

# Ensemble Molière

## Telemann & His Friends in Paris

Tuesday 15 October 2024

**Georgia Browne** baroque flute

**Kate Conway** viola da gamba

**Alice Earll** baroque violin

**Satoko Doi-Luck** harpsichord



**Michel Blavet (1700–1768)**

Ouverture from *Le Jaloux Corrigé*

**Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)**

*Paris* Quartet Nouveaux quatuor en six suites,  
Deuxième Quatuor TWV43:a2

Allègrement - Flatteusement - Légèrement -  
Un peu vivement - Vite - Coulant

**Jean-Pierre Guignon (1702–1774)**

Violin Sonata Op 6 No 1 in A major  
Andante - Allegro non troppo - Adagio Molto -  
Presto

**François Couperin (1668–1733)**

*La Française* from *Les Nations*  
Sonade - Passacaille

**Interval**

**François Couperin**

*L'Impériale* from *Les Nations*  
Sonade

**Georg Philipp Telemann**

Fantasie No 8 in G minor for Harpsichord

**Antoine Forqueray (1672–1745)**

*La Guignon*, Cinquième Suite, Pièces de viole

**Michel Blavet**

Flute Sonata, Op 2 No 3 *La Dhérouville*  
Adagio - Allemanda - Rondeau - Presto  
(Tambourin I & II) - Giga

**Georg Philipp Telemann**

*Paris* Quartet' Six Quadri, Sonata II, TWV43:g1  
in G minor  
Andante - Allegro - Largo - Allegro

**In 1737, at the invitation of four eminent French musicians, Georg Philipp Telemann left Hamburg and travelled to Paris to perform what are now known as his ‘Paris’ Quartets.** More than seven years previously, the flautist Michel Blavet, violinist Jean-Pierre Guignon, gambist Jean-Baptiste Forqueray and a cellist called Prince Édouard, whose precise identity is unknown, had extended an invitation to Telemann to come and collaborate with them in France. In return, Telemann composed his first set of six ‘Paris’ Quartets, published in 1730 under the title *Quadri* and written in the national styles of Italy, Germany and France. In the years between the invitation and his arrival in Paris, he penned another six suites, published in 1738 as the *Nouveaux quatuors*. Despite their French title, these works were more an amalgamation of national styles than a parody of one particular genre, this evolution of national styles was seen across Europe and eminent French composer François Couperin was one of the first, with his 1724 publication *Les Goûts-réunis* and 1726 *Les Nations*, from which we will be performing extracts of tonight. The first performances of the ‘Paris’ Quartets had an overwhelmingly positive impact upon Telemann and his career, and our concert celebrates this union of musicality, intellect and respect through a selection of works by these four prominent musicians – or, in Forqueray’s case, a work possibly by his father.

We open with the Overture from *Le Jaloux Corrigé* by Michel Blavet, who was renowned as a flautist of the highest calibre. Born in 1700, he reputedly acquired a flute by accident but became a master of the instrument, leaving behind a record of technical knowledge that remains invaluable to this day. Premiered in 1752, *Le Jaloux Corrigé (The Man Cured of Jealousy)* is sometimes counted as the first French comic opera and was a parody of the Italianate style that was growing popular in France.

After the success of the *Quadri*, Telemann’s *Nouveaux quatuors* were eagerly anticipated, becoming the most influential German

chamber works of the decade. The quartet in A minor is one of the most popular from the set, and certainly one of the most dramatic, with the vigorous opening chords in the strings and keyboard subsiding only for the flute to make its presence felt. The melodies are intricately crafted and passed between the players with care, generously yet diplomatically distributed throughout.

Not much is known about the violinist Jean-Pierre Guignon. Born in Italy in 1702, he was granted French citizenship in 1741. During his career he was entrusted with the supervision of the musicians and dancers at the royal court, becoming the most influential violinist in France. He mostly wrote works for the violin, this sonata comes from his second collection of violin sonatas.

In 1726, François Couperin published a collection of four sonatas and suites under the title *Les Nations* which were said to have inspired Telemann’s quartets. The compositions were called *ordres*; each comprised a trio sonata in Italian style and a suite of French dances. These orders signified an evolution of French chamber music, although they were still written in the highly stylised, refined and intricate manner of the French baroque tradition.

Jean-Baptiste Forqueray, like his father Antoine, was one of the greatest viol players of his generation. However, it was Jean-Baptiste’s publication of the *Pièces de viole* in 1747 that ensures the name Forqueray remains relevant today. Whether these pieces were composed by the father or the son remains uncertain, and questions of authorship are complicated by the acrimonious relationship between the pair, which resulted in Jean-Baptiste being imprisoned and later exiled at his father’s request. The *Pièces* are regarded as some of the most virtuosic writing for the viol ever published, and ‘La Guignon’ is no exception. Dedicated to Jean-Pierre Guignon (the feminine article ‘la’ referring to the ‘pièce’ rather than to the sex of the music’s dedicatee), this work exploits the full range of the instrument but displays less egotism than

other works in the collection. Perhaps it presents us with an accurate portrait of Guignon himself?

Telemann's keyboard music amounts to several hours' listening, yet it represents a relatively small proportion of this extraordinarily prolific composer's output. The *36 Fantasias for harpsichord*, printed in 1732 - 33, are divided into three groups of twelve, the first and third of which are written in an Italian style while the second adopts a French style.

*Fantasia No 8 in G minor for Harpsichord* was composed in the Italian style, consisting of two movements (fast/slow), with the compulsory da capo of the first section.

Unlike Forqueray's *Pièces de viole*, the majority of Blavet's compositional output was published with the amateur musician in mind. Blavet writes in accommodating keys and revels in the delicate sound of the Baroque lute. 'La Dhérouville' comes from the *Sonates mêlées de pièces pour la flûte traversière avec la basse*, published in 1732, and is a typical French character-piece amidst otherwise

Italian-style sonatas. Character-pieces were often composed as direct portraits of celebrities or colleagues, as is the case with Forqueray's 'La Guignon', or as depictions of certain qualities in fictitious characters. It is unknown who Dherouville was, or even if he existed at all, but nonetheless it is a charming evocation.

We close with the G minor Quartet from Telemann's first set of 'Paris' Quartets, the *Quadri*. This comparative representation of national styles was said to have been inspired by François Couperin's *Les nations*, published four years earlier. TWV43:g1 has a German flavour, with a liberal application of the newly emerging *galant* style that was thought to have contributed to the 'Paris' Quartets' immense popularity. Although the music is virtuosic, the three obligato instruments participate equally, creating new textures and colours within the instrumentation, and demonstrating Telemann's considerable compositional finesse.

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## Elias String Quartet with Robin Ireland

Thursday 5 December / 7.30pm

Violist Robin Ireland, a member of the celebrated Lindsay String Quartet for twenty years, joins the Elias String Quartet to perform some of the greatest string quintets ever written. Discover Mozart's expansive lyricism and dazzling counterpoint contrasted with Sally Beamish's reflective *Epilogue*.



**Free tickets for 8-25 year olds to selected chamber music concerts**

Through the generous support of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust, we are able to offer young people aged 8-25 the fantastic opportunity to experience this concert absolutely free.



**Ensemble Molière** have gained a reputation as an established early music ensemble. Their unique line-up of instruments provides memorable and creative programmes from the repertoire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all inspired by the music of the French Baroque.

Ensemble Molière were selected as the first ever BBC Radio 3 New Generation Baroque Ensemble for two years from October 2021, in partnership with BBC Radio 3, the National Centre for Early Music and the Royal College of Music. They have performed throughout the UK and Europe, including concerts at the Buxton International Festival, Beverley Early Music Festival, Lammermuir Festival, MA Festival Fringe in Bruges and Festival Oude Muziek Fringe in Utrecht. The group made their debut at the London Festival of Baroque Music under the 'Future Artists' scheme, and are also former members of the BREMF Live!

programme. In 2017, they reached the finals of the York Early Music International Young Artists Competition.

Ensemble Molière's first cross-arts project, *Pygmalion*, was part-funded by Arts Council England and featured an innovative combination of opera and digital media. More recently, the group joined forces with two clowns to create a music theatre show, *Good Soup*, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of their namesake, the French playwright and actor Molière. The production explored Molière's world through his words and the music of his time, and premiered in London in July 2022 in the intimate and theatrical surroundings of Sands Films Studio. Ensemble Molière's debut album, *The King's Playlist*, was released on Linn Records in March 2024.

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