent Marais, was baptised at the small church of St Médard, on the Left Bank of the Seine in Paris, on 31 May 1656. Who could have imagined then that, little more than twenty years later, he was to receive the grand title of *Ordinaire de la Chambre du Roi pour la viole*? Indeed, on 1 August 1679, Louis XIV and his secretary of state Colbert signed a patent, appointing Marin Marais – by then one of the greatest violists in France – to succeed Gabriel Cagnet to that position.

Louis Marais, Marin's uncle, was a priest at the royal church of St Germain-l'Auxerrois

in Paris, and he no doubt took a hand in his nephew's destiny, for on 15 April 1667, Marin became a choirboy at the famous church. For a gifted child, a *maîtrise*, or choir school, opened up enormous possibilities. Apart from receiving board and lodging and being generally looked after, he was trained in subjects ranging from Latin to musical composition, and including singing, music theory and the study of a musical instrument. Fortune also smiled on Marais in giving him as his music master one of the most reputed teachers in Paris, François Chaperon, who used his position at the church as a stepping-stone to the Sainte-Chapelle. Marais's fellow singers at St Germain-l'Auxerrois included Michel-Richard Delalande, who later became *sous-maître* of the Royal Chapel, then *surintendant de la Musique de la Chambre du Roi*.

Marais left the *maîtrise* in 1672 and went to study with Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe, the best-known and most influential bass viol virtuoso and teacher of that time. According to Évrard Titon du Tillet (*Le Parnasse françois*, Paris, 1732), Sainte-Colombe stopped teaching him after six months on realising 'that his pupil had surpassed him'. The same author continues: 'But he [Sainte-Colombe] always gave him credit for the amazing progress he had made on the viol. One day he was at a gathering at which Marais had played the viol and some persons of distinction asked him what he thought of his playing. He answered that there were pupils who could surpass their master, but that young Marais would never find any to surpass him.'

After the six months spent with Sainte-Colombe, Marais's career took off. He became a member of the orchestra of the Académie Royale de Musique, which was directed by the *surintendant de la Musique de la Chambre du Roi*, Jean-Baptiste Lully. The prestige of

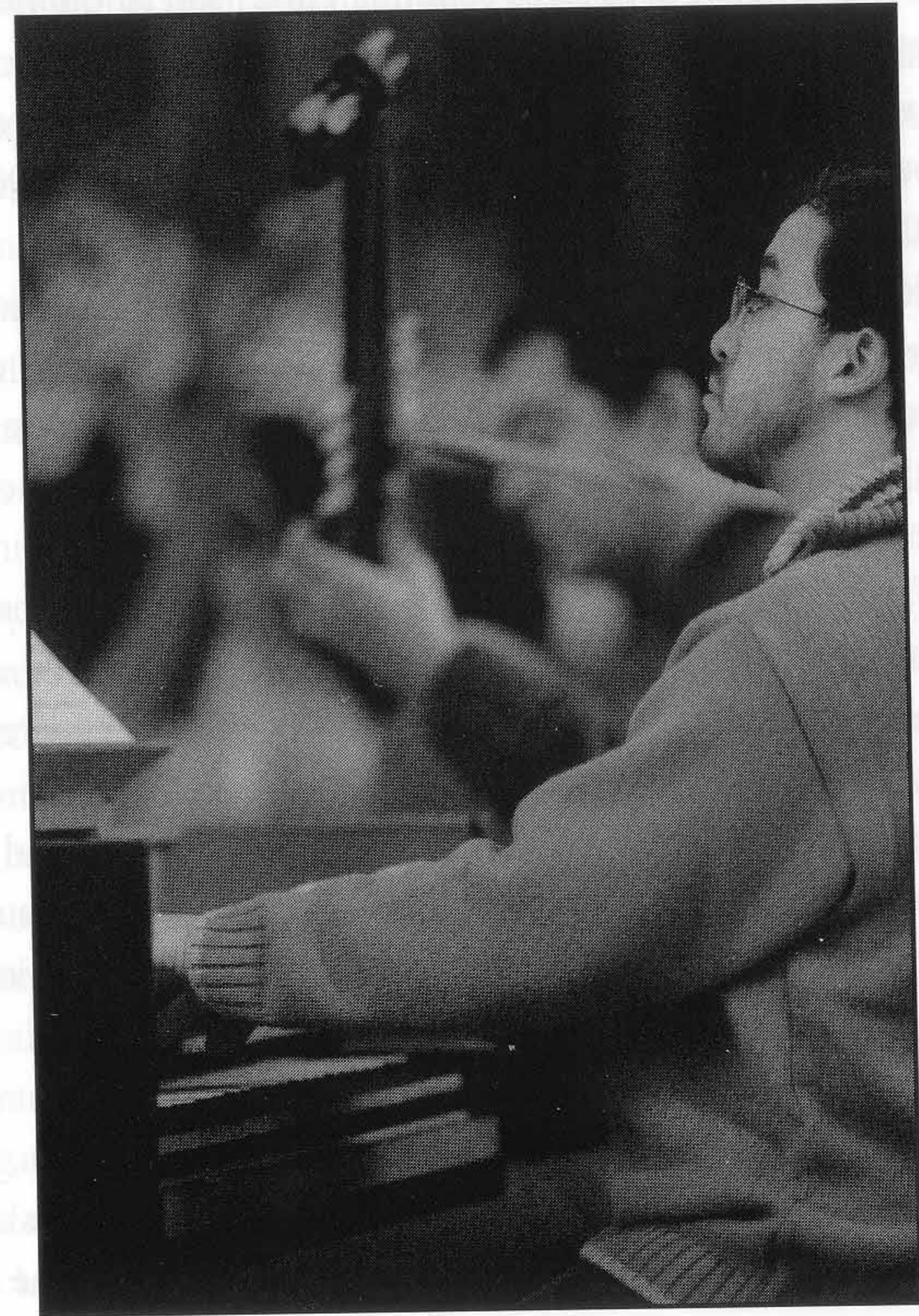
Marais's position at court from 1679 must have gained him access to all the fashionable salons and brought him pupils from the highest social strata.

Marin Marais was a good father to his numerous offspring, several of whom also became very good violists. His eldest son, Vincent, acquired the reversion of his father's office as viol player in 1708, and when Marais retired in 1725, he bequeathed his royal appointment to him. Titon du Tillet tells us that Marais spent his retirement peacefully, 'growing plants and flowers in his garden' and continuing to give the occasional lesson at his home in Paris (Rue de l'Oursine, Faubourg St Marceau), where he died on 15 August 1728.

The following month, a tribute to Marais was published in the *Mercure de France*: 'Death has recently deprived us of a most famous musician who is sorely missed by all viol players: Monsieur Marais. He had taken that instrument to a high degree of perfection. As well as his exceptional talent for the viol, he had a great gift for composition, having written several operas in which, among other fine orchestral pieces, the storm scene from *Alcyone* is regarded as an admirable achievement. He died at a very advanced age, leaving two sons² as worthy inheritors of all his talents.'



The most important part of Marais's musical output is the series of bass viol pieces, which he published in five collections between 1686 and 1725. These volumes comprise an amazing 598 pieces for solo viol, 18 for two viols, and 21 for three viols, all of them published with figured bass. But he also published a set of *Pièces en trio pour les flûtes*,



violons et dessus de viole avec basse continue (1692) and *La Gamme et autres morceaux de symphonie pour le violon, la viole et le clavecin* (1723). And he composed four operas, which met with varying success: *Alcide* (1693), written in collaboration with Louis Lully (son of Jean-Baptiste), who also wrote the libretto, *Ariane et Bacchus* (1696), *Alcyone* (1706) and *Sémélé* (1709).

Published over a period of almost forty years, the five collections of bass viol pieces show Marais's evolution as a composer: we witness the maturation of his style of writing. They also reflect the changing tastes of his time, notably in the organisation of the suites, which gradually move from suites consisting almost exclusively of dances to ones comprising more 'pièces de caractère'³ (a similar progression may be observed in the works of harpsichordists of that time). These collections also provide vital information about Marin Marais's playing, for each one contains precise instructions for ornamentation, fingering and bowing, as well as many other details on how to perform his pieces with the required technique and according to the rules of good taste.

Marin Marais's bass viol pieces represent the apogee of the genre. And at the same time one might say that they mark the end of the great period of French viol music. For no composer after him made such an important contribution to literature for the viol.



Le Rapporté (Concert XLVIII, *Concerts à deux violes esgales*) is an amazing chaconne by Monsieur de Sainte-Colombe, completely different from the one by Marais presented

on this recording. Expression is given absolute priority (which does mean that virtuosity is excluded) and there are no frenzied rhythms in this chaconne. One of the viols states the sombre theme that is to serve as the ground bass, then the two viols exchange questions and answers, with frequent use of double stopping. The virtuosity resides both in the use of double stopping and in the extreme expressiveness that is required of the musicians in order to maintain the tension that runs from beginning to end of the piece in practically the whole of the viol's range. Did Sainte-Colombe and Marin Marais ever play this piece together? We shall probably never know. But we do know that Sainte-Colombe's compositions influenced not only his illustrious pupil but also all the violists who came after him, including Antoine Forqueray.

Prélude en harpègement (Suite in A minor, *Pièces de viole*, Book V, 1725): this piece clearly refers to the 'unmeasured' preludes of the lutenists and harpsichordists. We must not forget that, before becoming a genre in its own right, the prelude evolved from the short improvisation musicians used to check their instruments: lutenists testing their tuning, harpsichordists checking the touch and tone of their instruments, organists establishing pitch and mode. A prelude was originally a preparatory piece.

Fantaisie (Suite in A minor, *Pièces de violes*, Book III, 1711). This short piece for viol and harpsichord (another very important instrument of that time) is far removed from the usual fantasia, i.e. contrapuntal in style, fugal, and not dissimilar to the *ricercar*. During the reign of Louis XIV organists (Louis Couperin, for example, and later Gilles Jullien), then lutenists, often used the fantasia as a prelude to their suites. Marais's *Fantaisie* also appears to be a sort of short prelude, a means of 'warming up' before moving on to more substantial

matters. The tone is light-hearted and almost dreamy.

With its very mannered and extremely stylised melody, *Grand Ballet* (Suite in A minor, *Pièces de violes*, Book III, 1711) seems to come straight from a Grand Siècle opera – one by Lully, for example, or by Marin Marais himself. We remember that he composed four operas, including the very successful *Alcyone* of 1706. Like all ballet music of the time, this piece includes some very effective alternations between duple and triple metre. From the technical viewpoint, we notice the use of double stopping in certain passages and the echo effects between the viol and the continuo. The addition of a guitar to the theorbo and harpsichord of the continuo is very judicious. Indeed, the guitar was highly fashionable at the court of Louis XIV and the king himself took up the instrument at an early age. Bernard Jourdan, Sieur de la Salle, was appointed guitar teacher to the king on 29 April 1651 (when Louis was twelve) and remained in the position until his death in 1695, when his son succeeded him. The guitar was of course used in operas, particularly in the ballets.

Caprice ou Sonate (Suite in A minor, *Pièces à une et trois violes*, Book IV, 1717) is a French overture, a genre brought into fashion (but not invented, as some have claimed) by Lully. Division into two parts is basic to the French overture, beginning with a slow, solemn, duple-metre movement, with vertical writing and plentiful dotted rhythms, followed by a faster, livelier, triple-metre one, contrapuntal in style. In this piece Marais follows tradition to the letter. The melody in the first part is affected almost to the point of stiffness – a reflection, no doubt, of the bearing of the ageing king, whom Marais must have observed quite often at Versailles from 1679, when he became violist to the *Chambre du Roi*. The second part is a lively and rather virtuosic *fugato* movement, in which the continuo plays an

active part in the imitation. The title, leading us momentarily to imagine that the piece is going to be Italian in style, is not very appropriate. Provocation on Marais's part? Or his way of showing his contempt for Italian music? At that time the quarrel between supporters of the Italian and the French styles was still going strong, and we know that Marais was a great defender of the purest French tradition. (His principal rival, Antoine Forqueray, on the other hand, adopted the quintessence of Italian music, using its styles and formulas abundantly in his works and thus creating a most successful mixture of Italian and French styles, echoing the famous '*goûts-réunis*' of François Couperin.)

Muzette (Suite en A minor, *Pièces à une et trois violes*, Book IV, 1717): this dance appeared in French ballet as early as Campra's ballet-opera *Les Muses* (1703) and it was often used in eighteenth-century stage performances. The *musette* is a dance in duple metre, moderate in tempo and tender in character; it was generally danced by characters representing shepherds. The music is very characteristic and easily recognisable, since it invariably suggests the sound of the *musette* or bagpipe, its continuous drone (*bourdon*) supporting a simple whirling melody. In this piece Marais goes beyond the usual simplicity of the *musette*: writing for two viols enables him to make very effective use of a drone in echo in the second part. This music is delicate and very poetic; we are reminded of the gardens depicted by Antoine Watteau, full of colour, laughter and intoxicating perfumes...

Folies d'Espagne (Suite in D minor, *Pièces de violes*, Book II, 1701): with this bravura piece – a set of thirty-two variations based on the *folia* tune – Marin Marais explores his instrument's wide range of technical and expressive possibilities. The folk dance known as the *folia* developed in the Iberian Peninsula towards the end of the Middle Ages, before



being taken into the polyphonic court repertory at the end of the fifteenth century. It probably originated in Portugal, a fact asserted by the Spanish theorist Francisco Salinas in his treatise *De musica libri septem* (1577). The *folia* music was introduced into France in 1656 by the Italian guitarist Francesco Corbetta and it subsequently became very popular in Paris. The 'folie d'Espagne', as it was known, circulated widely in the eighteenth century through composers such as Marin Marais, François Couperin, Michel Corrette and many others, who wrote numerous variations on this popular tune. This piece by Marais was included in his *Pièces de violes* of 1701, but fifteen or so of the variations are to be found in a manuscript dated 1685. So we must bear in mind the fact that many of these variations are the work of a young and spirited musician. This final version is well constructed, with carefully chosen contrasts between the variations. Some of them are expressive, some emphatic, some so virtuosic that they border on frenzy, e.g. the final variation (a perfect example) with its very clear evocation of castanets and heel-stamping, and with the viol, completely bewitched, disappearing in an amazing final whirl. Both musically and didactically, this is one of the very finest pieces Marin Marais ever produced.

La Rêveuse (*Suite d'un goût étranger* in F minor, *Pièces à une et trois violes*, Book IV, 1717) is also undoubtedly one of his masterpieces. The poetry, emotion and dreamlike quality that emanate from this musical portrait make it quite timeless. Despite the extremely simple melody – persistent and plaintive bass figures interrupted by rests (sobs?), alternating with very *cantabile* passages in the high register – it is easy to picture this *Rêveuse*. She is graceful, tender, charming, but also hesitant, pensive, and as mysterious as early-morning autumnal mist. The key of F minor (rare at that time) helps to create the mood of mystery

and poetry that brings this piece very close to the music of Sainte-Colombe, whose presence can be felt in Marais's works.

Le Dialogue (Suite in G major, *Pièces de viole*, Book V, 1725) lives up to its name. Unexpectedly, we find the viol conversing volubly with the bass of the continuo (possibly evoking a master talking with his pupil), with affirmations, heated exchanges, questions and answers, all this pleasantly conveyed in music by the use of various effects, sometimes close to burlesque!

Plainte (Suite en G minor, *Pièces de violes*, Book II, 1701) is a 'pièce de caractère'. The French *plainte* and its English counterpart, the complaint, were typical of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sainte-Colombe composed a fine piece entitled *Les Pleurs*, and John Dowland's *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares* is another excellent example. For this long expression of grief, the composer has brought together all the necessary ingredients: the inevitable key of G minor, a very slow tempo, long ties interrupted by rests (evoking sobs), a very expressive melody, extreme tension in the harmonies, and great simplicity in the continuo, helping to create a feeling of intense sorrow. This piece calls for skill on the part of the performer; particularly important is the bowing technique, which enables the musician to increase as he or she thinks fit the dramatic tension already existing in the music.

Chaconne (Suite in G major, *Pièces de viole*, Book V, 1725): this dance in triple metre originated in the New World and was brought to Spain in the sixteenth century. It was imported into France in the early seventeenth century, where it became slower and statelier. It became very popular in the operas of Lully, then those of his successors, from Marais to Rameau, and even Gluck. And the lutenists, then the violists adopted it for solo variations on

a ground bass. Chaconnes were composed in France until the end of the eighteenth century. This one by Marais is written most tastefully and with great generosity. Its variations call for a high degree of virtuosity, while the ground bass is relatively simple. The use of double stopping and complex diminutions at the end of the piece shows a quite successful attempt to renew the genre. The frenzied rhythm, combined with the joyful key of G major, brings us closer to Italy than to France. Indeed, epitomised by Sainte-Colombe, the French chaconne of the time, with its restrained and slightly affected splendour, was in the key of G minor.

Tombeau pour M^r de S^e Colombe (Suite in E minor, *Pièces de violes*, Book II, 1701) is a very fine 'pièce de caractère'. The *tombeau* ('tomb', 'tombstone'), an instrumental piece in the character of a lament, commemorating the death of some person, appeared in France towards the end of the 1630s, when Ennemond Gaultier composed such a piece for his fellow lutenist René Mesangeau (d. 1638). From the lute repertory, the *tombeau* spread to that of the guitar, the harpsichord, and, of course, the viol. In the Suite in B minor from the same *Pièces de violes*, Book II, we find a second *tombeau*, dedicated this time to Lully. Marais's *Tombeau pour M^r de S^e Colombe* is in the same poetic vein as the *Plainte* from Book III or *Les Pleurs* by Sainte-Colombe. His great sorrow is obvious from the very beginning of the piece, with the famous descending tetrachord, a system of four notes contained within the limits of a perfect 4th (here: E-D-C-B), which was used by composers of the early Baroque period to express great unhappiness. The long ties interrupted by rests represent the sobs of the man who has lost his revered master. And Marais uses chromaticism here and there to bring out the emotion: notably for greater expression in the descending tetrachord (E-D-C sharp-C natural-B). Simply and without affectation, Marin Marais shares with us his

despondency, his tears, his very real grief.

Erik Kocevar

February 2003

Translation: Mary Pardoe

Translator's notes:

¹ Grand Siècle: the reign of Louis XIV seen as France's period of political and cultural pre-eminence.

² The 'two sons' were probably Vincent (see above) and Roland Marais, who was praised by Quantz as an excellent bass viol player.

³ 'Pièce de caractère' ('character-pieces') was the term used by Marais for the pieces with special titles suggesting extra-musical significance (e.g. *La Rêveuse*, *Dialogue*, *Le tableau de l'opération de la taille*).

