

Complete Analysis of the Four Suites for Harpsichord by Bernard de Bury

Analysis of *Premier livre de pièces de clavecin* by Bernard de Bury

In order to gain a sense of the range of movements found in the four suites by Bernard de Bury, the following list identifies the genre of each.

Première Suite

<i>La Minerve</i>	character piece
<i>Sarabande, Les Regrets</i>	sarabande
<i>Les graces Badines</i>	gavotte
<i>La Tendre Agitation</i>	character piece
<i>Le Plaidoyer de Cithere 1er Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>2e Rondeau</i>	rondeau

Seconde Suite

<i>La belle Brune</i>	character piece
<i>Sarabande La Prude</i>	sarabande
<i>L'Enfantine</i>	character piece
<i>La Cithérée 1er Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>2e Rondeau</i>	rondeau

Troisième Suite

<i>Les Amusemens 1er Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>2e Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>Sarabande La *** ou les Sentimens</i>	sarabande
<i>Zephir 1er Menuet</i>	minuet
<i>Flore 2e Menuet</i>	minuet
<i>La Pithonisse</i>	character piece
<i>Loure</i>	loure
<i>La Séduisante 1er Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>2e Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>Double du 1er Rondeau</i>	rondeau
<i>Double du 2e Rondeau</i>	rondeau

Quatrième Suite

<i>La Brillante</i>	rondeau
<i>La Dampiere</i>	allemande
<i>La Michelin</i>	giga
<i>La Jeunesse</i>	minuet
<i>Chaconne</i>	chaconne

Premiere Suite

La Minerve

The first suite of Bernard de Bury's *Premiere livre de pièces de clavecin* has "A" as its home key, movements being in either A major or A minor. In the title of the opening movement de Bury makes reference to the Roman goddess of wisdom and arts. In François Couperin's *La Régente ou La Minerve* (XIV), the Regent, according to Jane Clark and Derek Connon, is Philippe d'Orléans (1674-1723) who served as Regent of France from 1715 to 1723. He was a "highly cultured man . . . [who] was liked and respected by both musicians and artists . . . He created the official title of *Ordinaire de la Musique du Roi* for Couperin, a post that carried with it a pension . . . Couperin's portrait is another example of his evident sympathy for the man."¹ Couperin thus honored the Regent with a title of great respect, *La Minerve*.

Whether or not de Bury also references the Regent or more generally the goddess of wisdom and arts, he succeeds in using the opening motive in an "artful" way, as the opening gesture is imitated in the bass two measures later.

Ex. 3 - B. de Bury, *La Minerve* (I), mm. 1-5

Sans lenteur

This is then repeated in the dominant minor and subsequently imitated again in the bass. The theme also opens the second half, and a three-note descending motive derived from it can be heard sprinkled throughout the second strain.

After opening in the home key of A minor, there is a modulation to the dominant minor of E minor two-thirds of the way through the first half of the binary form, before a cadence on E major (thanks to a Picardy third – a common characteristic in this music) to end the section. The second half starts right away in the mediant key of C major and returns halfway through to the home key of A minor.

Sarabande, *Les Regrets*

A wistful affect in the music reflects the title of this movement. Characteristics of the sarabande heard include: triple meter; balanced phrases in each half of the binary form;

¹ Jane Clark and Derek Connon, *'The mirror of human life': Reflections on François Couperin's Pièces de Clavecin* (UK: King's Music, 2002), 84-85.

occasional accents on the second beat. The music is simple, both in terms of the melody and the harmony, which moves to the expected key of the dominant, and returns to the tonic key to start the second half.

Les graces Badines

Divided into two *partie*, the first in A major and the second in A minor, this movement is an unnamed gavotte. The balanced phrases, duple meter, simple harmony (no modulations in part one and only a key change to the mediant in the second half of part two), and upbeat beginning in the middle of the anacrusis measure all identify it as such. The first *partie*, in particular, seems to emulate the title of “playful love”. In elucidating this designation, Jane Clark and Derek Connors quote Antoine Furetière (1619-1688; French scholar and writer): *Il n’y a rien plus agreeable qu’un amour badin* (“There is nothing pleasanter than playful love”).

Two examples of Italian music characteristics can be heard in this gavotte. First, the designation of *Légèrement* (“lightly”) seems to indicate an Italian style, the implication of “lightly” thus being “lightly detached”. Evidence for this comes from Couperin’s *L’art de toucher le clavecin* where, speaking about Italian music, he writes, “It is the rapid movements of the Sonatas which are the most successful on this instrument [the harpsichord].”² The word translated as “rapid” is *légèretés*, a word related to *légèrement*, and one which is probably better translated as “light”. Second, the left-hand octaves in the *seconde partie* also could be seen as appearing due to Italian influence. As a result, one could play this movement without *notes inégales* to reflect the Italian traits. The freedom allowed by *bon goût* (“good taste”) may also lead a performer to use *notes inégales* in the first *partie*, but not in the second.

La Tendre Agitation

Wonderfully inventive, this binary movement is another character piece. The key is again A major, with a move to the key of the dominant toward the end of the first half. An unusual modulation to the VI key of F# major six measures into the second half is followed by a run through a succession of keys (B minor, F# minor, F# major, B minor, E minor) before landing in B minor at the halfway point. Two circle of fifths progressions follow, a harmonic trait of the Italians, before a return to the tonic key. Also Italianate are the arpeggiated sequences in each half. The frequent shifts through various tonalities could be the key to understanding the title referencing “tender agitation.” This genre piece is an example of a distinctly French movement flavored with Italian traits.

² François Couperin, *L’art de toucher le clavecin*, ed. and trans. by Margery Halford (Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 47.

Le Plaidoyer de Cithere

1er Rondeau

Two rondeaux in the *Pièces de clavecin* by Bernard de Bury, each with an accompanying second rondeau, make reference to the island of Cythera: *Le Plaidoyer de Cithere* (I) and *La Cithérée* (II). François Couperin, in his third *Ordre*, writes a work called *Les Pélerines*. Jane Clark informs us that this was “originally a vocal piece. The pilgrims are pilgrims of love bound for the Island of Cythera.”³ The artist Watteau produced two similar paintings on the subject of this island: *l’Embarquement pour Cythère* (1717), which hangs in the Louvre, and *Le Pèlerinage a Cythère* (1721), housed in Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, “. . . underlying the frivolity [in Watteau’s paintings] is a feeling of melancholy, reflecting the certain knowledge that all the pleasures of the flesh are transient. This poetic gravity distinguishes him from his imitators. . .”⁴ This background helps explain the different emotional facets of the two sets of rondeaux referencing Cythera in their titles. Each pair has one rondeau in a major key and the other in a minor one. The differing emotions evoked could be reflecting the “melancholy” and “poetic gravity” referenced above.

Turning now to the music of Bernard de Bury, the first rondeau of *Le Plaidoyer de Cithere*, in A minor, is marked by thematic integration. The opening descending three-note figure is repeated immediately in sequence twice, and then these first four measures are repeated to close out the rondeau theme. The harmonic sequence is built on a descending chromatic tetrachord, moving from A minor to G major to F major and back to A minor. The same type of tetrachord is found in *Courante* of the c.1729-30 *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin* by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764).

Ex. 4a - B. de Bury, *Le Plaidoyer de Cithere*, 1er Rondeau (I), mm. 1-5

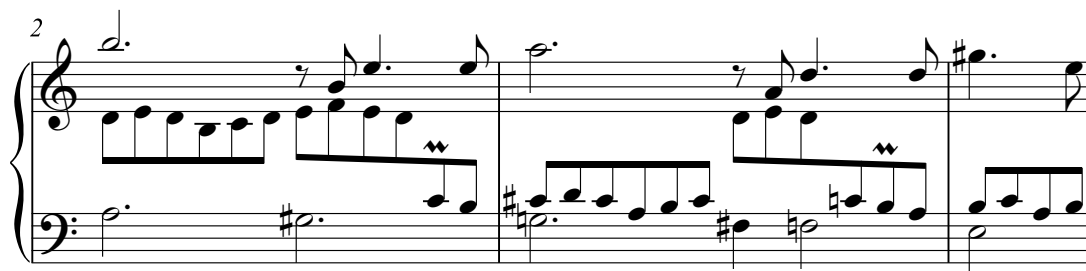
Gracieuse[en]t sans lenteur

[Rondeau]

³ Clark, *The Background*, 8.

⁴ *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, ed. Ian Chilvers, s.v. “Watteau, Jean-Antoine,” Oxford University Press 2009 *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Master’s College and Seminary (accessed 31 May 2012).

Ex. 4b - J-P. Rameau, *Courante* (c.1729-30 *Nouvelles suites de pièces de clavecin*), mm. 2-4 (Bärenreiter revised edition of 2000)



The combination of descending sequential melodic motive and sorrowful descending chromatic tetrachord evokes a melancholy affect. The same motive can be heard prominently in the first two couplets and in inversion and diminution in the third.

The third couplet also surprises the listener with Italianate passagework of sixteenth notes throughout in the treble. In addition, the first four measures contain sequences in both hands. Here, then, is an example of juxtaposition of French and Italian styles.

This movement is marked *Gracieusement sans lenteur*. In a premise presented by Edward Parmentier, an examination of *L'Enharmonique* from the same suite by Rameau may provide a clue as to the meaning of *gracieusement*.⁵ Not only is it labeled as such, but the designation alternates throughout with *hardiment, sans altérer la mesure* (“boldly, without altering the beat”). The special *graciously* sections contain very chromatic, harmonically nebulous areas, while *hardiment* sections are straightforward and contain sixteenth note runs. Thus, it seems that since *hardiment* gives instructions to play the rhythm “straight”, then *gracieusement* implies the freedom to change the beat, or to apply rubato in accordance with the affect. Especially if this is true, the contrast between French and Italian styles is seen even more clearly in de Bury’s movement. The rondeau theme and first two couplets are indeed elegant and gentle, though tinged with sadness, and yet these sections do include imitation, sequence, and even circles of fifths, characteristics more associated with Italian music. The third couplet, as noted above, adds to the Italian traits with passagework.

2e Rondeau

Despite borrowing ideas from *1er Rondeau*, this movement contrasts greatly with it. The mode shifts from A minor to A major. After hearing many changes of key in the first rondeau, there is not a single modulation in the second. Also, although the rondeau theme starts with the same opening motive heard in the first rondeau, it begins on the brighter third scale degree rather than the fifth degree. The opening bass idea is also repeated here, though only twice and

⁵ Edward Parmentier, Personal notes from “Harpichord Music of François Couperin and Contemporaries, 1720-1740, with Emphasis on Couperin, Books III and IV,” Harpichord Workshop at the University of Michigan, 1998.

without the resulting descending tetrachord. Though derived from the same source material, this rondeau theme has an entirely different sound than its sister theme.

The first couplet opens with a rising arpeggiated figure (a characteristic associated with the Italians) accompanied by octaves in the bass. This motive is then imitated in the bass. The opening four-note descending motive is then presented, repeated, and extended, while the left hand joins in on the extension at the interval of a third below. A wide range of four octaves is heard.

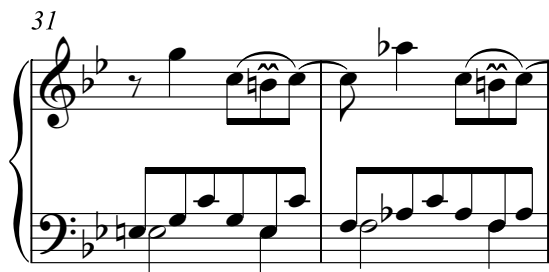
The second couplet is built from the descending four-note motive and the bass features some octaves again. Secondary dominants on IV and V in the third couplet help prepare the listener for the final return to the rondeau theme.

Seconde Suite

La belle Brune

The second suite is in C minor, with only the first rondeau of *La Citherée* being in C major. The first eight bars of the opening movement are mirrored thematically by the second eight measures. A common rhythmic motive found in most of the movement is an eighth rest followed by five eighth notes. A variant on this motive starts near the end of the movement.

Ex. 5 - B. de Bury, *La belle Brune* (II), mm. 31-32



This delicate trill figure may be representative of the “pretty brunette” referenced in the title of this character piece. Harmonically, near the end of the first strain there is movement from C minor to the minor dominant key of G minor. The second half starts immediately in the mediant key of Eb major. The home key is reached halfway through the strain, with a change of mode to C major at the trill figure which remains until a “reverse” Picardy third in a final C minor chord.

Sarabande La Prude

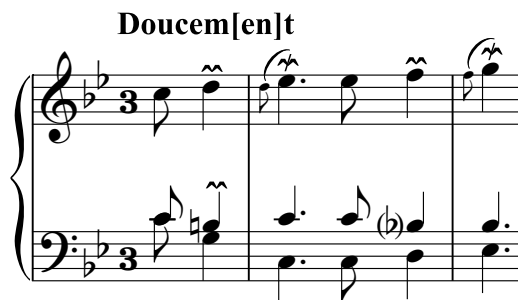
Though her marriage to the king was never officially announced or admitted, Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon (1635-1719), became the second wife of King Louis XIV

(1638-1715) and subsequently was known as Madame de Maintenon. Her religious austerity led to changes in the court which were not appreciated by all. For example, the Duchesse du Maine (Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon, 1676-1753; married to Louis Auguste de Bourbon, Duc du Maine, 1670-1736, legitimized son of Louis XIV) “could not bear the court as it was under Madame de Maintenon. ‘The Court is becoming so tedious, it is hardly to be endured. The King thinks he is being pious when he arranges for people to be eternally bored.’”⁶ Some forms of entertainment were also curbed. According to Derek Connon, “. . . the true reason for the King disbanding the [Italian] troupe remains unclear but it does seem likely that the prudery of Madame de Maintenon had something to do with it.”⁷ Madame was, as a result, subject to satire, including in François Couperin’s *La Prude (Sarabande)* (II). It seems likely, then, that the same reference is being made by Bernard de Bury in *Sarabande La Prude*.

This binary sarabande is serious in tone and complex harmonically, characteristics of this dance that were missing from *Sarabande, Les Regrets* (I). One trait the two movements share is the occasional accent on the second beat of the measure, in addition to those created by hemiola.

The opening motive of upbeat eighth and quarter notes followed by a dotted quarter note is found throughout.

Ex. 6 - B. de Bury, *Sarabande La Prude* (II), mm. 1-2



This is true even during a sequential move from Eb major through F major and G major accompanied by dramatic rolled chords in the bass during the second half. This same motive appears next in parallel motion in the tenor and bass voices and is subsequently imitated in the soprano.

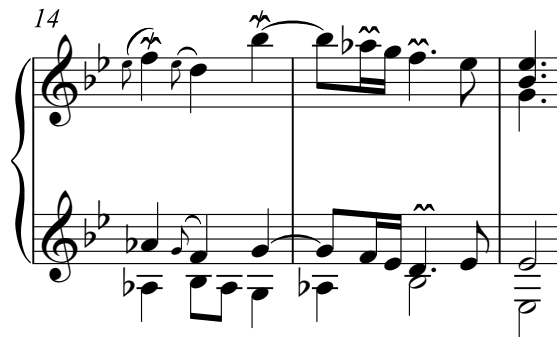
Harmonic interest is an important feature of *Sarabande La Prude*. Directly from the first to the second measure there is a progression from V/III to III in the key of C minor. The first half of the movement ends with a Phrygian cadence, before jumping immediately to the mediant key

⁶ Duchesse d’Orléans, *Letters from Liselotte, Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine and Duchess of Orléans*, trans. and ed. by Maria Kroll (London: Gollancz, 1970) as quoted in Clark and Connon, “*Mirror*”, 12.

⁷ Clark and Connon, “*Mirror*”, 20.

of Eb major to start the reprise. There is a striking dissonance created by simultaneous 9-8 and 7-6 suspensions over the bass note in m. 15.

Ex. 7 - B. de Bury, *Sarabande La Prude* (II), mm. 14-16



The above-mentioned sequence follows before a move back to the home key of C minor. The petite reprise produces more surprises, as it commences with a deceptive cadence. Before the final cadence back in C minor, an appoggiatura over a diminished seventh chord provides even more dissonance.

L'Enfantine

This “child-like” character piece is illustrated as such in several ways. There are frequent shifts of range, as a number of times the left hand appears in the treble clef before skipping back to its normal tessitura. The designation of *Gracieusement* likely implies freedom in performance, suggesting perhaps the taking of extra time when called upon to make sudden changes in compass. Also “infantile” are the parallel tritones in the first few measures of the second half.

Ex. 8 - B. de Bury, *L'Enfantine* (II), mm. 8-10



In this binary movement the opening section stays in the home key of C minor, ending with a Phrygian cadence. The opening of the second part shifts mode to C major, which is the front end of a circle of fifths progression (C major - F minor - Bb major - Eb major). Halfway

through the reprise, the key returns to C minor, followed quickly in succession via sequence by F minor, D minor, and G major (F minor and G major being reached through minor dominants), which then leads back to the home key for the last few measures.

The most prominent motive is an opening rising interval of a fourth. It appears inverted (at a third instead of a fourth) to open the reprise (see Example 8), and again also in the bass line.

La Citherée
1er Rondeau

A paired set of rondeaux, the second by de Bury referencing the island of Cythera, closes out the second suite. The setting of the rondeaux in first major and then minor keys again reflects the two sides of life depicted in Watteau's paintings.

Both the first and second rondeaux of *La Citherée* are unnamed gavottes. Each begins the upbeat in the middle of the measure, has (with one exception) four-bar phrases, and uses fairly simple harmonies (especially the second rondeau). The designation of *Gracieusement sans lenteur* implies tenderness and expressiveness, along with freedom to perform the rhythm with thoughtful flexibility. The opening movement of this paired set is in C major. The rondeau theme consists of a syncopated treble line accompanied by a walking bass line.

Ex. 9 - B. de Bury, *La Citherée*, *1er Rondeau* (II), mm. 1-4

Gracieusem[en]t sans lenteur

This off-beat rhythm is also featured prominently in both couplets, the first of which is heard entirely in the bass staff range of the harpsichord. This first couplet moves immediately to the key of the sub-dominant and then to that of the dominant before a shift to the minor mode. The second couplet is made up of mostly descending staggered chords in first inversion and is entirely in the minor keys of the vi, ii, and vi before the above referenced arrival back in the tonic key of C major.

2e Rondeau

The same rhythmic motive of syncopated right hand and steady quarter note left hand heard in the first rondeau is employed throughout this movement, though in the parallel mode

of C minor. The first couplet modulates to the mediant key of Eb major, while the second quickly shifts from C minor to the minor dominant key of G minor, ending with a Picardy third. The serious nature of this rondeau comes partly from the heavy use (nearly a fourth of all harmonies) of diminished chords.

Troisième Suite

Les Amusemens

1er Rondeau

Six of the eleven movements of this suite, the longest of the four, are rondeaux which bookend this collection, the first a paired set to open (*Les Amusemens*) and later another paired grouping plus *doubles* for each (*La Séduisante*) to close. Centering on “G”, seven of the eleven movements are in the minor mode. Next to the chaconne which closes the entire *livre*, the center movement of this suite, *La Pithonisse*, is the longest written in this set of suites by Bernard de Bury.

The respective *Les Amusemens* movements by Bernard de Bury and François Couperin (VII) share an emotional link: cheerful in *1er Rondeau* and sad in the *2e*. For Couperin, this evidences his “preoccupation with the two sides of life . . . [his] magnificent piece in two parts may well be a reference to *Les Amusemens sérieux et comiques* by [Charles] Dufresny [1648-1724; French dramatist].”⁸ Antoine Furetière (1619-1688; French scholar and writer) notes, *Il est bon d’egayer la tristesse des leçons et de les deguiser en badinage* (“It is good to lighten the sadness of lessons and to disguise them in playfulness.”)⁹

The spirited *1er Rondeau* of *Les Amusemens* by de Bury is certainly engaging. Ornaments help provide forward motion for the opening cheery syncopated rondeau theme.

Ex. 10 - B. de Bury, *Les Amusemens*, *1er Rondeau* (III), mm. 1-4

⁸ Clark and Connon, “*Mirrors*”, 70.

⁹ *Ibid.*

The first ten measures are then essentially repeated to complete the rondeau section, all in the home key of G major. Another agreeable melody again using syncopated rhythm is heard in the first couplet, and features an early modulation to the key of the dominant. The second couplet divides into three parts. The first four measures continue the off-beat idea, but with a descending melody that surprisingly is in the major sub-median key of E major. Next, a different syncopated idea with a gently rocking tenor line finishes in E minor. The last four bars consist of a descending series of first inversion chords which modulate back to the tonic key of G major halfway through the progression.

2e Rondeau

The melancholy syncopated melody of the second rondeau theme is in the parallel minor mode of G minor. The twelve-measure first couplet is entirely in the dominant minor of D minor, ending with a Picardy third. Two short sequences are featured, the first consisting of arpeggiated diminished seventh chords and their resolutions. The second couplet again divides into three parts: four measures in G minor; four measures in the mediant key of Bb major; eight measures with sudden Italianate traits including a sequential combination of short arpeggios and running sixteenth note scale passages moving through a circle of fifths (from Bb major through F major, C minor, and G minor).

*Sarabande La *** ou les Sentimens*

Sarabandes titled *Les Sentimens* by both Couperin (I) and here by Bernard de Bury are tender, expressive works (Couperin's is marked *Tres tendrement* and de Bury's *Gracieusement*). Typical of a sarabande, de Bury's triple time slow serious piece with balanced phrases and complex harmonies sometimes places an accent on the second beat. The opening section of this binary form movement modulates from the home key of G minor to the minor dominant of D minor, ending with a Picardy third. Shifting immediately at the start of the second half to the mediant key of Bb major, there is a brief modulation to its dominant key of F major, before returning to Bb major. The final seven measures (which also make up the petite reprise) begin in G major and move quickly to the parallel mode of G minor until the end.

Zephir

1er Menuet

Zephir refers to the gentle west wind of spring. The music creates the sense of a soft breeze. *Zephir* consists of two halves of only eight measures each. The soprano line in the first two measures of the second part is then repeated in sequence. The following two measures feature a series of first-inversion chords with a rising step-wise bass, leading then to the final cadence. Typical of a minuet, the movement is harmonically simple, being entirely in G major.

Flore
2e Menuet

Flore, named for the goddess of flowers, and sharing a name with Couperin's *La Flore* (V), is a more dramatic minuet than *Zephir*. Rolled chords and some octaves in the left hand in the first half and more complex harmony in the second strain contribute to this change. The first part is entirely in G minor with two four-bar phrases ending with a Phrygian cadence. The second half is twice as long, further extended another eight measures due to a *petite reprise*. An opening two-measure measure long sequential figure in the second strain in C minor is repeated in Bb major. The home key of G minor is reached via the keys of the minor sub-dominant and the dominant.

La Pythonisse

The Pythoness (or Pythia) was the priestess who presided over the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi, located on Mount Parnassus. It is commonly believed that the vapors rising from the ground induced the priestesses to deliver the oracles in a frenzied state. This intensity is conveyed in the central movement of Suite III conceived on a grand scale of 132 measures in length.

The music in *La Pythonisse* is built from three main themes: full chord under upward scalar sweep and subsequent dramatic V/4/2 chord with octaves in the bass and added dissonance created by suspensions (A); *pièce croisée* idea (B); repeated tonic left hand pedal chords with arpeggiated figure in the right hand (C). The effect of Jean-Philippe Rameau on the young Bernard de Bury can be noted in this movement, as Rameau's rondeau, *Les Cyclopes* (1724 *Pièces de clavecin*) is also a grand show piece which features arpeggiation, scale passages and, most analogous, the *pièce croisée* idea.

Ex. 11a - B. de Bury, *La Pythonisse* (III), mm. 1-4

The musical notation shows the first four measures of the piece. The right hand begins with a trill on G4, followed by an eighth-note scale: A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The left hand starts with a full chord (G2, B2, D3, F3, G3) and then plays a series of chords with octaves in the bass: G2-B2, G2-D3, G2-F3, G2-B2. The piece concludes with a cadence in the final measure.

Ex. 11b - B. de Bury, *La Pithonisse* (III), mm. 5-7

Ex. 11c - J-P. Rameau, *Les Cyclopes* (1724 *Pièces de clavecin*), mm. 15-17 (Bärenreiter revised edition of 2000)

Ex. 11d - B. de Bury, *La Pithonisse* (III), mm. 40-43

The following chart summarizes the entire movement.

Measure #	1	16	25	40	47	55	70	77	85	100	111
Theme	ABB	A trsn	ABB	C	AB	ABB	C	C	ABB	trsn	ABBC
Key	g	g	d	d	Bb	c	c	cir 5	Eb	cir 5	g

Bernard de Bury keeps the *pièces croisée* sections fresh by having different harmonic purposes for them. Alternation of diminished chords with the tonic is most often heard. However, *pièces croisée* are also used to modulate from Bb major to C minor, to move through a circle of fifths, and to alternate between tonic and dominant seventh chords (in Eb major).

Loure

According to Meredith Ellis Little, “The 18th-century loure was a slow, virtuoso French theatre dance of a noble, majestic but languid character, often associated with the pastoral tradition.”¹⁰ She notes further:

The loure was often described as a slow gigue . . . The music is indeed similar to that of a slow gigue set in slow 3/4 or 6/4 time with an upbeat, using phrases of irregular length in a contrapuntal texture, and characteristic rhythmic motifs such as the typical dotted figure of the gigue, syncopation, hemiola . . .¹¹

The loure of Bernard de Bury is completely consistent with this description, save the upbeat. The stately character of this movement is reminiscent of that typically heard in the French overture, which invites over-dotting.

This binary form movement in 6/4 meter is characterized by many low-ranging thick chords. Each time the opening idea is heard, it is immediately imitated in the opposite hand.

Ex. 12 - B. de Bury, *Loure* (III), mm. 1-3



The phrase structure is irregular, the first half containing eleven measures (7 + 4) and the second half an unbalanced twenty-two (5 + 6 + 4 + 7). The harmony throughout the movement is rich with diminished seventh chords. The first half opens in G minor, with a modulation to the minor dominant key of D minor (ending with a Picardy third). The keys to which de Bury travels in the second half, some far afield from the home key of G minor, are: C minor (iv); Bb major (III); Eb major (VI); F major (VII); Bb major (III); F major (VII); G minor (i).

The opening theme is heard one last time to open the second strain. A new dotted arpeggiated theme appears four times. After numerous harmonic excursions, the home key of G minor is reached with dramatic descending chromatic octaves in the left hand, characteristics of Italian music.

¹⁰ Meredith Ellis Little, “Loure,” *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 June 2008), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Ex. 13 - B. de Bury, *Loure* (III), mm. 28-30

La Séduisante

Discussion about this set of movements, especially with reference to François Couperin's *Les Amusemens* (VII), can be found under "Influence of François Couperin on Bernard de Bury". The former also wrote a piece entitled *La Séduisante* (IX). There the seductress is thought to be the easily bored aforementioned Duchesse du Maine. Clark and Connon note that, "In time the Duchess felt she had to have her own fairyland and in December 1699 the Maines bought the *château* of Sceaux . . . Here the bored court flocked to watch the entertainments . . ." ¹² De Bury pictures his temptress in the music as elusive. For example, phrase endings are not always clear-cut. Only about 30% of all the chords heard are in root position, creating a feeling of being unsettled or incomplete. There are comparatively few authentic cadences, providing a sense of restlessness.

While the first rondeau and its *double* are in G major, the other two movements are in G minor, a pattern which has before been observed. The implied flexible rhythm noted from the term *Gracieusement* is important in performing this music, as the repetitive nature of it could otherwise become tiresome. The use of triple meter with each phrase starting in the middle of the measure points to these movements being in the style of a gavotte. The phrase structure of each of the opening rondeau themes is identical, and it is similar between the couplets of the rondeaux. As noted earlier, both rondeau themes are characterized by quarter-note movement in the treble staff, and *stile brisé* broken two-note chord accompaniment.

Quatrième Suite

La Brillante

The fourth suite by Bernard de Bury is for the most part in E major, with only the second movement and the middle section of the final movement being in E minor. Though only consisting of five movements, this suite requires almost as much time to perform as the

¹² Clark and Connon, "Mirror", 13.

previous one with its eleven movements due to the length of the concluding *Chaconne*. In his final collection, de Bury again successfully integrates the newer Italian modes into his own native French style.

La Brillante is certainly a brilliant opening piece. Almost all of the first three sections (rondeau theme and first two couplets) are written in the bright upper range of the harpsichord, both staves requiring treble clef. Right away Italian characteristics such as sequence and brief imitation are heard.

Ex. 14 - B. de Bury, *La Brillante* (IV), mm. 1-5

One further example of sequence is heard in the first couplet. The sound of this movement through the second couplet, however, is decidedly French with its cheerful affect and attractive ornaments. The third couplet, however, introduces running Italianate sixteenth notes, as well as more extensive imitation and sequence.

The harmony is simple throughout, using mostly tonic and dominant chords. The first couplet starts out in the tonic key of E major, before modulating to the key of the dominant. The second couplet divides equally between the sub-median key of C# minor and E major, while the final couplet moves from the key of the tonic to that of the sub-dominant before a return again to the home key.

La Dampiere

The fourth suite continues with an unnamed French allemande. Though characterized by majestic French overture dotted rhythms, the music is seasoned with Italian spices. Several sequences result in frequent modulation. Left hand octaves and chromaticism are also sprinkled in.

This expressive movement moves harmonically in the first half from E minor to the minor dominant of B minor, ending with a Picardy third. The basic movement in the second half is from the mediant key of G major to the tonic, E minor. In between, though, a sequential progression moves the keys up by step from G major (III) to A major (IV) to B major (V). The next two sequential passages move from the keys of E minor (i) to A minor (iv) to D major (V) before again reaching the home key of E minor.

La Michelin

Movements three and four, *La Michelin* and *La Jeunesse* respectively, contrast styles common to Italy (the former) and France (the latter). *La Michelin* is a lively Italian giga marked *Vivement* and features running sixteenth notes and frequent use of sequence, especially in the second half. Characteristics of a giga found in this movement include balanced phrases, melodic sequences, and simple homophonic two-part structure. The harmonic scheme is also straightforward, the first strain modulating half way through from E major to the key of the dominant. A return to the tonic key starts the second half of this binary form movement, before moving to the sub-dominant key of A major and then back to the tonic key.

La Jeunesse

La Jeunesse (“Youth”) is the third minuet in the *Pièces* by Bernard de Bury (the others being *Zephir* and *Flore* in III). This quintessential French dance is marked by tonal clarity, balanced phrases, and much repetition of melodic ideas. The first part of this binary form movement is made up of two eight-bar sections. In the second half, the first eight measures are almost exactly repeated in the final eight bars. Harmonically, this short piece is very simple, moving from E major to the dominant key of B major near the end of the first strain, with a return to the home key of E major for the entire second half. Not only is the key structure uncomplicated, but most of the chords heard are either that of the tonic or the dominant.

Chaconne

Chaconne, the final movement of *Quatrième Suite*, and indeed the entire *Premier livre de pièces de clavecin* by Bernard de Bury, is in E major, with an extended middle section of eighty measures in the parallel mode of E minor. The form is built of groups of four measures which are immediately repeated for a total of eight in each unit, the first of which includes a descending chromatic bass tetrachord.

Ex. 15 - B. de Bury, *Chaconne* (IV), mm. 1-4

No particular harmonic pattern is consistently repeated and no modulations are heard. Recurrence of earlier units is an important part of the overall structure, especially in the final *Majeur* section. Another example of a previous unit being recalled is found in François

Couperin's *L'Amphibie, a movement de passacaille* (XXIV) in which the opening *Noblement* theme returns to close out the sectional piece.

This final movement is decidedly French in character. In a seeming nod to his heritage de Bury composes in a variation form that had been popular in the previous century, and even does so in the archaic French violin G1 clef. Yet even here some Italian traits can be found in the guise of Alberti bass (Theme F) and arpeggiated melody in sequence (theme G). Other examples of sequence are also noted.

During the middle section of this variation form, the indications of *Louré* and *Louré ce Couplet* are found. *Louré* is the name of a bowing technique: "This expressive re-articulation or pulsing of notes joined in a single bowstroke was described by [Francesco] Galeazzi [1758-1819; theorist, violinist and composer] as 'neither separate nor slurred, but almost dragged.'"¹³ The expressive, flowing melodic line should thus imitate this bow stroke. In the repeat of *Louré*, the word is placed under the staff to make clear that the composer is inverting both lines of music, the flowing melody now in the bass. When "*Louré* this couplet" is encountered, slurs group together four and then two eighth notes. The exact same melody is then found in the bass. The ending of this *louré* leads back to the major key.

The following summarizes this lengthy movement by measure number and theme, with selected comments.

Measure	Theme	Comments
1	A	descending chromatic bass tetrachord
8	A	mm. 5-16 essentially repeat mm. 1-8
16	B	RH downward scales; bass moves up a third in three measures
24	C	downward scales in both hands in m. 27 borrowed from B
32	D	bass rises a fourth in two measures
40	E	ends in a half cadence; bass descends a seventh
48	D1	same melody as D at higher pitch; LH figuration from E
56	F	important melody with interval of rising fourth; Alberti bass

¹³ Werner Bachmann, et al. "Bow." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/03753> (accessed August 4, 2011).

risers a fourth over four measures

64	G	arpeggiated melody in sequence; chords in bass
72	F1	Alberti bass now in sixteenth notes
80	G1	same LH chords and harmony from G

Mineur

88	H	bass descends a sixth
96	I	bass reminiscent of A with descending chromatic fourth
104	F2	another idea using rising fourth; same Alberti bass as F

Louré

112	J	bass rises diminished fourth over four measures; sequential melody
120	J1	inversion of J; <i>Louré</i> melody now in bass; decorated bass rises a diminished fourth
128	A2 and F1	sequential RH derives from A; LH repeats F1
136	K	rich vi7 chord in m. 138
144	K1	similar melody now in LH

Louré ce Couplet

152	L	expressive “bowed” melody
160	L1	melody now in LH; ninth chords in mm. 162, 163

Majeur

168	A	<i>Majeur</i> section includes much repetition of earlier themes
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176	M	bass descends a fourth over four measures
184	D	
192	N	each hand moves up sequentially a fourth three times in three measures
200	F	
208	G	
216	F1	
224	G2	same harmony and bass as G1 with new RH figuration
232	G3	G2 figure is inverted
240	E	
248	D1	D1 is repeated through a petite reprise

* * *

With the wave of publications for harpsichord in France in the 1730's, it is understandable that the youthful work of Bernard de Bury would be overlooked today, in particular since his career took him from composing for keyboard to writing for the theater. A more extensive investigation of his *Premier livre de pièces de clavecin* reveals, however, that this collection is of consistently high quality and certainly worthy of performance.¹⁴ Harmonic interest is sustained through a variety of modulations, movement to the minor dominant being almost as recurrent as to the major V, with the major median key next in frequency. Phrygian cadences and Picardy thirds add to the harmonic palette. De Bury skillfully incorporates Italian characteristics such as sequence, arpeggiated figures, passage work, imitation, chromaticism, circle of fifths progressions, and sometimes frequent modulations into his clearly French suites, with their tender melodies, simple musical design, and expressive ornamentation. The Italian and French traits are integrated sometimes by juxtaposing the styles, but more frequently by

¹⁴ An edition has been prepared by the author and is seeking a home with a publisher. A recording of all four suites has also been released by the author and is available at cdbaby.com.

integrating them in a tasteful manner. He thus achieves the musical ideal described by François Couperin when he wrote that, “. . . the bringing together of French and Italian styles must create musical perfection,”¹⁵ (*L’Apothéose composé à la mémoire de l’incomparable Monsieur de Lully*, 1725). Examination of the *Premier livre* provides a more complete picture of an often over-looked contribution to clavecin music after François Couperin. Moreover, it allows Bernard de Bury to take his rightful place in a long line of distinguished French harpsichord composers.

¹⁵ Couperin, *Goûts Réunis*, as quoted in Tunley, ‘*The Perfection of Music*’, ii.