

General introduction

You see correctly . . . that the king has decided not to discontinue his protection of the arts, notwithstanding the great wars with which His Majesty is presently occupied. And you can be assured that His Majesty, loving the fine arts as much as he does, will continue to cultivate them with increased vigor, for they will serve to perpetuate his grand and glorious deeds.

J.-B. Colbert to Charles Errard, July 23, 1672⁴

The study of Louis XIV, his time, and his legacy have much to teach us about the rise and decline of great power. Profound lessons have surfaced in the study of the reign of this monarch, lessons that would inform us well if we would learn from them. Once Louis had declared his personal rule in 1661 – he would appoint no prime minister, but undertake that function himself – his choreographed ascent was rapid. The two decades that followed brought him remarkable success in achieving the glory he sought: Within the first decade he acquired the title “Louis *le Grand*,” and those decades evoked Voltaire’s epithet “*le Grand Siècle*.”

When Louis moved his court to the chateau at Versailles in 1682, all of Europe took notice, and the emulation of his grandeur, which had already begun, accelerated markedly; but at that point things began to go less well. In 1683 Louis’s queen, and his great finance minister, Colbert, perished of illnesses. Then two years later, by revoking the Edict of Nantes – the noble declaration Louis’s grandfather, Henri IV, had made in 1598 granting a great measure of religious freedom to the Huguenots – Louis vigorously stoked the fires of religious intolerance. That act, along with unfair taxation policies that favored the wealthy, and the many unnecessary wars in which he engaged his people, all brought great hardship on the French populace. A depressed economy persisted for the remainder of the long reign. Despite the struggles in the last decades of his rule, however, Louis’s image and mystique, on the whole, persisted throughout the reign, and then served as a potent legacy for his two Bourbon successors, both of whom sought to

⁴ Colbert 1868, 331.

continue Louis's air of grandeur. Most of his subjects stoically accepted his authoritarianism, acceded to his wars, paid his taxes, and fervently embraced the religious intolerance he reestablished. Dissent was present, but it remained in the background.

This book, happily, deals with the early years of Louis XIV's regime – the time of his rise and his strategic cultivation of an image of magnificence before his subjects, the period during which he achieved the epithet “*le Grand*.” The history begins when Louis was not at all in control as a young monarch, indeed far from “absolute,” just before his remarkable ascent began, when in January 1660 the twenty-one-year-old king arrived in Provence for a two-month stay. He first visited Arles on January 14, 1660, where the young Guillaume Poitevin (1646–1706) – then a thirteen-year-old choirboy at Saint-Trophime – witnessed the celebrations that surrounded the king's arrival there. Three years later, Poitevin moved from Arles to Aix-en-Provence where he soon became a master teacher, leading one of the most distinguished choir schools in the kingdom, that at the cathedral of Saint-Sauveur. He and his students André Campra (1660–1744), Jean Gilles (1668–1705), Jacques Cabassole (1674–c.1733), François Estienne (1674–1755), Claude-Mathieu Pelegrin (1682–1763), Laurent Belissen (1693–1762), and Antoine Blanchard (1696–1770), as well as a few others, formed the Aix School. Poitevin's most famous student, André Campra, who would compose music both for the church and for the stage, becoming Lully's most worthy successor, enjoyed a remarkably long life and career, one that extended from the apogee of Louis XIV's reign, through the Sun King's late years, the subsequent regency, and well into the reign of Louis XV. Other members of the Aix School, all composers of church music, remained active into the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, this book deals with the eighteenth century almost as much as it does with the *Grand Siècle*. However, while the timeframe begins more than two decades before Louis's establishment of his court at Versailles, and extends well beyond his reign, including more than a full century of musical activity, the genesis of the history related in this book falls to the time of the young Louis XIV and the important year of 1660 in particular.

Historians from Voltaire (1694–1778) to Alexandre Maral (1968–) have examined the reign of Louis XIV with careful scrutiny and perceptive analysis. Two relatively recent studies, in particular, have addressed the sophisticated cultivation of the Sun King's image that took place early in the reign. Peter Burke's *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (1992) informs us of the specific techniques of image cultivation that Louis employed to achieve power, and the successes he realized in

that effort. Abby Zanger's *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power* (1997), a study that deals with the important year of 1660 from which this one takes its departure, illustrates how the power of absolutism can be successfully nurtured through illusory images and symbols cultivated in ritual and ceremony.⁵ Neither of those books, nor other recent ones in English, however, has broached the topic of the specific role of music in the cultivation of Louis's image. Four decades ago Robert Isherwood's study *Music in the Service of the King* (1973) gave a useful overview of the role music played in the reign of the Sun King. In the same decade, James R. Anthony's *French Baroque Music* (1974) exposed the breadth and richness of French music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those two works, along with the two books mentioned earlier, revealed how the arts may serve as useful tools to cultivate a political image aimed at achieving power, molding culture, and securing popular support. Music, though, and sacred music in particular, has been investigated less than the architecture, visual arts, literature, and theatre of the old regime. In the time since the publication of Isherwood's book, however, much has been uncovered about the music of late seventeenth-century France.

A transformative time

In recent years, historians have begun to explore the idea of "liminality" in the past. The concept of liminality, first applied by anthropologists to rituals, has since been broadened to describe political and cultural change as well. In her study of the marriage of 1660, Abby Zanger describes the wedding of Louis XIV to María Teresa (Marie-Thérèse), infanta of Spain, in June 1660 as a "liminal event," one that was transformative, and marked an important new beginning. Zanger makes a persuasive case. In her analyses of a series of "scenes" that she identifies from the royal wedding, she demonstrates how the power of absolutism can be nurtured through images and symbols that create illusions of reality that are actually based on fictions. Zanger reveals how Louis XIV, during this liminal period, was on the throne but not fully in control. Instead he depended on images and

⁵ While not a study of Louis XIV's era, Van Orden 2005, 136–56, presents valuable background information for this book, particularly its section on the origins of the ceremonial *Te Deum* in the time of Henry III.

representational forms to support and cultivate his rising image. She observes:

Liminal periods must be studied because, as the anthropologist Victor Turner has demonstrated [in *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage* (1967)], they are fundamental to social ordering. Marked by ambiguity, flux, and transition, liminal periods encourage the interrogation of fixed ideas and the perturbation of established structures.⁶

The wedding of 1660 itself marked an important transformational point in France, for through that event and the peace treaty associated with it, Louis XIV's power as perceived by the French populace strengthened markedly, setting the stage for the rapid and dazzling trajectory of the Sun King's early reign. A period of increasing absolutism then followed, a time that allowed Louis to establish rapidly the socially and politically stable state that France became. Music, literature, and the fine arts flourished in France during this period.

Louis visited Provence just a few months before his wedding, a visit that provided for an encounter there with church musicians – a moment that marked a similarly transformative event in the history of the great sacred music that developed in France beginning around that very time. This music, particularly the concerted French choral motet – a form that became an important tool for Louis in cultivating his *Très-Chretien*^s image – was developed at the royal court in the Île-de-France^s early in his reign. It then quickly radiated to a receptive group of composers in faraway Provence. The history of the development of sacred music in that region, however, is shrouded in the same obscurity surrounding its principal figure, the *maître*^s *de musique* at Saint-Sauveur in Aix-en-Provence, Guillaume Poitevin. This book sheds new light on Poitevin and his work, but the great teacher still remains an elusive figure, and for now we must turn to conjecture and educated guesses to fill in many gaps in the history. From the relatively few facts and clues that have surfaced for the period from 1660 to the mid-1690s, a glimpse of what transpired emerges, but greater detail becomes evident when we examine the results of Poitevin's life-work, the legacy of music his students produced.

Taking its point of departure from the events surrounding Louis XIV's visit to Provence in early 1660, this book seeks first of all to document and explain a phenomenon in the history of French sacred music: the exceptional productivity of a provincial choir school at the

⁶ Zanger 1997, 3.

cathedral of Saint-Sauveur in Aix-en-Provence, despite its location nearly 500 miles from the French center of political power in the Île-de-France. Second, this study examines the important part that sacred music, and the ceremonial *Te Deum* in particular, played in forging a bond between the French population and Louis XIV by helping to cultivate the image of Louis *le Grand* during his reign. Third, it identifies and addresses the musical legacy that resulted from the relationship of the Aix School with the music of the royal court, a relationship that began with specific events and developments that unfolded early in the reign of a king whose dazzling court and eventual residence at Versailles attracted the attentions of the French kingdom, its church musicians, and indeed all of Europe.

This book also sheds light on an important institution, the *maîtrise*⁸, i.e., the French choir school. From the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century, a significant portion of Christian European education took place in the choir schools of Europe. Bach dutifully supervised one of them. In 2003 and 2010 respectively two rich volumes of essays that hold a wealth of information on the *maîtrise*, edited by Bernard Dompnier, were published.⁷ The composers of the Aix School all were educated in the one at Saint-Sauveur in Aix-en-Provence, among the most distinguished in the kingdom. They left Aix to work as *maîtres* in choir schools in Arles, Toulouse, Agde, Lyon, Besançon, Marseille, Toulon, Amiens, Versailles, and Paris among other cities. Thus, they left their mark on music education through the *maîtrise*, as well as on church music itself in France. The characteristics of the French *maîtrise* are outlined in Chapter 2.

French baroque sacred music: thoughts on the current state of research

In 1941 Paul Henry Lang, in his *Music in Western Civilization*, perceptively summed up the then-current state of scholarship on French baroque sacred music. In a brief essay on the French motet, Lang observed, “Lalande had many disciples and followers, and church music flourished throughout the country; but the compositions are dispersed in the manuscript collections of libraries, and the whole question represents one of those *blank spots* on the

⁷ Dompnier 2003 and 2010b. The first volume also contains studies on the choir schools in Germany, Spain, and Portugal.

map of musical and cultural history.”⁸ Since that time, great strides have been made by American scholars who study the music of other European countries – Germany, Britain, and Italy in particular – but remarkably, the condition Lang described regarding French church music remained relatively unchanged for nearly a half-century.

The study of French baroque sacred music, however, has accelerated remarkably in recent decades, primarily in France and Britain. The last twenty-five years have brought significant new research that has led to fresh findings and a richer understanding of French music in the time of the Bourbon dynasty. Much of it has been produced and coordinated by the Centre de musique baroque de Versailles (CMBV), which since 1987 has sponsored conferences and commemorative festivals yielding concerts and recordings with accompanying published critical editions and studies, mostly in French, on Lully, Charpentier, Lalande, Mondonville, Campra, Couperin, Clérambault, Desmarest, Giroust, and in 2014, Rameau. Individual scholars have added important studies as well: Jean-Paul C. Montagnier has produced a steady stream of writing in French on sacred music, including books on Gervais and Madin, along with many articles on the nature and role of *musique latine*⁸ in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; major studies by Denise Launay and Alexandre Maral⁹ complement the pioneering work of Marcelle Benoit, and recent large published collections of studies by Catherine Massip, Jean Duron, Bernard Dompnier, and Catherine Cessac¹⁰ expand knowledge significantly. These works are written in French, however, and thus they do little to inform those who do not read that language.

In the Anglophone world of French baroque sacred music, we can be grateful for Lionel Sawkins’s monumental and comprehensive catalogue of the works of Michel-Richard de Lalande. That meticulously prepared volume, along with H. Wiley Hitchcock’s thematic catalogue of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, offers English readers useful research tools.¹¹ There have been a few monographs published in English: Patricia Ranum’s wonderful, but easily overlooked *Portraits around Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, Catherine Cessac’s English edition of *Charpentier*, and Peter Bennett’s *Sacred Repertories in Paris under Louis XIII* (2009) among them. Lionel Sawkins has also written many excellent articles, and those, along with Graham Sadler’s articles and editions, Deborah Kauffman’s contributions, and

⁸ Lang 1941, 540, emphasis mine. ⁹ Launay 1993 and Maral 2002 respectively.

¹⁰ Massip 2005; Duron 2010a, Dompnier 2003 and 2010b, and Cessac 2012 respectively.

¹¹ Sawkins 2005 and Hitchcock 1982. A useful listing of Sawkins’s writings is found at <http://lionelsawkins.co.uk/Export3.htm>.

Jean-Paul C. Montagnier's extensive writings in English,¹² have stimulated interest in the subject. We can look forward to more writing on French sacred music by two younger scholars in the field, Peter Bennett and Don Fader.¹³ On the whole, however, French baroque sacred music and its associated genres have not received as much focus from Anglophone writers as have the stage works in recent years.

The French motet: problems of terminology and identity

Reference works, textbooks, and most scholarly writing dealing with the subject of the French baroque choral motet – writing by Edith Borroff, H. Wiley Hitchcock, John Hill, and George von Buelow, for example – generally employ the French term “*grand motet*,” attentively setting it in italics in their publications. This designation, rarely used in the era in which these works were first created, is misleading to English audiences as it does not translate well to an English cognate: *grand* in French often translates best as “great” or “large,” whereas in English “grand” generally means splendid or expansive. Thus, leading French Baroque scholars treat “*grand motet*” as a French musical term. There is no entry for “*grand motet*” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Under the heading “Motet” we find James R. Anthony's essay in which he refines the term by adding the qualifier “Versailles.” The term “Versailles *grand motet*” highlights the French origin of the genre, unlike “*grand motet*” alone, but it is equally misleading because the early history of the motet, which had its beginnings in the time of Jean Veillot (?–c. 1662), had nothing to do with Versailles. The early decades of its development under Louis XIV – the time of Du Mont, Robert, and Lully – also had little to do with Versailles, as these composers had established the early form of the concerted French motet well before Louis XIV officially moved the royal court to Versailles in 1682.¹⁴

¹² Montagnier's article “Catholic Church Music in France” in S. Keefe (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 113–26 is easily overlooked. A full listing of his publications is at <http://jpmontagnier.monsite-orange.fr/index.html>.

¹³ Peter Bennett has published studies on the early French baroque sacred music (see Bennett 2009) and Don Fader has focused recent work on the regency, including the sacred music of that time (see Fader 2005).

¹⁴ The *sous-maîtres* Du Mont and Robert were never in residence at Versailles, since they retired from the court just before its relocation; Lully served there, but died just four years after the move. Special occasions, however, took place at the chateau before the court's permanent establishment in 1682.

Thierry Favier wrestles with this issue of terminology in his important and comprehensive study “*Le motet à grand chœur*,” titled using a term that draws on the early history of the genre, a designation that appears in contemporary accounts of the Concert Spirituel and other performances in the *Mercure de France*, as well as in library inventories that survive in Arles, Lyon, and other places.¹⁵ It serves well in French as a more accurate term, but its direct English translation “motet for large choir” fails to signal either the French origins of the genre, or primary characteristics of the most developed form – the presence of instruments as well as elaborate movements for solo voices and instrumental obbligati. Furthermore, while the “*motet à grand chœur*” genre carried common attributes throughout its history, there were also differences, among the most salient of which were the existence of: (1) motets for two choirs and instruments, by composers including Du Mont, Robert, Charpentier, and Lully; (2) motets for one large choir, a group of soloists, and instruments, e.g. by Lalande, Charpentier, Campra, and Gilles among others; (3) motets for one choir with soloists, and continuo (generally designated as motets “*sans symphonie*”); and (4) the later symphonic motets of Blanchard, Mondonville, Giroust, and others, which brought new forms and instrumental practices to the works. In English, the broader term “French baroque motet” also falls short, for it fails to distinguish the choral motets from the important companion genre, the motet for one, two, or three voices with or without instruments, generally called the “*petit motet*,” which many of the same composers produced.

After considerable reflection, lacking an adequate English term for the genre, this author has decided that for the discussions in the present book the French concerted motets for large choir and instruments will generally be designated with the most common French term of its time, “*motet à grand chœur*,” or occasionally by the English term “French choral motet.” These terms may be considered to be synonymous. When they appear, they designate a composition for one large choir of more than one singer per part, a smaller choir *or* a group of soloists, and instruments including continuo. The terms “French concerted motet” and “*motet en symphonie*” may be applied to both choral motets with instruments and motets for solo voice or voices with instruments, although most often “*motet en symphonie*” historically appears to have referred to *motets à grand chœur*. There exists yet another sub-group of French baroque choral motets, those for choir without instruments except for continuo, generally designated “*motets sans*

¹⁵ In southern France, we also find the term “*motet en symphonie*,” in inventories surviving at Arles and elsewhere.

symphonie.” In this study I will employ the term “*petit motet*” for the motet for solo voice or voices and continuo with or without instruments, as that term commonly appeared in the epoch, for example in the reports on the Concert Spirituel in the *Mercure de France*, and in some earlier sources.

A neglected genre

French baroque sacred music, and the genre of the *motet à grand chœur* in particular, has received less study than its German and Italian counterparts in the past seventy-five years, particularly in the United States. Younger scholars may have been discouraged from pursuing the field due to a point of view put forth by Manfred Bukofzer. Despite Lang’s 1941 observation of the “blank spot” in historical study, in his *Baroque Music* of 1946 Bukofzer dismissed the importance of the French motet genre with his uncharacteristically short-sighted declaration, “The opera at the French court held such a dominating position that other forms of vocal music did not develop very vigorously.” Contrary to Bukofzer’s assertion, the French choral motet underwent a significant and multifaceted development for more than a century, both at the royal court and away from it. Its history covers about the same length of time as that of the classical symphony. Favier correctly states:

Yet, contrary to a linear trajectory, the history of the *motet à grand chœur* is multiple, complex, and dependent on a network of interactions between institutions, currents of thought, esthetic tendencies, and the sensitivities that evolved, each of these according to different times, in a rapidly changing social context and culture.¹⁶

Favier’s observation strikes to the very heart of how one must address any French repertory from this period. Music’s significant role in the lives of the French people cannot be distilled into a linear history, but glimpses of how it functioned can be obtained through study, and through the re-creation of that music in performance.

After a century-and-a-third, the development of the concerted motet genre, which had been very much identified with the old regime, was disrupted by one of the most violent cultural upheavals in the history of Western civilization, the French Revolution. The genre did not disappear, but its post-Revolutionary history remains obscure because little study has been devoted to sacred music in early nineteenth-century France.

¹⁶ Favier 2009, 576.

Ultimately, though, the motet continued, transforming into its nineteenth-century form as exemplified in Berlioz's *Te Deum* and the orchestral sacred works of Saint-Saëns and others.

The relatively thin treatment French baroque music receives in music history textbooks is somewhat bizarre in view of European history.¹⁷ France in the late seventeenth century, at the time known as the *Grand Siècle*, produced the dominant culture in Europe. It was a time when influence emanated from Versailles rather than toward it. Voltaire described the time as an era of French supremacy in taste, refinement of manners, and artistic and intellectual brilliance. Voltaire no doubt had his biases, but many a European nobleman – Bach's patron Prince Leopold at Cöthen, for example – imitated the French style and Versailles in particular, in their more modest courts and estates, giving credibility to Voltaire's view. Just as French art and architecture found imitators in Germany, Britain, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries, Purcell, Bach, Telemann, Handel and others admired and adopted elements of French musical style in their sacred and secular compositions. In consideration of France's position in a major historical era as the model of absolutism and divine right, where the sacred merged with the person of the king, where once again France was the exemplar for the rest of Europe, it seems strange that American musicologists have given scant attention to such an important dimension of French music as its sacred works.¹⁸

In the realm of sacred music, Favier points out that even French musicology itself has at times supported an unenthusiastic view of the post-Lalande *motet à grand chœur*, in particular through an interpretation of the genre's history expounded chiefly by Norbert Dufourcq. Favier observes:

¹⁷ Several texts, including those by Daniel Hertz (2003), George Buelow (2004), and John Walter Hill (2005) give more attention to French sacred music, including its presence at the Concert Spirituel. Peter Burkholder has expanded the information on French Baroque sacred music in his revisions of Grout's *History of Western Music*. This increased attention to French baroque music, and to French sacred music in particular, indicates that things are changing in American scholarship, and a fuller understanding of baroque sacred music in France is emerging.

¹⁸ The cause for this imbalanced condition reaches beyond the scholars who wrote the English-language music textbooks in the mid-twentieth century. History has been unkind to French baroque music. Many music manuscripts and documentation disappeared in the cultural rupture of the French Revolution. Other times of war and disorder, including World Wars I and II, and also the time of the Law of Separation of church and state in France (1905), resulted in the loss or destruction of old documents. The lack of original sources greatly impeded progress toward making French baroque music available to modern scholars.