



Claude Lefèvre (1632–1675)
Portrait of Charles Couperin with the Artist's Daughter
 oil on canvas, about 1665–1670; Château de Versailles
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The Other M^r Couperin

GLEN WILSON

No other period of music history presents us with so many family dynasties as the lute and harpsichord schools of seventeenth-century France. The exasperating scribal habit of omitting first names makes for oftentimes insuperable difficulties of attribution. Among others, the names Boquet, du But, Favier, Gallot, Loeilliet, Marchand, Mercure, Monnard, Rieu, Richard, Verdier, and, most notoriously, Gaultier and la Barre, present problems in this regard. What about the most illustrious of all these dynasties, the Couperins?

The earliest pieces to come down to us other than under the patronym alone are the *Pieces d'orgue consistantes en deux messes* of François Couperin *le Grand*, which were issued in 1690 in the form of manuscript scores with printed title pages and front matter. Ironically, this first instance of a Christian name on a Couperin score gave rise to a misattribution: the masses were long considered to be the work of the composer's uncle François (i).¹ Every other “Couperin” piece from the seventeenth century has been attributed, since the nineteenth century, to his uncle Louis.²

On face of it, the unquestioned firmness of this attribution seems strange, given the aforementioned dearth of given names and the number of possible candidates, which include François *le Grand's* grandfather Charles (i) (1595–1654), his three sons Louis (circa 1626–1661), François (i) (circa 1631–circa 1710), and Charles (ii) (1638–1679), and perhaps even these brothers' cousin, Marc-Roger Normand (1663–1734), who was known by Italianized forms (Couprin, Coprino) of his mother's maiden name.³ There is also the precocious young François *le Grand* (1668–1733) himself to be considered, who lost his father, Charles (ii), at the age of ten in 1679, when it was immediately arranged that he should inherit his father's position as organist of St. Gervais. Until he was of an age, 18, to assume the post officially, he was put under the protection of no less a personage than Jacques-Denis Thomelin, *organiste du roi*. Presumably in these early years he frequently deputized for the interim appointee,

1. See, for example, F.J. Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, vol. 3 (Brussels, 1837), p. 206.

2. See, for example, the nineteen pieces included in Louise Farrenc, ed., *Le Trésor des pianistes*, 20^{me} livraison (Paris, 1872).

3. For basic biographical information about members of the Couperin family see David Fuller et al., “Couperin,” in Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2001), vol. 6, pp. 579 ff., especially the family tree, p. 580, for their relationships. See also Marie-Thérèse Bouquet-Boyer, “Normand, Marc-Roger,” in *New Grove*, vol. 18, p. 48.

the distinguished Michel-Richard de Lalande, who, in his printed *approbation* at the head of the twenty-one-year-old composer's *Pieces d'orgue*, praised the masses as "very beautiful and worthy to be given to the public" (*fort belles, et dignes d'estre données au Public*).⁴ In his own preface to *Les Gouts Réunis* (1724), François le Grand speaks of "the works of my ancestors" (*les ouvrages de mes ancêtres*). He must have known something more than the music of one of his uncles. I would like to examine here whether Louis's monopoly on the family business can continue to be justified.

Louis, from the beginning of research, has benefitted from the status of *chef de secte* conferred upon him by Jean Le Gallois in his *Lettre ... à Mademoiselle Regnault*, published in 1680. He is contrasted there with Jacques Champion de Chambonnières and is repeatedly referred to as one of "these two great men" (*ces deux grands hommes*). After describing Chambonnières's style, Le Gallois proceeds:

The other method is that of the first of the Couperins to have died [i.e., Louis], who excelled in composition, that is to say, by his learned refinement. And this manner of playing is esteemed by the knowledgeable, because it is full of harmonies and enriched with beautiful dissonances, design, and imitation.⁵

The main source for "Couperin" pieces, the Bauyn manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. Vm7 674 and 675), always seemed to support this division of the Parisian harpsichord world.⁶ The first part is devoted to the works of Chambonnières, the second to pieces by "Mons^{ieu}r Couperin." (The third part of the manuscript, now bound incorrectly in two volumes, contains a miscellany of works by other composers.) Two of the Couperin works are dated: an organ *fantasie* dated

4. See James R. Anthony and Lionel Sawkins, "Lalande, Michel-Richard de," in *New Grove*, vol. 14, pp. 139–149, specifically 139.

5. *Lettre de Mr Le Gallois à Mademoiselle Regnault de Solier touchant la musique* (Paris, 1680), p. 74: *L'autre methode est celle du premier mort des Couperins, qui a excellé par la composition, c'est à dire par ses doctes recherches. Et cette manière de jouer a esté estimé par les personnes scavantes, à cause qu'elle est pleine d'accords, & enrichie de belles dissonances, de dessein, & d'imitation.* A pdf of the book is available on the Gallica bibliothèque numérique website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k854800d> (accessed 17 July 2014). Portions of Le Gallois's discussion about the clavecinistes are transcribed and translated in David Fuller, "French Harpsichord Playing in the 17th Century – after Le Gallois," *Early Music* 4/1 (January 1976), pp. 22–26.

6. See Bruce Gustafson, ed., *Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. Vm7 674–675, the Bauyn Manuscript*, 4 vols. (New York: The Broude Trust, 2014). The first three volumes of this edition, with works, respectively, of Chambonnières, Couperin, and various other composers, correspond to the original arrangement of the manuscript. Vol. 4, "Commentary," includes an up-to-date discussion of the manuscript. The entire manuscript is available in pdf form via the Petrucci Music Library website at [http://imslp.org/wiki/Bauyn_Manuscript_\(Various\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Bauyn_Manuscript_(Various)) (accessed 5 February 2016).

December 1656 (no. 135 in Bruce Gustafson's catalogue) and a chaconne dated 1658.⁷ That, however, dates in Bauyn must be taken with caution is shown by Johann Jacob Froberger's Toccata II, marked *fatto a Bruxellis anno 1650*,⁸ although it appears in the composer's autograph *Libro Secondo*, dated 29 September 1649 on its title page.⁹ Taken at face value, the dates 1656 and 1658 for the Couperin pieces in Bauyn, together with the *Tombeau de Mr de Blan[c]rocher*,¹⁰ which presumably could be dated close to the lutenist's death in 1652, seemed to place this magnificent corpus of music squarely in the purview of Louis Couperin, under whose name Paul Brunold published the *Oeuvres complètes* in 1936.¹¹ The unchallenged attribution had taken on an almost totemic aspect.¹²

Nothing changed when a new source appeared in 1968. The Parville manuscript contained four new "Couperin" pieces which were unhesitatingly attributed to Louis.¹³ A small alarm might have gone off when one of these appeared to be an arrangement with *double* of a rigaudon from Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera *Acis et Galathée* from 1686, a quarter century after Louis's death.¹⁴ Perhaps it was thought that this was one of Lully's many reworkings of earlier material or even a folk tune. A list of "Additions

7. These are nos. 97 and 122 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 2, and in his inventory of the Couperin section in *French Harpsichord Music of the 17th Century: a Thematic Catalog of the Sources with Commentary*, 3 vols. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), vol. 2, pp. 396 and 404.

8. No. 5 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 3.

9. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Musiksammlung, Mus. Hs. 18706

10. No. 81 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 2, and his *Thematic Catalog*.

11. Louis Couperin, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paul Brunold, ed. (Paris: Éditions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, 1936)

12. The first faint acknowledgment that there might potentially be a problem with the attribution of the Bauyn Couperin pieces to Louis was raised by Guy Oldham, discussing a newly discovered manuscript with pieces undoubtedly by this composer in "Louis Couperin: A New Source of French Keyboard Music of the Mid 17th Century," *Recherches sur la musique française classique* 1 (1960), pp. 51–59, specifically 53: "Nos 15 and 16 [in the new source] also occur in the Bauyn manuscript and this at last provides the *proof* that the *Mr Couperin* of that collection is indeed *Louis*" – but only, one might observe, under the assumption that all the Couperins in Bauyn, were one and the same member of this large musical family.

13. See Alan Curtis, "Musique classique française à Berkeley: Pièces inédites de Louis Couperin, Lebègue, La Barre, etc.," *Revue de Musicologie* 56/2 (1970), pp. 123–164. The pieces are nos. 32a, 33, 53, and 85 in Curtis's edition of Louis Couperin, *Pièces de Clavecin* (Paris: Heugel, 1972); Parville nos. 11, 67a, 69, and 87 in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 2, pp. 434–465.

14. No. 32a (p. 55) in Curtis's edition. Davitt Moroney, in the critical apparatus to his reworking of Paul Brunold's edition of Louis Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin* (Monaco: Éditions de l'Oiseau-Lyre, 1985), p. 220, goes so far as to date this "rather simple, even crude" work to Louis Couperin's youth.

and Corrections” published by Gustafson in 1990 to update his 1979 catalogue of seventeenth-century sources notes that:

The air obviously did not originate in *Acis et Galathée* (1686) if Louis Couperin (d. 1661) was the composer of the double on it (no. 67a), but no earlier source for the tune has been found The version here is so close to the Lully score that it is difficult to imagine that they are both merely versions of an existing tune; there is no other reason, however, to question attributions in *36-Parville*, or to use this one anomaly as a basis of attributing all of (Louis) Couperin’s *oeuvre* to a member of the family alive in 1686.¹⁵

As regards at least *some* of the attributions, this does somewhat seem to beg the question. One might well ask “why not?”

Louis could have had nothing to do with a pair of pieces appearing in Bauyn part two (no. 112) as *Menuet de M.^r Couperin* with its *Double*, in Bauyn part three (no. 78) as *Menuet de Poitou* with its *Double par M.^r Couperin*, and in Parville as *Menuet de Poitou* with its *Double ... par M.^r Couperin*.¹⁶ The minuet was too late an addition to the court dance canon to have a place in Louis Couperin’s world. There is no evidence for the minuet as a French court dance before the 1660s, and its earliest appearance in Lully’s stage works was in 1664.¹⁷

Other *doubles* attributed to *M.^r Couperin* in the Bauyn manuscript would also be difficult to attribute to Louis. Jacques Hardel, who died 1678, mentioned in 1676 as an *officier* of the Duchess of Orléans¹⁸ as the immediate predecessor of Louis’s younger brother Charles in the same capacity, was the composer of a gavotte in a-minor to which a *double* was added by *M.^r Couperin*.¹⁹ A few pages later in the third part of Bauyn is another Couperin *double* on a gavotte that Nicolas Lebègue had

15. Bruce Gustafson and David Fuller, *A Catalogue of French Harpsichord Music 1699–1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), Appendix C, p. 383.

16. See Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 4, p. 184.

17. See Meredith Ellis Little, “Minuet,” in *New Grove*, vol. 16, pp. 740–746. In fact, much the same could be said for the rigaudon, which was an even later addition to the repertoire of court dances: see Meredith Ellis Little, “Rigaudon,” in *New Grove* vol. 21, pp. 378–380.

18. See David Fuller and Bruce Gustafson, “Hardel,” in *New Grove*, vol. 10, pp. 844–845.

19. No. 50 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 3, pp. 107–108; no. 125 in Moroney’s edition of Louis Couperin. For Charles’s position as *maître à jouer du clavessin de Madame, duchesse d’Orléans*, see Michel Antoine, “Le Contrat de Mariage de François Couperin,” in Norbert Dufourcq, ed., *La Vie musicale en France sous les Rois Bourbons*, vol. 13, *Mélanges François Couperin* (Paris: Éditions A. & J. Picard, 1968), pp. 22–29, specifically 26. The delightful and long-suffering sister-in-law of Louis XIV, the duchesse d’Orléans, Liselotte von der Pfalz, who denied having any talent for music, surely played some of the simpler Couperin pieces preserved in Bauyn, whoever wrote them.

published in 1677 in his first book of *Pièces de clavessin*.²⁰ One could perhaps argue that the gavotte was composed before Louis Couperin’s death in 1661, but this year is the earliest firm date for Lebègue’s presence in Paris.²¹ The *double*, therefore, is far more likely to have been written by Charles, whose career as a Parisian organist overlapped Lebègue’s for the larger part of two decades. The rest of this article will be devoted to considering the extent of Charles’s contribution to the seventeenth-century Couperin *oeuvre*.

I have had serious doubts about Louis’s monopoly on the family business since the disappointing day in 2003 when I first read through Guy Oldham’s long-anticipated edition of the *Pièces d’orgue*, which he had discovered in London in 1957.²² These are in many cases signed and dated (in a handwriting which is under dispute²³) and are undoubtedly the work of the first of the Couperins (Louis) to establish himself in Paris. It struck me very forcibly then that this was not the same composer as the author of the beloved harpsichord pieces that, according to Wanda Landowska, “thrilled” Camille Saint-Saëns and which she likened to works of Bach and Chopin.²⁴ Many readers will surely be angered by this assessment, but the composer of the organ pieces is in every way less competent than that of the harpsichord works.²⁵ They are the work of someone solemnly going through the motions of contrapuntal manipulation; *langueurs* abound; a sense of forced improvisation prevails. The extraordinary sequence of pieces in what is loosely called the Phrygian mode – almost half the total number – shows a composer grappling, unsuccessfully, for mastery. They are certainly full of the *doctes recherches* and *belles dissonances* with which

20. No. 54 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 3, pp. 112–113; no. 131 in Moroney’s edition.

21. He had come from Laon. See Edward Higgenbottom, “Lebègue,” in *New Grove*, vol. 14, pp. 429–430.

22. See Oldham, “Louis Couperin: A New Source,” and Louis Couperin, *Pièces d’orgue*, Guy Oldham, ed. (Monaco: Éditions de l’Oiseau-Lyre, 2003).

23. See, for example, Fuller et al., “Couperin,” in *New Grove*, vol. 6, p. 582: “There are good reasons for not accepting Oldham’s assertion that all the organ pieces, and a number of others as well, are in [Louis] Couperin’s hand.”

24. In 1914 she wrote, “I am happy that I made Saint-Saëns like the Chaconne of Louis Couperin. I observed him while I was playing. He was obviously thrilled by several passages of this piece”: see Denise Restout, ed., *Landowska on Music* (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), p. 340. For the comparison with Chopin see *ibid.*, p. 278; the comparison with Bach is in Landowska’s *Musique ancienne* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1909), p. 32.

25. The lower quality of the organ pieces has also been noted by Skip Sempé in the notes to his CD “Louis Couperin” (Alpha 066, issued in 2004). In this brief essay, “Believing in the Music: Who Was Louis Couperin?” reprinted in his collection *Memorandum XXI: Essays & Interviews on Music & Performance/Ecrits & Entretiens sur la musique & l’interprétation* (s.l.: Paradiso, 2013), pp. 69–71, Mr. Sempé seems to favor rejecting the attribution of the organ works to Louis.

Le Gallois characterized Louis Couperin's style, and there is a good moment or two in every piece, but these qualities only serve to mask a general poverty of invention. Some of the duos and bass *réécits* are more interesting, and there is one really fine piece, the Prelude in the first *ton*.²⁶ Couperin must have thought highly of it, for he designates it for an *autre livre grand livre d'Orgue*; either that, or his copyist extracted it from another book.

By contrast, the only comparable material in the harpsichord works – the fugues in the larger Preludes – could not be finer. They surpass even Jean-Henry D'Anglebert's five organ fugues²⁷ in finesse and sustained rhetorical power. This difference in quality of fugal writing between the works in the Oldham and Bauyn manuscripts cannot be merely a question of a different medium.

Trolling for clues to this mystery in Bruce Gustafson's magisterial *Thematic Catalog* of the sources of the seventeenth-century French harpsichord repertoire, my attention was caught by a reference to entries in the *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de feu M. Burette* (Paris, 1748) that cast doubt on the monolithic character of the Bauyn manuscript's "Couperin" attributions.²⁸ Items 407 and 408 (vol. 1, p. 44) in this catalogue of the immense library left by the recently deceased Pierre Jean Burette (1665–1747), a musician, medical man, and general polymath who was the son of Claude Burette, a *musicien du roi* in the previous century,²⁹ were:

407 Pièces de Clavecin, composées par J. de la Chapelle, Sieur de Chambonnières, Ordinaire de la Musique du Roi; et par Louis & Claude Couperain [sic], Organistes de Saint Gervais, recueillies & notées par P.J. Burette [sic], D.M. *MS.* 1695, *obl. v.m.*

408 Pièces de Clavecin, composées par divers Auteurs, recueillies & notées par P.J. Burette, D.M.P. *MS.* 1695 *obl. v.m.*³⁰

26. No. 46 (pp. 64–65) in Oldham's edition.

27. Included in his *Pièces de Clavecin* (Paris, 1689), pp. 111–121.

28. The lost Burette manuscripts are mentioned in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 1, p. 116. See also Albert Cohen, "Musicians, Amateurs and Collectors: Early French Auction Catalogues as Musical Sources," *Music & Letters* 81/1 (February 2000), pp. 1–12. A pdf of vol. 1 of the 1748 *Catalogue*, which includes the entries for these manuscripts on p. 44, is available online via Google Books (accessed 16 February 2015).

29. See David Tunley and Philippe Vendrix, "Burette," in *New Grove*, vol. 4, pp. 612–613; also *Mémoire sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Burette* in the 1748 *Catalogue*, pp. viii–xxx.

30. The abbreviations indicate that Burette was a *Docteur en Médecine* in Paris and that the volumes were in manuscript, oblong format, bound in brown calf (*veau marron*). The items are in the section of the catalogue for books of folio size. For this interpretation of *D.M.P.* I am grateful to François Thissen, whom I also owe many thanks for various other suggestions and for translating this article for eventual publication in French.

"Claude," the name of Burette *père*, is an obvious slip of the pen for "Charles." Taken together, the order of contents of these two manuscripts "collected and notated" by Burette *fils* is identical to that of the three parts of the Bauyn manuscript, which, as noted above, was originally in three sections with works, respectively, of Chambonnières, "Couperin," and various composers. Unless the arrangement of Burette manuscripts 407 and 408 was an extraordinary coincidence, they must have at least had access to the Bauyn. I would even suggest that one of the Burettes may have been the highly professional scribe of that source.

Another thin strand of evidence connects Claude Burette, who from 1693 was a colleague of François Couperin at court, with Bauyn. The only manuscript with a surviving work by him (Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, ms 2356)³¹ is one of the narrow range of sources outside Bauyn and Parville to transmit "Couperin" pieces. Gustafson dates it to "ca. 1690?," about the same period, the 1690s, to which he now dates Bauyn.³² The piece by "Bura. L. aisé" is entitled *Brusque*, a title which appears elsewhere only in two pieces by Chambonnières contained in Bauyn and one other source. The piece itself³³ is a clear parody of "Couperin's" *la Piémontoise*, which survives only in Bauyn.³⁴

The door is hereby opened by fragile documentary evidence – aside from stylistic issues, more on which later – to the possibility that Bauyn contains pieces by both brothers.



Louis and Charles were evidently closely associated in the minds of later writers, despite the difference in age of 12 years. Le Gallois makes the following references:

31. Source 47-Gen-2356 in Gustafson's *Thematic Catalog*, pp. 174–181.

32. See the commentary in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 4, p. 6. His first dating of the manuscript, in *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 1, p. 96, and 2, p. 314, was simply "post 1658." Later, he determined that the Bauyn paper cannot have been made before 1676: see Gustafson & Fuller, *Catalogue of French Harpsichord Music 1699–1780*, Appendix C, p. 356. Thus, Davitt Moroney's earlier theory, in the commentary to his 1985 edition of Couperin's works, pp. 9–10 and 206, where he dates the manuscript "c1660–1670 ?," that it was copied shortly after Louis's death as part of an agreement between the two surviving brothers could be discarded. Indeed, Moroney eventually himself discarded this theory and dated Bauyn to 1690–1710 in his introduction to the second issue of the Minkoff facsimile of the manuscript (Geneva: Minkoff, 1998), as cited in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 4, p. 12.

33. See the incipits in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 3, p. 179.

34. In the various editions: no. 6 (pp. 14–15) in Curtis's; no. 102 (p. 155) in Moroney's; and no. 103 (p. 176) in vol. 2 of Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*.

Illustrious harpsichordists include...the Couperins [followed by a separate reference to François (i) as being active *presentement*] ...³⁵

One can also say that the first of the Couperins to have died excelled in his way: and that he was succeeded by the other Couperin who died recently...³⁶

The other method is that of the first of the Couperins to have died ...³⁷

Note that no given name is mentioned.

Évrard Titon du Tillet's *Le Parnasse françois* (Paris, 1732), the only major documentary source for the brothers' biography, refers to *les trois frères Couperin*, but later, in his paragraph on François (i) says, "He did not have the same talent as his two brothers for playing the harpsichord and the organ; but he had that of demonstrating the harpsichord pieces of the two brothers with great precision and ease."³⁸ This is clear evidence that pieces by Charles were in circulation, taught by his brother François who far outlived *ces deux frères*. (Titon's index entry reads *les Couperins*, MM. The only other comparable entry is for *les deux Gaultiers pour le luth*.³⁹) A picture emerges here of two brothers who were very closely identified with one another. Titon specifically mentions of Louis that "from this musician we have only three suites of harpsichord pieces of admirable taste and workmanship: they have not been printed, but several good connoisseurs of music have them in manuscript and keep them very carefully."⁴⁰ This is disturbing information for anyone proposing to attribute more than 130 pieces to Louis Couperin. Can any trace of these suites be found? There is none in any of the lesser sources. Let us return to the Bauyn manuscript and look closely there.

Damien Vaisse has succeeded in discovering details of the Bauyn de Bersan family

35. Le Gallois, *Lettre*, p. 62: *Le clavecin a eu pour illustres ... les Couperins*.

36. Ibid., p. 64: *On peut dire aussi que le premier mort des Couperins a aussi excellé dans son genre: et qu'il a esté suivi par l'autre Couperin deffunt*.

37. Ibid., p. 74: *L'autre méthode est celle du premier mort des Couperins*.

38. P. 403: *Il n'avoit pas les mêmes talens que ces deux freres de jouer l'Orgue & du Clavecin; mais il avoit celui de montrer les Pieces de Clavecin de ces deux freres avec une netteté & une facilité très-grande*. A pdf of this book, together with its supplement (*Suite du Parnasse françois, jusqu'en 1743*) is available online via Google Books (accessed 18 February 2015).

39. P. lxxxii.

40. P. 403: *Nous n'avons de ce Musicien que trois suites de Pieces de Clavecin d'un travail & d'un goût admirable: elles n'ont point point été imprimées, mais plusieurs bons Connoisseurs en Musique les ont manuscrites & les conservent precieusement*.

for whom the manuscript was compiled.⁴¹ They were music-loving neighbors of both François Couperins, uncle and nephew, and one family member must have been a student of François *le Grand*, whose sixth *Ordre* includes a piece titled *La Bersan*. Judging from the dates during which the Bauyns and Couperins were neighbors, one can reach a fairly narrow range for the copying of the Couperin section of the manuscript compiled for the Bauyns, between 1697 or 1700 and 1706.⁴²

The second part of the manuscript, with the "Couperin" works, can be subdivided into several sections. The Preludes were copied first, according to a different key scheme from the rest of the pieces, a modification of the old system of *tons*. This arrangement, which had been followed by Nicolas Lebègue in his two books of *Pièces de clavecin* (1677 and 1687), places the Prelude section of the Couperin pieces in Bauyn chronologically midway between the Oldham manuscript, with its chaotic attempts at arrangement by *ton*, and the second section of Couperin pieces in Bauyn. The dances of this latter section have been rigorously reorganized according to a very modern scheme of major/minor on rising scale steps. This is another reason for a late dating of Bauyn as subsequent to Parville, which has a key scheme similar to Lebègue's.

At the end of this section comes the *Pavanne* in the extraordinary key of f-sharp minor (no. 121). Thurston Dart proposed this as Louis Couperin's *Tombeau* for Ennemond Gaultier, known as *le vieux Gaultier* or *Gaultier de Lyon*, who died in 1651 after a long retirement in a village near Lyons.⁴³ I would suggest that the piece was composed by Charles Couperin as a memorial to Ennemond's cousin, Denis Gaultier, known as *Gaultier le jeune* or *Gaultier de Paris*, who died in 1672. In *La Rhétorique des Dieux* (c. 1652) the latter Gaultier began two of his *modes* with funeral pieces in f-sharp minor, and, unlike most lutenists, he composed three-strain pavanens.

Following the f-sharp minor pavane in Bauyn there come, as a kind of coda, two pieces quite out of order, in d minor: a chaconne (no. 122) and a gigue (no. 123). Both of these pieces show unusual characteristics. The chaconne is dated 1658, and is the only harpsichord piece in the manuscript to bear this Louis Couperin trademark of a date. The gigue is one of two fugal giges in the collection. Its subject is closely related to those of the sixth and eighth fugues in François Roberday's *Fugues, et caprices*

41. "Du nouveau sur le manuscrit Bauyn: une famille parisienne et le clavecin aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles," *Revue française d'héraldique et de sigillographie*, vol. 71–72 (2001–2002; actually issued in 2004), pp. 39–52.

42. In 1697 André Bauyn de Bersan bought the mansion at the corner of the rue Vieille-du-Temple (no. 110) and the rue Neuve Saint-François, today rue Debelleye. From 1700 at latest, perhaps as early as 1697, to 1710 Couperin *le Grand* lived just a few dozen meters away in the building, also still standing, at the corner of rue Neuve Saint-François and rue Thorigny, corresponding to the present 3 rue Debelleye/24 rue de Thorigny. His uncle François Couperin (i) lived two blocks away, on rue Sainte Anastase, in a building now lost. André Bauyn died in 1706, his wife in 1701.

43. Dart's proposal is reported by Alan Curtis in a footnote to the preface of his edition of Louis Couperin, *Pièces de Clavecin*, p. xi.

(Paris, 1660), and, indeed, the goldsmith-composer gives credit in the introduction to his publication that *Messieur ... Couperin*, presumably Louis, then organist of St. Gervais, as one of the composers whose themes he borrowed.

There are three other irruptions in the placid order of the dances in the second part of Bauyn. First, with very few exceptions, each key group is ordered in the “proper” late-seventeenth-century suite order of allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue, and chaconne/passacalle, with occasional extras tossed in. In the G-major section, however, three courantes appear at the very end, like the clusters that appear in lute suites and *ballets de cour*. They have a key signature of one sharp, whereas all the other G-major pieces have no sharps as a signature.⁴⁴ These three courantes (nos. 90, 90-bis, and 91 in Gustafson’s edition⁴⁵) all have strangely awkward moments and lack the imitative figures characteristic of the other Bauyn courantes. Nr. 90 is particularly simple and foursquare. After the double bar in nr. 90-bis there is an extravagant *brisé* figure unlike anything else in Bauyn, and at the end of the piece an archaic-sounding ornamental figure, also unique.

The second irruption among the Couperin works in Bauyn is the chaos at the end of the F-major section. A gigue (no. 76), galliarde (77) and chaconne (78) are inserted “out of order.” All three pieces show distinguishing characteristics. The gigue is the only fugal gigue in the collection other than no. 123, mentioned above. This is a more archaic, lute-like gigue type than the others among the Couperin works in Bauyn, which are all of the same type as the movement that Lebègue published in 1677 as *Gigue dangleterre*. Further, except for the folkloristic minuets, this is the only Couperin piece in Bauyn which stays in the tonic at and past the double bar. It shares this

44. The sharp signature for G-major was quite rare in the seventeenth century. Among the *clavecinistes* I have found it only in Chambonnières, in Lebègue’s first book (not the second), and, oddly enough, in two anonymous pieces in the Sainte-Geneviève manuscript, the source for Burette’s only known piece. Later on this key signature was quite abandoned, reappearing only in the Geoffroy manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, département de la musique, fonds conservatoire, Réserve 475; 37-Geoffroy in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 3, pp. 1–69) in which the works of Nicolas Geoffroy were presented, some time after the composer’s death in 1694, in a reordering similar to the arrangement of the Couperin pieces in Bauyn. Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre reinstated the one-sharp signature for G-major in her second book of *Pièces de clavecin*, published in 1707. One other example occurs in the post-1687 Dart manuscript, a diminutive *Chacone de Mons^r Couperin*, the only piece which Gustafson rejects for Louis on grounds of its dissimilarity to the other chaconnes. (The manuscript, 45-Dart in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, where this piece is discussed in vol. 1, p. 113, and vol. 3, p. 123, is now, according to Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 4, p. 58, MS 1372 in the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library at the University of California, Berkeley. Thurston Dart included the piece in his revision of Paul Brunold’s edition of Louis Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin* [Monaco: Éditions de l’Oiseau-Lyre, 1959], no. 111, pp. 134–135.) Could it be an early work by Louis, or perhaps the only surviving piece by his father, Charles Couperin (i)?

45. Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 2, pp. 148–150. They are nos. 90, 90a, and 91 in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 2, pp. 393–394, and nos. 90–92 in Moroney’s 1985 edition of Louis Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin*.

highly archaic trait, as well as a significant further resemblance, with a *brusque* by Chambonnières.⁴⁶ The galliarde – if that is what it really is, for this is one of the pieces that has had its title struck out – is a bizarre example of its type. It too bears a resemblance to a work of Chambonnières, one of his two galliardes.⁴⁷ Likewise for the chaconne, uniquely melodious among the “Couperin” chaconnes, there is a Chambonnières *Doppelgänger*.⁴⁸

Closing this F-major subsection of Bauyn is the *Tombeau de Blan[c]rocher*, again with crossed-out title. (No other section of the manuscript has so many titles crossed out as this one.) It is assumed that this must be the work of Louis Couperin because of the date of the subject’s death (1652), and it may very well be. But, truth be told, there is no reason why a brilliant fourteen-year-old apprentice could not have written this lovely utterance; or for that matter, why it could not have been written later in grateful remembrance of past beneficences. We do not know what kindnesses the Couperins may have received at the hands of this wealthy amateur.⁴⁹ Louis was in Paris for two whole years before becoming organist at St. Gervais in 1653, and it was another five before he obtained his royal post. Perhaps through Chambonnières’s recommendation Louis and his brothers received lodging in the spacious house of Charles Fleury, Sieur de Blancrocher, or the adjacent buildings that he owned at the

46. *Autre brusque du même Auteur*, no. 85 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 1, pp. 106–107.

47. *Pièces de Clavessin ... Livre Premier* (Paris, 1670), pp. 13–14.

48. *Chaconne de M^r Dela Chappelle dit Chambonnières*, no. 28 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 1, p. 34.

49. A reference to Blancrocher in the manuscript *Historiettes* of Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux (1619–1692) seems to have gone unnoticed in the musicological literature. “Lisette,” one of these scandalous miniature biographies, deals with an obscure person who sought attention by claiming to be a daughter of Henri IV. Mathurine in the passage quoted here was Mathurine de Vallois, Blancrocher’s mother:

When this girl [Lisette] was fifteen she began to imitate Mathurine; this Mathurine had been mad, then cured, but not entirely. There was still something not quite right about her. She continued to behave strangely and wore her hair in a chaperon, but under the pretext of madness she was a courier of love-letters. She came into wealth, and left a son who was an admirable lutenist; he was called Blanc-Rocher.

See Gédéon Tallemant des Réaux, *Les Historiettes*, 3rd ed., L.-J.N. de Monmerqué and Paulin Paris, eds., (Paris, 1862), vol. 1, pp. 135–136: *Quand cette fille eut quinze ans, elle se mit à imiter Mathurine; cette Mathurine avoit esté folle, puis guérie mais non pas parfaitement; il y avoit encore quelque chose qui n’alloit pas bien. Elle continua à faire la folle et avoit un chaperon; mais sous prétexte de folie elle portoit des poulets. Elle gagna du bien, et laissa un filz qui a esté un admirable joueur de luth; on l’appelloit Blanc-Rocher.* A footnote explains that a *chaperon* was “a mad person’s bonnet with horns and ear flaps” (*bonnet de fou, à cornes et oreillettes*).

corner of the rue des Petits-Champs and rue des Bons-Enfants.⁵⁰ The fact that the first mention of Charles Couperin in Paris dates from 1659 in no way precludes the possibility of a longer residence in the capital. The title *Prelude de M^r Couprin alimitation de M^r froberger*, which appears only in Parville (p.79) and may not even come from the composer, also does not perforce lead to an attribution to Louis Couperin. An impressionable young Charles might have met the Emperor's organist when he tarried in Paris in 1652, and it is now known from the recently discovered manuscript in the collection of the Berlin Sing-Akademie that Froberger returned to Paris at least once, in 1660.⁵¹

The third irruption in the second part of the Bauyn manuscript is near the end of the g-minor section, between a sarabande and the closing passacaille. Here, among all the "Couperin" harpsichord works, are two organ pieces, a *Fantaisie* (no. 97) dated December 1656 and a *Duo* (98). The three groups of "out of order" pieces (or for the two organ works "out of context") thus exhibit characteristics which clearly set them apart from the rest of the pieces in the Couperin section of Bauyn. These characteristics include apparent instances of a striking reliance on Louis's mentor, Chambonnières.

Taking this all together, this is what I think might have happened when the Bauyn manuscript was being compiled. The family Bauyn de Bersan was given access, about 1700, either by their neighbor/teacher François Couperin the elder or by his nephew, Couperin *le Grand*, the young *organiste du roi*, to a significant part of their own family's music library. The sources included a collection of works by the old family friend Chambonnières, the *Préludes* of Charles Couperin, the collected harpsichord pieces of Charles on loose sheets, a few works by Louis (parts of the "three suites"), and a collection of pieces by older masters. The scribe ordered the pieces by Chambonnières – at the family's request, or at the request of the orderly young scholar Burette? – according to a modern system of a rising scale, but took over the formidable preludes *en bloc* in their more archaic "Lebègue" order. He organized the other harpsichord pieces as he had those of Chambonnières (inserting along the way, in their proper place in the key order, a couple of organ pieces by Louis which looked playable on the harpsichord), added out of order at the end two pieces by Louis Couperin which came to hand later, and finished with the old masters. If the scribe was not Burette *fils*, it was someone he knew, and he was allowed to copy the copy. He added nothing to the original "Couperin" attributions, created his own titles to the sections, and from that point the knowledge of who had written what was lost, leaving only a faint trace in the catalogue of now lost Burette manuscript. The

50. Blancrocher's properties are described in Catherine Massip, *La Vie des musiciens de Paris au temps de Mazarin* (Paris: Éditions A. et J. Picard, 1976), pp. 127–128.

51. In this source Froberger's *Méditation faite sur ma mort future* is dated Paris, 1 May 1660: see Johann Jacob Froberger, *Toccaten, Suiten, Lamenti: Die Handschrift SA 4450 der Sing-Akademie zu Berlin*, Peter Wollny, ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2004).

Bauyn de Bersans later remarked to their friend Titon du Tillet how strictly the family guarded the works of Louis, their *chef de secte*.



Let us now consider the stylistic question. What follows are merely the words of a performer who has let this music pass through his hands often and made note of its sensations on his brain, like a literary critic trying to separate Shakespeare from Beaumont and Fletcher, or an art critic trying to distinguish between Breugels. I will be brief, and leave any detailed stylistic analysis for others to add or detract as they can.

Once we accept the possibility of Charles Couperin being the "M^r Couperin" behind the majority of the Bauyn pieces, a highly unified body of work emerges, one which belongs to a different epoch from Louis's organ pieces and the pieces I suspect come from his *trois suites*. French harpsichord music actually changed surprisingly little between Chambonnières (1601/1602–1672) and Gaspard Le Roux (*Pièces de clavessin*, 1705), Nicolas Siret (two books of *Pièces de Clavecin*, circa 1710 and 1719), and Jean-Philippe Rameau's comparatively modest first book of *Pièces de Clavecin* (1706). This is quite in line with the standardizing influence of the royal taste. Still, I think a certain progression can be observed, corresponding with the birth dates of the major composers:

Chambonnières 1601/1602
Louis Couperin 1626
D'Anglebert 1628
Lebègue 1630
Charles Couperin 1638

Chambonnières, the elegant founder of the school, often comes dangerously close to vapidness. Louis Couperin brings a powerful infusion of provincial blood and an association with Froberger, but, arriving in Paris at the fairly advanced age of 24, he struggles to integrate the influences he finds around him into a new, more forceful style. He still belongs mainly to the epoch of Louis XIII's harpsichordist Chambonnières, and, in organ playing, to the transition from Charles Racquet (1597–1664) through Henry Du Mont (circa 1610–1684) and Etienne Richard (circa 1621–1669) to Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers (circa 1632–1714). Louis Couperin's works for viols and shawm band serve to fix him even more clearly in this epoch. (All these pieces appear in the third part of Bauyn, apart from the main body of Couperin harpsichord pieces in the second part of the manuscript.) D'Anglebert, who becomes royal harpsichordist after Louis Couperin's graceful refusal (1658), advances the art considerably. Louis XIV assumes power in the year of Louis Couperin's death (1661). Lebègue makes a major contribution, initiates a new scheme for organizing keys, and contributes to the practice of writing down *préludes non mesurés*. Charles Couperin, extremely fortunate in all his associations, and of an age to assimilate everything

he can take from the older masters, caps the development of harpsichord music in the *grand siècle*.

Stylistic comparison among the various composers should take into consideration the nature of the sources. The transitional role of D'Anglebert, half a generation older than Charles Couperin, is somewhat veiled by the extreme degree of ornamentation in the works that he prepared for publication late in life in his *Pièces de Clavecin* (1689). His works in manuscript⁵² tend to be less fully ornamented. Similarly, Chambonnières's works in the first part of the Bauyn manuscript lack many of the ornament signs included in the versions of the works published in his two books of *Pièces de Clavessin* (1670). The ornamentation of the Couperin pieces in Bauyn, like that of the Chambonnières and D'Anglebert works in manuscript, is somewhat restrained. Although we can only imagine what they might have looked like if Charles had prepared them for publication, one of the few undated Couperin pieces in the Oldham manuscript, the sarabande in the still-unpublished a-minor suite,⁵³ might provide an inkling. Here this piece shows more ornamentation than in its Bauyn concordance.⁵⁴ If those who think that the handwriting⁵⁵ in Oldham is that of Charles Couperin, not Louis, are correct, then I think he put this suite at the end of his music book, where by key it would belong, before transcribing his brother's organ pieces, the last two of which surround the suite.

Charles's pieces – as I will now take the liberty of referring to them – seem to me clearly the work of someone who has assimilated the lessons of D'Anglebert and advanced on them. Particularly the unmeasured preludes, the incomparable summit of this form,⁵⁶ relegate even D'Anglebert's gorgeous efforts to second place. These pieces are unthinkable without Froberger, but can they have come into existence, as we see them in the Parville and Bauyn manuscripts, without the fully-developed recitative of Lully, from the 1670s? In fact, the rich elaboration of Charles's pieces in general clearly shows, I think, a familiarity with Lully's fully developed orchestral style. The d-minor chaconne dated 1658 and ascribable to Louis might have been inspired by Lully's *Chaconne des Maures*, from the ballet *Alcidiane*, which, his first work

52. Principally the mostly autograph manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, département de la musique, fonds conservatoire, Réserve 89^{ter}; 33-Rés-89^{ter} in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 2, pp. 285–311.

53. See the incipits in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalog*, vol. 2, p. 284.

54. No. 110 in Gustafson, *Bauyn Manuscript*, vol. 2, p. 184.

55. That is, of the several hands in this manuscript, the one called “Co” in Oldham, “Louis Couperin: A New Source,” and “F” in Gustafson, *Thematic Catalogue*, vol. 2, p. 268.

56. It is usually forgotten that this form was already present in the earliest extant source of French instrumental music, Pierre Attaignant's *Tres breve et familiere introduction for lute* (1529). See the third *Prélude*, transcribed in *Preludes, Chansons and Dances for Lute Published by Pierre Attaignant, Paris* (1529–1530), Daniel Hertz, ed. (Neuilly-sur-Seine: Société de Musique d'Autrefois, 1964), pp. 6–7.

to contain chaconnes, premiered in that year.⁵⁷ Big chaconnes and passacailles only became fixtures of Lully's finales in the late 1660s. The monumentality of many of Charles's pieces, particularly the g-minor passacaille, seems to partake of the grandeur of Lully's *tragédies lyriques*, which commenced only in 1673 with *Cadmus et Hermione*.⁵⁸

The next step upwards from Charles is logical and clear: the magnificent organ masses of his son, offered to the public only eleven years after his death. François *le Grand* was only ten years old when his father died. Although Titon de Tillet remarked that the boy, “unable to profit from his [father's] teaching and wisdom,” found a “second father” in his subsequent teacher, the renowned organist Jacques-Denis Thomelin,⁵⁹ François even in his tenderest years would obviously have absorbed much from daily exposure to Charles's art. Moreover, François would have inherited the precious manuscripts of his father's music, which would have formed his great stepping-stone. One imagines that his namesake uncle François dropped by the

57. The other example of this form in *Alcidiane* is a diminutive movement titled *La Petite Chaconne*.

58. If, as I would maintain, the works of Lully had such significant influence on the *clavecinistes*, the relegation of D'Anglebert's transcriptions of movements from Lully's stage works to the equivalent of an appendix in Kenneth Gilbert's edition of the *Pièces de Clavecin* (Paris: Heugel & C^e, 1975) was ill-advised. In D'Anglebert's original publication (1689), the Lully transcriptions are interspersed with his own pieces or are placed together in groups as additional suites following his own suites in the same key. One should also note that P.-J. Burette's library included four volumes of music in his own hand, of which, in addition to the two mentioned above (containing works of Chambonnières and the Couperins) and another volume with his father's works for harpsichord and for harp, the fourth consisted of his own transcriptions of *Symphonies de tous les Opera de Jean-B. Lully, Surintendant de la Musique du Roi; mises sur le Clavecin, avec toutes les parties que peut comporter le jeu du cet instrument*: see the 1748 *Catalogue*, p. 44. That even in J.S. Bach's milieu such transcriptions were regarded as serious works of art is shown by the entry for “Anglebert” in Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732), p. 37, which describes his *Pièces de Clavecin* mistakenly as “full of harpsichord pieces, all [sic] previously composed by Mr. Lully for other instruments” (*voller Piecen vors Clavessin, so alle von Mr. Lully auf andere Instrumente vorher gesetzt gewesen*), yet deems it “a strong book” (*ein starkes Buch* – which cannot refer to the mere physical size of its 128 pages).

59. *Suite du Parnasse françois* (Paris, 1743), p. 664: *Son pere, Charles Couperin, fut un des meilleurs Organistes de son tems; il mourut âgé de 40. ans en l'année 1679. & eut pour fils celui dont on parle ici, qu'il laissa âgé de dix ans, & hors d'état d'avoir pû profiter de ses leçons et de son sçavoir; mais le jeune Couperin Trouva en Tomelin, Organiste de l'Eglise S. Jacques de la Boucherie, homme très-celebre dans son Art, un second pere, qui se fit un plaisir de le perfectionner dans l'Orgue & le Clavecin, & dans la Composition.*

organist's house at St. Gervais every day, worrying about him and continuing to teach him his father's harpsichord pieces.⁶⁰

Louis Couperin died on the cusp of a great stylistic revolution and had a part in shaping it. He was lucky enough to have his younger brother to pick up the torch. Charles appears to us in one of the greatest portraits of a seventeenth-century musician (see the frontispiece to this article). Its painter, Claude Lefèvre (1632–1675), another genius who died too soon, shows him sitting with a look of friendly self-confidence at a chamber organ, alongside a young student, the artist's daughter. I, for one, find it impossible to believe that no music by this formidable personage, one of *ces deux frères*, has survived. 🌿

60. That uncle François was an admired, if colorful, harpsichord teacher, can be inferred from Titon's story that "He was a small man who greatly loved good wine, and who willingly lengthened his lessons when one paid attention to bringing to the harpsichord a carafe of wine and a crust of bread, and a lesson ordinarily lasted as long as one wished to refill the carafe." See *Le Parnasse françois*, p. 403: *C'étoit un petit homme qui aimoit fort le bon vin, & qui allongeoit volontiers ses leçons, quand on avoit l'attention de lui apporter près du Clavecin une carraffe de vin avec une croute de pain, & un leçon duroit ordinairement autant qu'on vouloit renouveler la carraffe de vin.*

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Abstract

Except for two organ masses issued by François (ii) Couperin, “*le Grand*,” in 1690, the sources of all other seventeenth-century works by “Couperin” do not provide the composer’s Christian name. Although there were several members of this family active as harpsichordists and organists, including François *le Grand*’s father Charles (ii), his uncles Louis and François (i), and his grandfather Charles (i), all these other works have, since the nineteenth century, been attributed to Louis (circa 1626–1661), whom Jean Le Gallois in 1680 praised as a harpsichordist. Several of the Couperin pieces in the Bauyn and Parville manuscripts can be shown to have been composed after Louis’s death in 1661. The organ pieces, doubtless by Louis, in the Oldham manuscript are generally inferior in quality to the harpsichord pieces conventionally attributed to him. According to Évrard Titon du Tillet in 1732, there were only three surviving suites of harpsichord pieces by Louis, far fewer than the 130 now given to him. Documentary sources attest to the skill of Louis’s brother Charles (1638–1679) and provide evidence of the survival of his compositions into the eighteenth century. It seems likely that most of the Couperin pieces in Bauyn and Parville, which show the influence of Jean-Henry D’Anglebert, were composed by Charles Couperin, while some stylistically less advanced pieces are more likely the work of Louis.