



*Philidor*

Suites for Flute and B.C.

Musica ad Rhenum

Jed Wentz & Marion Moonen *traverso*

Cassandra Luckhardt *viola da gamba*

Michael Borgstede *harpsichord*



Pierre Danican Philidor 1681–1731  
Suites for Flute and B.C.

3 Suites à 2 flûtes traversières seules avec  
3 autres suites dessus et basse Op.1

Quatrième Suite

1. Lentement	2'40
2. Courante	1'57
3. Air en Musette (Rondeau): Gracieusement	1'25
4. Gavotte	0'39
5. Sicilienne: Très lentement	1'30
6. Paysanne: Gayment	1'16

Première Suite

7. Très lentement	1'35
8. Rigaudon en Rondeau	1'48
9. Courante en Contrefaiseur	1'54
10. Fugue	2'19

Cinquième Suite

11. Très lentement	2'22
12. Allemande	2'31
13. Sarabande: Très tendrement – Un peu plus gay, et piqué – Mouvement ordinaire	3'29
14. Gigue: Gayment	2'23

Deuxième Suite

15. Fugue	1'30
16. Air en Rondeau: Gayment	2'18
17. Sarabande: Très proprement	1'27
18. Fugue	1'28

Sixième Suite

19. Lentement	1'40
20. Gavotte (Rondeau): Gayment, et gracieusement	1'27
21. Sarabande: Lentement	1'50
22. Rigaudon	0'36
23. Gigue: Gayment	1'21

Troisième Suite

24. Lentement	3'20
25. Fugue	1'42
26. Rondeau	2'30
27. Chaconne	3'30

Suites à 2 flûtes-traversières seules avec  
autres Suites dessus et basse Opp. 2 & 3

Neuvième Suite

28. Lentement	1'51
29. Courante: Affetueusement	3'56
30. Rigaudon en Rondeau	1'30
31. Gigue	1'31
32. Fugue	1'22

Septième Suite

33. Sarabande: Très proprement	4'12
34. Allemande: Lentement	3'33
35. Gayment	0'41
36. Rondeau: Légèrement et affectueusement	2'39

Dixième Suite

37. Sarabande: Lentement, et très proprement	2'11
38. Premier & Deuxième Rondeau: Gayment; Tendrement	2'43
39. Gigue: La Coquette	1'10
40. Badine	1'41

Huitième Suite

41. Affectueusement	3'30
42. Fugue: Gayement, et point trop vite	1'36
43. Lentement, Gracieusement & piqué	1'21
44. Allemande	1'14

Onzième Suite

45. Rondeau en Contrefaiseurs: Lentement	3'01
46. Allemande: Un peu gay	3'04
47. Air en Sarabande: Tendrement	2'08
48. Gavotte	1'10
49. Fugue: Pas trop vite	1'30

Douzième Suite

50. Prelude: Très lentement	2'09
51. Allemande: Pas trop vite	2'19
52. Sarabande: Très proprement	1'38
53. La Parisienne: Très légèrement	1'01
54. Chaconne	1'59

Musica ad Rhenum

Jed Wentz *traverso* (after Rippert, by Simon Polak)  
Marion Moonen *traverso* (after Rippert, by Simon Polak)  
Cassandra Luckhardt *viola da gamba* (by J. Pringle)  
Michael Borgstede *harpsichord* (after Couchet, by Titus Crijnen)

The Danican Philidor family was a musical one, with close ties, spanning several generations, to the royal house of France. This association began, as far as we know, during the reign of Louis XIII, when the family was strongly associated with wind instruments and military music: a certain Michel Danican (Philidor) was an oboist. His descendant, André Danican Philidor (Philidor L'ainé), was also an oboist in various military ensembles (and the 12 Grands Hautbois du Roi), though he worked as well as the music librarian of Louis XIV from at least the 1680s onwards. The next generation, sons and nephews of André, wrote music for wind instruments, including the newly fashionable *flûte traversière*. For instance, André's son, Anne Danican Philidor, born in 1681, published music that could be performed on flute, recorder or oboe as well as violin, while another son, François Danican Philidor, published two volumes of music specifically for the *flûte traversière*.

It is, however, with a nephew of André Danican Philidor, a composer and performer named **Pierre Danican Philidor**, that we are currently concerned. Born in 1681, the same year as his cousin Anne, he published the 12 suites recorded here in a series of three publications: the first (*œuvre première*), containing three suites for two flutes without bass and three suites for flute and basso continuo, appeared in 1717; in 1718 two more *œuvres* (*deuxième* and *troisième*) appeared, bringing the total number of works to twelve suites equally divided between the two instrumental ensembles. If one compares these suites to those of his cousins Anne (published in 1712 and 1714) and Pierre (published in 1716 and 1718), the works of Pierre show a greater compositional sophistication. They also demand a greater technical ability from the performer. This should not surprise us, for, by this time, Pierre was keeping very impressive musical company indeed: from 1716 onwards he worked as a viol player in the *chambre du roi*, together with his great contemporaries François Couperin and Marin Marais.

Whether or not these *pièces* compare favourably to those of Couperin and Marais I leave to the listener to decide, but for me they certainly form the pinnacle of music composed in France for the flute before the appearance, a decade later in the late 1720s, of Italianized works by virtuosos like Michel Blavet and Jean Daniel Braun. Philidor's sophisticated harmonies and unusual turns of phrase make these works stand out against the beloved and beautiful, but less adventurous compositions of Jacques-Martin Hotteterre, Michel de la Barre or even Michel Pignolet de Montéclair. Moreover, Philidor's detailed notation of ornaments that were conventionally left to the player's discretion, like his (for us today) surprisingly frequent indications for vibrato (*flattement*), make these three books of suites a treasure trove for historically informed performers. Indeed, Philidor even at one point indicates the possibilities for the performers to take rhythmic freedoms: that is to say, he notates what many today would call *rubato*. Such invaluable information points towards the possibility of these suites having been composed and published as teaching material. In the 18th century, duets were often used to teach beginners the rudiments of an instrument, as they allowed the student to fill his or her ears with the sounds of the teacher's perfections, and to imitate those perfections in their own playing. It is indeed tempting to see the

publication of these suites, which appeared so soon after Philidor's appointment to the prestigious *chambre du roi*, as an elaborate calling card advertising his availability as a *maître de musique*. The suites could have served as elegant didactic material to be used by the aristocratic clientele to which his position now gave him access.

Such didactic intentions might also help explain one puzzling feature of the suites: Philidor's frequent use, in the duets, of imitative writing. Indeed, five of the six suites for two flutes contain at least one movement marked either *fugue* or designated with the canonic indication *en contrefaiseurs*. The sole exception is the *septième suite* of *œuvre deuxième*, yet even that suite contains a highly imitative *allemande*. This preference for 'learned' contrapuntal writing, unusual for the time, could once again point towards a didactic intention, as the imitative writing would facilitate, may even dictate, an imitative performance: the pupil could easily model her or his playing on that of the master.

Alas, in preparing this recording there was no 18th-century master for us to imitate, or even to consult. How then can we create the appropriate style, distinguish good from false taste, vivify the sounds of the French court, when we have never heard even a single note from the 18th century itself? Without recordings, and short of a séance, how can we best approach the top of Parnassus, when we stand at its foot, with neither rope nor ladder to help us climb? Indeed, should such mountain tops even be attempted by humble performers, dare we presume upon the authority claimed by the composer through the legacy of notation?

I would stress that the rich notation of these suites, their many unusual performative indications, opens the path towards a performance style inspired by possibilities, rather than crushed by fears. Why worry about being 'untrue to the composer' when we cannot know what he or she wanted? So much has been written and argued, in Early Music circles, about authenticity, 'composer's intentions' and *werktreue*. There has been much wringing of hands about the future of the movement. Renewal, however, must first take place in the imaginations of the performers, before it can spread by means of sound to the listener's ear. A careful examination of the performative indications that Philidor's suites offer us (at the distance of 300 years) should therefore not be seen as a crushing load, placing an impossible responsibility on the performer to achieve 'authenticity', but rather as a key to unlock creativity within the context of our imperfect and every changing knowledge of 18th-century style. That we never can achieve authenticity is, for me, irrelevant and in no way discredits the honest attempt to find it. Seeing where Philidor has notated *flattement*, for instance, or when he has asked for freedom of tempo, has invited us in this recording to look for musical moments that might profit from a similar approach. In this manner, combining rigour and inspiration, one's ideas about style can evolve. One's memory absorbs and one's imagination experiences the potential locked in notation, and it is only by looking up, never by looking down, that one can attempt to scale Parnassus.

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