



Smithsonian Associates

A CELEBRATION OF FRENCH MUSIC

Dr. Rachel franklin

Tuesday, March 21, 2023 - 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET

France is an immeasurable powerhouse of cultural achievement. Through French politics and history, philosophy, fine arts, cuisine, our daily lives continue to be shaped by the Gallic vision of society. And in many ways the history of French music is also the history of Western music. We are used to focusing on the achievements of Germany and Italy, and we tend to forget that right up until the middle Renaissance, it was France that led the way. Looking closely at those earlier periods, we find many of the defining moments in the grand procession of Western musical development were carved out by the French. Such composers such as Guillaume de Machaut and Josquin des Prez were as important as Mozart and Beethoven, and two centuries later Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau were internationally celebrated as great innovators. Following the violent convulsion of the French Revolution, the 1800's saw the emergence of figures such as Hector Berlioz and Georges Bizet, two of the most brilliant and controversial figures in the European musical pantheon. Along with such composers as Camille Saint-Saëns and Gabriel Fauré, they laid the groundwork for a simply astonishing collection of late 19th to mid-20th French artists who forged a wide path through musical Impressionism to Modernism. Our concert canon would be infinitely the poorer without the genius of Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, the group of composers known as Les Six, Olivier Messiaen, and many others. But what makes French music French? Over four weeks we explore social,

political, religious and cultural issues that shaped the output of these great composers, and listen to a selection of the greatest French music in the literature.

British-born Franklin has been a featured speaker for organizations including the Library of Congress and NPR, exploring intersections among classical and jazz music, film scores, and the fine arts.

WK 1. SYLLABUS & WORKS

March 21: 700 Years in Two Hours

We take a lightning tour of French music written before the 19th century, beginning with the mystery and beauty of early 12th-century polyphony by Léonin and Pérotin from the mighty School of Notre-Dame. Touching briefly on exquisite work by Guillaume de Machaut (14th century) and Josquin des Prez (15th century), we jump forward to the Baroque period, which saw the meteoric rise of French opera and non-vocal instrumental music. We enjoy splendid dance music and opera selections by Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau, plus witty keyboard pieces by master clavecinist Francois Couperin. We end by staring into the cataclysm of the approaching Revolution through the intensely dramatic “reform” operas of German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, who changed French audiences forever.

Works explored, media used:

Anon: *Inter Natos Mulierum - Saint Jean Baptiste, Ad Magnam Missam. Alleluia*

- Marcel Pérès ,Ensemble Organum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hB8mmGUx6o>

Anon: *Alleluia "Dies Sanctificatus"*

- Marcel Pérès, Ensemble Organum

Pérotin, c. 1155/60-1205: *Sederunt Principes*

- Hilliard Ensemble

Guillaume de Machaut, c. 1300-1377: *Douce Dame Jolie*

- La Morra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJS-HZWB3wE>

Josquin des Prez, c. 1450/55-1521: *El Grillo* (the cricket)

- Voices of Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdDjAlTa4xc>

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687): *Ballet de la Nuit, Entrée d'Apollon, 1653*

- la Compagnie l'Eventail, 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l09uJkHJI8g>

Jean-Philippe Rameau, 1683-1764: *Hippolyte & Aricie, 1733*

- l'Opéra de Paris

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-4i_Rfax5M

Rameau: *Platée*, 1745

- l'Opéra Garnier

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coENn4UzHsY&t=482s>

Francois Couperin, 1668-1733: *Le Tic Toc Choc ou les Maillotins*

- Elaine Comparone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STm83fDhyxg>

La Victorieuse

- Rachel Franklin

Christoph Willibald Gluck, 1714-1787: *Iphigénie en Tauride*, 1779. 'Le calme rentre dans mon coeur'

- Jarrett Ott, Orchestra de l'Opéra national de Paris

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO7OzXB1myM>

Gluck: *Orphée et Eurydice*, 1762/1774. "Quel est l'audacieux?"

- Roberto Alagna, Teatro Comunale di Bologna & Opera National de Montpellier

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wplxn1uEKIU&t=2700s>