

## Introduction

François Couperin II “Le Grand” lived in Paris from 1668 to 1733. A composer, harpsichordist, and organist, he held important positions at the court of Louis XIV, and can be considered France’s most important musical personality between Lully and Rameau. He composed music for harpsichord and organ, chamber music, and sacred and secular choral music.

Couperin’s chamber music collection *Les Goûts-réünis*,<sup>1</sup> in which he contrasted and combined Italian and French stylistic elements, appeared in 1724. The collection’s subtitle, *Nouveaux Concerts*,<sup>2</sup> infers that this collection represents a continuation of his *Concerts Royaux* of 1722, which contains concerts 1–4. *Les Goûts-réünis* holds concerts 5–14. The term “concert” designates here a series of dance movements for a chamber ensemble. The 14th concert, with the title *L’Apothéose de Corelli*, expresses Couperin’s admiration for Italian music.

While most of the concerts are composed for a high melody instrument and basso continuo,<sup>3</sup> two are written for two equal instruments, namely “à deux Violes, ou autres instrumens à L’unisson”<sup>4</sup> (12th concert) and “à 2 instrumens à L’unisson” (13th concert). From the clefs, it can be seen that both concerts are intended for low instruments, that is to say, for viols, cellos, or bassoons.

These two concerts, nos. 12 and 13, are reproduced in the present edition. We confine ourselves to violoncellos or bassoons.<sup>5</sup> Our transcription into modern notation follows the model as closely as possible. Corrections are indicated by footnotes. Accidentals are valid for the whole measure. We have retained the beaming of the original. We have replaced the original alto clef (C3) and baritone clef (F3) partly with the tenor clef (C4) and partly with the bass clef (F4). Couperin’s embellishments are explained in the first book of his harpsichord works (*Pièces de Clavecin*, 1713). Only the following signs appear in the present concerts: trill (♩), mordent (♯), and trill with termination (♩). The breath

marks and the bass figures are taken from the original.

The first movement of the 12th concert is notated in the original with “white notes,” that is to say, the beamed notes have white note heads (Ill. 2). This is a specifically French manner of notation that is used exclusively in 3/2 time. It is explained, for example, in Hotteterre’s *L’Art de Preluder* (Paris, 1719).<sup>6</sup> In the section in which the different meters are discussed, examples are given for 3/2 time, see Fig. 2. The example at the far right is notated with white notes, and displays the annotation “On la note aussi de cette façon.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, in *Les Goûts-réünis* Couperin notates three of the four 3/2 movements with white notes. Moreover, in Hotteterre it is explained that this meter is for slow movements with emotional, delicate music, and that the *quarter* notes are to be played unequal (*pointé*), like the *eighth* notes are usually played in other meters. Indeed, the white quarter notes almost look like eighth notes. In our transcription, we have retained the 3/2 time and doubled the values of the beamed white notes, i.e., eighth notes become quarter notes, etc. – At the beginning, this movement is marked “pointé-coulé.” In this context, “coulé” means “smooth” or “supple.” We interpret this to mean that the quarter notes are bowed back-and-forth, but so smoothly that it almost sounds like legato.<sup>8</sup>

The first movement of the 12th concert has a further peculiarity: the bass is figured (Ill. 2). Under the music, however, is the annotation: “Although one could add an accompaniment with harpsichord or theorbo in this concert, it always sounds better with two viols or two equal instruments without further [instruments].” In addition, the markings “sans accompagnement” and “violes seules” are found at two places in the music, but strangely the bass is nevertheless figured in the second passage.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Reunited Tastes”.

<sup>2</sup> “New Concerts”.

<sup>3</sup> The 14th concert is a trio.

<sup>4</sup> “for two viols or other equal instruments.”

<sup>5</sup> Edition for Violas da Gamba: Couperin, *Les Goûts-réünis* (Heidelberg: Güntersberg, 2013), G224.

<sup>6</sup> We are indebted to Hans Reiners for calling this to our attention.

<sup>7</sup> “One notates this [3/2 time] also in this form.”

<sup>8</sup> We are indebted to Geneviève Bégou for this information.