The Lure and Legacy of Music at Versailles

Louis XIV and his court at Versailles had a profound influence on music in France and throughout Europe. In 1660 Louis visited Aix-en-Provence, a trip that resulted in political and cultural transformations throughout the region. Soon thereafter Aix became an important center of sacred music composition, eventually rivaling Paris for the quality of the composers it produced. John Hajdu Heyer documents the young king's visit and examines how he and his court deployed sacred music to enhance the royal image and secure the loyalty of the populace. Exploring the circle of composers at Aix, Heyer provides the most up-to-date and complete biographies in English of nine key figures, including Guillaume Poitevin, André Campra, Jean Gilles, François Estienne, and Antoine Blanchard. The book goes on to reveal how the history of political power in the region was reflected through church music, and how musicians were affected by contemporary events.

JOHN HAJDU HEYER is Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater. He began his exploration of French sacred music from the time of Louis XIV during his years as a student in Paris with Nadia Boulanger (1967–70). His publications include two books and five critical editions of works by Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean Gilles. His work as a musicologist and conductor has twice been recognized with the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society for "distinguished contribution to the study and performance of early music." He has served on the Council of the American Musicological Society, the editorial board for the Web Library of Seventeenth-Century Music, and was active on the committees preparing the collected works of Lully. In the past four years, he has undertaken extensive research in archives and libraries of southern France.

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Louis XIV and the Aix School

JOHN HAJDU HEYER

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Foreword

More attention has been paid in recent years to the impressive and influential sacred music from the court of Louis XIV in France in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, notably the motets of Du Mont, Lully, Charpentier and Lalande. Certainly, more editions and recordings are available than was the case thirty years ago, but the centralisation of scholarship and performance on the Parisian region (both then and now) has meant that the vast store of sacred music from the French provinces in this period has not always received the attention worthy of it.

No centre outside Paris was more influential in French church music than the cathedral and its choir school (*maîtrise*) at Aix-en-Provence. Taking Louis XIV's 1660 visit to Provence as his point of departure, John Hajdu Heyer reveals the whole school of composers that subsequently emanated from there, composers who made their mark not only in Provence but in the French capital as well. Of these, none was more famous than André Campra. But other names are central to the story of the development of sacred music in Provence, such as Poitevin, who preceded Campra, and Gilles, Estienne, Belissen and Blanchard, who followed him.

In *The Lure and Legacy of Music at Versailles: Louis XIV and the Aix School*, Professor Heyer has brought together a lifetime of research and performance of this repertory to give a unique overview of the influence of this school, its connections to the distant Versailles chapel tradition, and the great debt owed by the court music to composers from Aix-en-Provence. Among the long-neglected archives which he has investigated are those of the cathedral at Aix, in order to provide as accurate a view as possible of the day-to-day life of the choir school, its alumni, and its functions at one of the great metropolitan churches of France; Professor Heyer's study is perhaps the first in English of a French provincial *maîtrise*. One can still view the ancient building today, together with its magnificent organ cases on either side of the chancel, an almost unique setting for a French cathedral, where the principal organ is almost always in a west gallery, and a much less significant instrument is in the chancel with the choir. This position for the *grand orgue* may well have been decided because of the strong choral

tradition of the cathedral, where so much music of high artistic endeavour would have been sung in the chancel.

Thus this book provides a fresh insight into the rich diversity of sacred music that graced both the court chapel and the churches of provincial *maîtrises* in France during the reigns of Louis XIV and his successors.

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Preface

In the conclusion to his 1996 article "Le grand motet à l'époque de Rameau: Le cas de Claude-Mathieu Pelegrin (1682–1763)," Jean Duron, while noting the number of distinguished composers who came from the choir school at Saint-Sauveur in Aix-en-Provence, poses a simple question, "Might there have been an Aix School?"[1] This book responds affirmatively to that question. An extraordinary group of composers emerged from the cathedral of Saint-Sauveur (Holy Saviour Cathedral) in late seventeenth-century Aix, but with the notable exception of André Campra, those composers were exclusively church musicians. Because scholars have examined French sacred music of that time to a lesser extent than stage and keyboard music, this important school has received little attention.

Aix, the capital of Provence, lies in a region of France nestled in the southeast corner of the country, well removed from the political center around Paris. In 1660, a few years before the leader of this school, Guillaume Poitevin, began his adult career in Aix, Louis XIV visited Provence, releasing transformative actions on the region. Poitevin, as a choirboy, found himself in the very presence of his king, and subsequent events imply that the encounter made a profound impression on the young musician. This study reaches beyond music and musical values to explore the history of the interaction of political power and church music in this period. It examines how the king and the court deployed sacred music to enhance the royal image and to secure the loyalty of the broader populace.

Little has been written in English about the French sacred music composed outside the Île-de-France. The music of Paris and the royal court, both secular and sacred, has drawn the preponderance of scholarly interest. James R. Anthony's *French Baroque Music* introduces some of the composers from metropolitan centers of France away from Paris. Short biographies of some of the principal composers appear in the leading reference works such as the *New Grove*, and there have been a few doctoral dissertations in

[1] Duron 1996, 174: "Y aurait-il eu une école aixoise?"

English examining the lives and music of some of these composers, but this is the first book in English to address an important musical center far from Paris, and its relationship to the music of the royal court. The book seeks to reveal the history, lives, and musical contributions of this unified school of composers, all of whom received training in the choir school at Saint-Sauveur.

The timespan of the study covers more than a century. In 1663, Guillaume Poitevin (1646–1706) arrived at Saint-Sauveur, becoming the leader of the choir school just four years later. A century later, in 1763, Poitevin's successor at Saint-Sauveur, Claude-Mathieu Pelegrin (1682–1763), died. Along with Pelegrin, Poitevin and his other students, André Campra (1660–1744), Jean Gilles (1668–1705), Jacques Cabassole (1674–*c.* 1733), François Estienne (1674–1755), Laurent Belissen (1693–1762), and Antoine Blanchard (1696–1770), as well as a few others, formed the Aix School. During that century, each of these composers developed a distinguished career in a principal city in France. They all composed, contributing significantly to a legacy of concerted masses and motets that was produced over that time.

Musically, this book explores the roles of the genre of the French motet and its important subset, the Te Deum settings, in the life of a cathedral. It examines the relationship between the motet genre in the hands of the composers of the Aix School in the south, and its treatment by those composers in the north at the political and cultural center of France – the court and Royal Chapel. It reveals new information about these composers, and their relationship to the reign and the music of Louis XIV and his successors, as these Bourbon monarchs exploited sacred music to fuse both the loyalty of, and a strong bond with, the common populace of France.

While working to inform English-speaking readers and others about a largely overlooked development in French music, and in French history, I have made an effort to limit the use of specialized terminology, and have provided a glossary that defines the French terms that it was necessary for me to use. Specialized French terms that cannot be directly translated, or are not explained in the text, but have been selected for preservation in French, are marked on their initial appearances with a superscript "g" as being defined in the glossary. *RISM* sigla identify libraries. Translations are mine unless otherwise stated. In keeping with the goal of accessibility, French quotations and terms are translated into English whenever possible, but some words that lack precise English counterparts, and some very common French words, including French titles, are intentionally left in their original

language. Poetry is translated on the page. Original transcribed French texts from primary sources, where translated, are given in the footnotes, but manuscript transcriptions are not modernized. French texts that are available in secondary sources are not repeated in the footnotes. A bibliography lists both primary and secondary sources, many of the latter being available online.

Acknowledgments

Many of the findings in this book result from a reading of the *Délibérations capitulaires*[g2] of Saint-Sauveur, the minutes of the meetings of the head canons of the Chapter of that cathedral, from 1657–1752. Those minutes therefore record the decisions made by the leaders of the metropolitan church of Aix. The seventeenth-century script is difficult to read and often confusing due to orthographic inconsistencies and multiple hands, but the texts are exceptionally detailed and reveal much about the times and practices of the church, including decisions affecting its *corps de musique*[g]. I am grateful to those who enabled me to photograph and to examine the originals of those manuscript volumes in detail, particularly to Natalie Reyes and the staff at the Bouche-du-Rhône Departmental Archives center in Aix. I thank Jean-Paul C. Montagnier and Patricia Ranum for their help with the translations of difficult-to-read manuscript passages.

Many librarians, archivists, scholars, colleagues, and friends have enabled me to realize this study. I wish to recognize especially the important help I received from Mme. Claudine Pézeron, *archiviste diocésain* for the Archbishop of Aix-en-Provence, who willingly responded to my requests for access to and copies of original source materials. Figures 10 and 11 are published courtesy of the Archbishop of Aix-en-Provence, proprietor of the manuscripts.

I thank Alan M. Baker and the estate of my late colleague, Campra scholar J. Anne Baker, for invaluable help and access to materials relating to André Campra. Deborah Hayes has, for many years, offered me wise counsel, meaningful suggestions, and valued support. The passionate advocate of French baroque sacred music, Lionel Sawkins, has always willingly shared his materials, library, and expertise with me, and has given me the benefit of his knowledge and wisdom as the book developed. Jean-Paul C. Montagnier has contributed his extensive knowledge in this field, offering me good advice and help upon the many occasions when I asked for his thoughts. Others to whom I am indebted include the late James R. Anthony, Pierre-Emmanuel Biot, Stuart Cheney, Charles Dill, Jean Duron, Thierry Favier,

[2] The superscript "g" denotes terms found in the glossary.

Philippe Ferrand, Paul R. Hanson, Rebecca Harris-Warrick, Bénédicte Hertz, Gregory Johnston, Olivier Labrèze, Danielle Pacha, Graham Sadler, Carl Schmidt, Shirley Thompson, Beverly Wilcox, and William Weber. My special thanks to Irma Boghossian for sharing her time and expertise on the *maîtrise*[g] at Saint-Sauveur, and to Guy Laurent for providing materials from the library of unpublished sound recordings of Les Festes d'Orphée, and for his photograph of the Saint-Sauveur *maîtrise* that appears on the back cover, as well as for sharing his insights on the music of the Aix composers. Thanks are due to David Heyer for the preparation of the music examples. Finally, my appreciation goes especially to Sandra Heyer for advice, help with preparation of the final copy, and proofreading, and for putting up with my absences during travels to Aix.

Many have helped me, but I must take the responsibility for any shortcomings in the book. This study aspires to break some new ground for English-speaking readers and to increase the awareness of the vast secondary literature in French for the music history of the era. I hope, more than anything, that younger American scholars will join their French and British counterparts to take interest in this music, reveal my oversights, improve the record, and advance the understanding of this excellent and historically important music.

John Hajdu Heyer

Prologue

> I myself still rather young . . . conscious merely of the immensity of the burden without having been able to test my own strength, wanting more than anything, even more than life itself, to acquire a great reputation if I could do so, but realizing at the same time that my first moves would either lay its foundations or would destroy my hopes for it forever, so that I was almost equally pressed and restrained in my aspirations by the same desire for glory . . .[3]
>
> Louis XIV, from *Mémoires for the Instruction of the Dauphin*

On January 17, 1660, the twenty-one-year-old Louis XIV entered Aix-en-Provence with caution – the earliest written accounts report that the king arrived at night "without splendor and ceremony by his expressed orders." There had been recent insurrections in Aix, the capital of Provence, so the young king and his court slipped through the city gates at nightfall, accepting only a token welcome observance from the city fathers. Although preparations had been made in Aix for the typical ostentatious arrival ceremonies an important French city normally put on for the king, the young Louis and his minister and mentor, Cardinal Jules Mazarin, knew the political situation remained perilous, and they were wary. Celebrations could wait, for there was important military action at hand; that night the royal carriages transported the king and his court to their lodging without the customary spectacle.

Young French kings normally visited the corners of their realm early in their reigns to learn about their kingdom, but Louis went to Provence for two specific reasons. In that region, anti-royal discontent continued to surface well after the Fronde (the rebellions of Louis's minority), and he needed to deal with it. Moreover, there was the even more rebellious former city-state of Marseille, against which a military campaign was due to take place during the visit. In summary, Louis, under the guidance of his first minister Cardinal Mazarin, visited Provence both to bond with its general

[3] Louis XIV, *Mémoires for the Instruction of the Dauphin*, trans. and ed. P. Sonnino (New York: Free Press, 1970), 23–24.

populace, and to chastise a rebellious city. Both undertakings aimed to promote the further unification of modern France in the post-Fronde era.

In other cities on his way to Aix, the king arrived with trumpet fanfares, festive celebrations, parades, and chants of "Vive le Roi" from the populace. Such a royal entry had taken place just a few days earlier in nearby Arles, where, on January 14, young Guillaume Poitevin (1646–1706) – then a thirteen-year-old choirboy at Saint-Trophime – had witnessed the joyful celebrations that surrounded the king's arrival there. For Poitevin, as for most of the population of Arles, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Guillaume no doubt sang, or played the serpent, in the splendid music performed at Arles's cathedral of Saint-Trophime for the mass celebrated before Louis XIV during his visit to that city. Young Poitevin would grow up to become one of the most accomplished music teachers of his time, and perhaps the most influential church musician in southern France. He and his gifted students formed the Aix School. The composers of this school developed distinguished careers in principal cities in France; two of them served the Royal Chapel at Versailles. The development of sacred music in Aix-en-Provence, southern France, and even at faraway Versailles, over the next century, may well have been put into motion by the inspiration Poitevin received from his encounter at Saint-Trophime with the young king, who was only eight years older than the choirboy, and at the peak of his physical being.