

DUTCH LIGHT — LUTE MUSIC OF NICOLAS VALLET (c. 1583 – c. 1642)

PHILLIP RUKAVINA, 10-COURSE LUTE

Program

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| I. | <i>Secret des muses 1615</i> | Prelude
Ballet 2
Branle de la Royne |
| | <i>Secret des muses 1616</i> | |
| II. | <i>Secret des muses 1615</i> | Pavanne en forme de complaint
Volte de la complainte
Mal Simms |
| | <i>Secret des muses 1616</i> | |
| III. | <i>Secret des muses 1615</i> | Courante de Mars
Courante sur la gailliarde de Bocquet |
| IV. | | Courante 18 |
| V. | | La Mendiante Fantasye |
| VI. | <i>Secret des muses 1615</i> | Volte 5
La Maturine
Carillion de Village |
| | <i>Secret des muses 1616</i> | |
| VII. | | Passemeze d'Italye
Gailliarde de Passemeze |
| VIII. | <i>Secret des muses 1615</i> | La Courante Sarabande
Galliarde 3 |
| IX. | | Passemeze pour bequare |

Lute after Frei by Malcom Prior, London 1981 (rebuilt in 2009)

PHILLIP RUKAVINA



performs as a lute and vihuela soloist and as a continuo lutenist. He's appeared at many music festivals specializing in Early Music, including the Utrecht Early Music Festival (2013) and the Boston Early Music Festival (2015). He is a founding member of the Venere Lute Quartet and has performed with many prominent early music ensembles, including the Newberry Consort, the Texas Early Music Project, and the Rose Ensemble. He has accompanied acclaimed sopranos Dame Emma Kirkby and Ellen Hargis. Phillip has directed and served on the faculty of the Lute Society of America's Biennial Lute Fests in Cleveland, and at the Amherst and Vancouver Early Music Festivals. He has recorded on the Studio395, Lyrichord, Lute Society of America, and Naxos labels.

From 2014–2016 Phillip Rukavina served as President of the Lute Society of America.

Dutch Light — Program Notes

Phillip Rukavina

Nicolas Vallet (c. 1583 – c. 1642) was a French lutenist and composer. He was born at Corbény, located north of Paris, but fled from France to the Dutch Republic, probably for religious reasons. Vallet, likely a Huguenot, would have been unwelcome in predominantly Catholic France after the reign of Henry IV. Conversely, English musicians came to Amsterdam to escape persecution for their Catholic faith under the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I in England. As a result, the musical scene in Amsterdam became a delightful mix of English, Continental (mostly French), and Dutch musical styles.

With the relative absence of aristocratic patronage in the Dutch Republic, musicians faced significant challenges for employment. As a result, Vallet pursued his career as a professional lutenist, performing at parties, weddings, and the like. In addition to his work as a lutenist, Vallet taught the lute, composed and published his own music, and was the co owner of a dance school which he set up in his home.

Much of what we know about the life of Nicolas Vallet comes as a result of his involvement with professional lute ensembles working in Amsterdam in the early years of the 17th century. Vallet's activities as a music contractor are relatively well documented through the written agreements he held with other lutenists, a number of whom were English born. These documents have a very modern feel to them, in that they address such subjects as the split of performance fees, penalties for absence from performances, provisions for shared health care, and the like.

Vallet also earned income through his music publications, costly ventures which were paid for by Vallet himself. His primary published work, *Le Secret des Muses*, contains secular compositions for the 10 course, Renaissance tuned lute. It was published in two volumes in 1615 and 1616. The music on this program is taken entirely from *Le Secret des Muses*, which features a variety of musical forms including the prelude, fantasy, carillon, bransle, courante, passemazo, volta, gailliarde, ballet, and well known song tunes set on the lute. As dancing the courante was all the rage in early 17th century France and the Netherlands, these works were no doubt quite practical for use in Vallet's dance studio.

As was the custom with lute music of this era, many of Vallet's titles contain information which hint at further connections. One such example, *Courante sur la gailliarde de Bocquet* notes the earlier piece on which Vallet based his composition. Others allude to emotional states of mind. *Pavanne en forme de complainte* and his *Volte de la complainte* are two such examples. The *Courante de Mars* appears as one of seven "movements" in a popular collection of pieces Vallet composed for his ensemble of four lutes. Known today as the "Vallet Quartets," these sparkling pieces are a programming staple for plucked string ensembles, performed both by lute and modern guitar ensembles alike.

With forward looking aspects, the opening *Prelude*, is an example of the changing styles of the early Baroque age. Its bipartite musical structure, the first half contrapuntal in nature and the second filled with rapid scale passages, the piece contains a toccata like quality. Although Vallet's music is, in general, less dramatic than that of the great contemporary English lutenist John Dowland, Vallet's *La Mendiante Fantasie* comes very close to matching several of Dowland's fantasies, both in musical intensity and length. As with the English galliard of this time, determining the tempos of Vallet's courantes seems most successful when a lot of weight is given to the emotive content of the music.

It is difficult not to think of Vallet's contemporaries, such as Emanuel Adriaenssen and Joachim van den Hove, when listening to Vallet's music. Along with these musical giants, he was one of the most important figures in Netherlandish lute music at the time of the great Dutch keyboardist, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck. Vallet's variations on popular tunes often call to mind Sweelinck's keyboard works, several arrangements of which I recently had the pleasure of recording with my ensemble, the Venere Lute Quartet, on our recent CD titled, "Airy Entertainments."