

Pren de bon cuer

Chansons for Renaissance flute consort
from the prints of P. Attaignant (1533)

Vier Schweitzer Pfeiffen.
Discantus.



Altus.



Tenor.



Bassus.



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Marc Lewon – Organisation

Concert and Open Livestream: Sun 25 April 2021 17:15 & 19:15
Audio and Video recording and streaming – orenkirschenbaum.com
Youtube channel: youtube.com/c/ReRenaissance
Website: ReRenaissance.ch

About the programme

When Johannes Fries travelled from Paris to Basel in 1536 to teach at the local Latin school, carrying with him a fingering chart for the transverse flute, the consort of flutes was already established as an instrumental ensemble throughout Europe. How the flute consort originally came to be, shortly before the beginning of the 16th century, is still obscure to us, however on the basis of various individual pieces of information we can piece together, mosaic-like, a possible development.

In the last quarter of the 15th century the flute was used mainly as a military instrument, usually in combination with a drum. The feared mercenary troops of central Switzerland with their soldiers used this duo to coordinate movements on the battlefield, and perhaps also to determine the marching tempo, to motivate their own troops, and to intimidate the enemy. From this time on, and in some cases for centuries to come, the flute was associated with the German-Swiss region. This is reflected above all in terms such as "Schweitzerpfeiff" or "Flute d'Allemand", the latter of which is used in Pierre Attaignant's Chanson print of 1533. The flute as a fife in combination with the drum was probably in use throughout Europe - wherever Swiss Confederates hired themselves out as mercenaries, such as in Burgundy and Italy from the 1470s onwards.

In iconographic sources of this period, the duo of flute and drum is also frequently found as an ensemble playing at dances and prestigious occasions, often as a change from or less expensive alternative to the *alta capella*, a loud wind ensemble. At this time the flute was probably also one of the wind instruments learned in the town pipers' guilds along with the cornetto, trombone or shawm. In a Bernese music print from 1553, dedicated to some of the city pipers there, the composer Johannes Wannenmacher remarks in the preface:

«I also have no doubt that these songs will be useful and pleasant for the listeners, especially on Schwegeln (= flutes) and recorders. [...] It would also be useful, if you are weighed down and tired by the playing of the stately instruments, i.e. trombones and cornetti, and the ears of the listeners are overflowing with the multitude of voices [of this polyphonic music], that then those who are still in training, with smaller instruments and fewer voices (because nature finds a special stimulus in the change of things) will again move the listeners to pay more attention...»

At the beginning of the 16th century the transverse flute gradually appeared in a new context, namely in the consort. The earliest pictorial evidence known is a drawing by Andrea Previtali from Bergamo, made between 1510 and 1520. In this picture three men - possibly German or Swiss mercenaries - are not playing their flutes on the battlefield, but are sitting together around a table in a private setting, playing from partbooks. At about the same time, Arnt von Aich notes in his Cologne Songbook (1519) on the title page of the Tenor partbook:

«In this book one finds 75 courtly songs with descant, alto, bass and tenor, entertaining to sing. Also many of them can be played on recorders, transverse flutes and other instruments.»

An early indication that these polyphonic songs were also played on flute consorts? By the 1520s we encounter the flute consort as an established ensemble, consisting of a bass instrument, two tenor instruments, and a treble instrument. The famous New Year's greeting from 1523 by the engraver, draughtsman and glass painter Urs Graf, who also worked in Basel for a long time, to his friend Jörg Schweiger shows a rather utopian scene: two Confederates and two Landsknechte playing consort together. This depiction is most likely intended as an optimistic vision of a peaceful future in which even hostile soldiers make music together. But it also depicts in detail a consort and its players - here the juxtaposition of flautists playing to the right and to the left is particularly remarkable. Apropos, Urs Graf was himself a soldier for the Swiss Guards as a young man.

In 1529 Martin Agricola published in Wittenberg in his textbook *Musica instrumentalis deudsch* an illustration of four «Schweitzer Pfeiffen» in three sizes (bass, two tenors and treble), which can be seen on the flyer and the title page of the programme for this concert. He explicitly mentions the use of such a consort for playing vocal polyphony.

After 1520 or 1530 the consort formation of one treble, two tenor and one bass flute seems to go out of fashion. The small treble flute is replaced by an instrument in the tenor register. One special thing about the renaissance flute is that although the construction is extremely simple in principle - the instrument has a more or less cylindrical inner bore, a blow hole and six finger holes, and the head end is stopped with a cork - it has nevertheless a range of over two and a half octaves and can thus cover all voice ranges from tenor to treble. Both consort formations will be heard in today's concert. The descant instrument appears again increasingly from the 17th century onwards; primarily in paintings from the Dutch and Flemish regions, but also in Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma Musicum of 1619*, there again as a component of the consort. Even after the development of the Baroque transverse flute in the second half of the 17th century, with its conical inner bore and single key, the duo of Swiss pipe and drum remained in use in the military.

Pierre Attaignant, who settled in Paris in the 1520s as a publisher of music and books, revolutionized music printing once again. Whereas Ottaviano Petrucci's method, patented in Venice in 1498, involved at least two, but usually three, steps in printing a page (first the staves, then the text, and then the notes), Attaignant had developed a method by which a page could be printed in a single operation, enabling him to achieve print runs of up to 1,000 copies, which was high by the standards of the time. In addition to prints of motets, lute tablatures, and dance music, he published more than 50 prints of chansons between 1528 and 1552. For this enormous production, however, buyers had to be found. Thus Attaignant's instrumentation suggestions in his 1533 chanson print can also be seen as a method of creating an additional market for the numerous recorder and transverse flute players in Paris. Most of the compositions you hear today are from this print and were explicitly suggested by Attaignant for a flute consort. His instrumentation suggestions, by the way, are by no means mere coincidence - the pieces for recorders and flutes correspond in each case to the range and also the preferred keys of these instruments. Attaignant had already suggested flutes in an earlier chanson print from the 1520s. This print, however, has been lost except for a single partbook.

In the painting «*The Ambassadors*» by Hans Holbein the Younger, who had worked in Basel for several years before his departure for England in 1532, the painter portrays two diplomats in April 1533 (when Attaignant's aforementioned print also appears): Jean de Dinteville, French ambassador to the court of Henry VIII, who is coming from Paris, and his friend Georges de Selve, a clerical envoy. In addition to numerous astronomical measuring instruments, books and globes, there is a lute (with a broken string) and a quiver with a boxwood flute consort at lower right, next to de Selve. The objects depicted are all symbolically charged: the flute quiver is not only an attribute for *musica*, but also stands for prosperity in general. Incidentally, the partbook lying on the table in *The Ambassadors* is Johann Walther's (Protestant) *Geistliches Gesangbüchlein*, printed in Wittenberg in 1524).

Henry VIII, who himself mastered the flute, had by the time of his death in 1547 no fewer than 72 transverse flutes purchased for his court, and maintained his own flute consort, which is referred to simply as «The King's flutes» in the salary lists. At the beginning of the 16th century a «band of French whistlers» are again employed at the Scottish court - were these «whistlers» a flute consort from France?

Jacques Moderne, who worked in Lyon and was the second most important music publisher in France after Pierre Attaignant, also proposes a flute consort in a print with dances and fantasies from 1544. In 1556, also in Lyon, the music textbook «*Epitome musical des tons, sons et accordz es*

voix humaines, fleustes d'Alleman fleustes à neuf trous, violes, et violons» by the author Philibert Jambe de Fer was published. He gives precise instructions for playing and speaks about the range and tone of the instruments, but also about articulation:

«After this, I call your attention to the fact that playing [on the flute] is not possible for those who have no tongue, because for all the notes that are articulated, it is necessary that the tongue be leading; therefore, take heed, you who have pleasure in this playing, that your tongues do not rot, in other words, drink often [alcohol].»

For decades, despite the general interest in Renaissance music, the Renaissance flute received little attention with only a small circle of researchers and players devoting themselves to the instrument. However it has been enjoying increasing popularity for several years. One of the pioneers of the Renaissance flute, Anne Smith, describes Fries's fingering chart, rediscovered in Basel in 2005, as an important link between the earliest sources for transverse flute (Martin Agricola in 1529, and Jambe de Fer in 1556), spanning the arc between French consort playing and the Swiss humanists.

Text: Johanna Bartz

About the Music

1. **Je ne puis pas** - Guillaume Le Heurteur (fl 1530-1545)

In the midst of the chanson, the opening motif from Josquin's "«Adieu mes amours» appears - is this a deliberate musical quotation?

2. **Jamais ung cuer** - anonymous

3. **Adieu mes amours** - Josquin des Prez (1450/55-1521)

For the Josquin Year 2021, we have chosen a chanson that was also printed in *Odhecaton A*, among others (see the recent ReRenaissance concert of March 28th, 2021). The piece not only appeared in several manuscripts and prints around 1500, but was used and arranged by various composers in masses, chansons and even lute pieces.

4. **Pren de bon cuer** - Pierre de Manchicourt (1510-1564)

Pierre de Manchicourt was so famous for his music toward the end of his creative life that Attaignant published a complete collection of his motets in 1539. In the title chanson of this program, a lover sings to a woman, «Accept with a good heart my little gift, and honor me by finding it good.»

5. **Parle qui veult** - Claudin de Sermisy (1490-1562)

This chanson is the only one in the entire print which is in a mode unusual for transverse flutes (G-Mixolydian), and thus stands out with a very bright and lively sound.

6. **On dit qu'amour** - Pierre Vermont (1495-1533) or Pernot Vermont (1495-1558)

On dit qu'Amour luy mesmes l'aymera,
car il la touche et craint de la blesser.
S'il en est pris, je crois qu'il forcera
elle d'aymer, et moy de la lesser.
(Antoine Héroët)

This quatrain comes from one of Héroët's eight-line poems. The other part of the quatrain will be heard in this programme with the piece *Madame a soy*. In the French version, the author

deliberately plays with the double meaning of the word «amour», which in this context can mean both «love» and «beloved».

7. **Pavane - Gaillarde** - Pierre Attaingnant (1494-1551)

In addition to chansons and motets, Attaingnant also printed an impressive œuvre of dance music. This program features dances such as the Basse Danse, Tourdion, Pavane and Gaillarde from some of his prints from the years 1529 and 1530.

8.-10. **Madame a soy - En attendant - Il me suffit du temps** - Clément Janequin (1485-1558)

In 1533, the same year in which the *Vingt et sept chansons musicales a quatre parties* with its suggested instrumentation for traverso and recorders was printed, Attaingnant published another chanson print entirely dedicated to Clément Janequin, already famous during his lifetime. The first chanson in this section belongs in content to *On dit quamour* heard earlier - the text comes from the same eight-liner by Antoine Héroët:

Ma dame a soy, non aux aultres, ressemble ;
car se voyant naturelle beaulté,
a tant acquis de chaste loyaulté,
qu'en elle sont deux contraires ensemble.

In the chanson *En attendant*, Janequin illustrates waiting for the beloved (as described in the text) by removing the tenor voice until shortly before the end of the piece - the tenor waits for his entry and the other voices wait for the tenor ...

11.-14.

Hellas, hellas amour - Guillaume Le Heurteur

Voyant souffrir - Jacotin Le Bel (1490-1555)

Amours, amours - Nicolas Gombert (1495-1560)

La Brosse - Pierre Attaingnant

The three chansons describe the various facets of disappointed love - they deal with humiliation, resignation and bitterness. «La Brosse» («The Brush») is actually an early form of a suite, as several different short dances follow one another within it.

15. **Tourdion** - Pierre Attaingnant

Thoinot Arbeau, in his dance treatise «Orchésographie» from 1588, described not only the duo of fife and drum but also the dances of his time - including the Tourdion, which was a faster form of the Gaillarde.

16. **Pour quoy donc ne** - Pierre Passereau (fl 1509-1547)

Pour quoy donc ne fringuerons-nous
entre nous, jeunes dames ?
Pourquoy donc ne fringuerons-nous
en despit de ces faulx jaloux ?

Ces faulx jaloux, par grant envie,
m'ont mis dessus qu'ay fait folie
d'avoir fringué soubz les cortines,
fust au soir ou devant matines.

Mais quoy qu'en soit,
si danserons nous,

moy et mon amy, par amours.

17. **Les yeulx bendez** - Pierre Vermont or Pernot Vermont

After the energetic *Pour quoy donc ne fringuerons-nous* now follows another deeply melancholic and world-weary chanson. Unfortunately, as in the case of many works with the composer indicated as «Vermont», it is not conclusive whether the composition is by Pierre or Pernot Vermont - the two were probably not related.

18.-21.

Jectes moy sur l'herbette - Johannes Lupi (1506-1539)

Par ung matin - Guillaume Le Heurteur

Hayne et amour - Pierre Vermont or Pernot Vermont

Allons ung peu plaisant - Guillaume Le Heurteur

The chanson *Hayne et amour* tells with great bitterness about the conflicting feelings of hate and love in the heart and thus forms a contrast to the other three frivolous and erotic chansons in this section. They present us with an invitation to a tryst in the open air, the story of a lady who instead of going to mass prefers to «have her flagon filled», and an encounter with a monk and his «instrument».

22.-24.

Basse danse - Pierre Attaignant

Elle veult donc pas estrange - Claudin de Sermisy

Sbon amour merite recompense - Jacotin Le Bel

Si bon amour mérite récompense,
et si pitié n'a perdu son pouvoir,
j'auray mercy ; car ma seule fiance
est la servir en faisant mon devoir.

25.-26.

Je navoye point - Claudin de Sermisy

Pavane - Gaillarde - Pierre Attaignant

In his last column, David Fallows wrote: «Most of these pieces last only two or three minutes; but each defines and expresses its own world.» Perhaps this program has also opened the door to a little world of its own with the sounds that were so familiar to Pierre Attaignant and Johannes Fries.