

Four Suites for Harpsichord
by
Bernard de Bury

Première Suite

La Minerve

Sarabande, Les Regrets

Les Grâces Badines

La Tendre Agitation

Le Plaidoyer de Cithère

1er Rondeau

2e Rondeau

Seconde Suite

La Belle Brune

Sarabande La Prude

L'Enfantine

La Cithérée

1er Rondeau

2e Rondeau

Troisième Suite

Les Amusemens

1er Rondeau

2e Rondeau

Sarabande La *** ou les Sentimens

Zephir 1er Menuet

Flore 2e Menuet

La Pithonisse

Loure

La Séduisante

1er Rondeau

2e Rondeau
Double du 1er Rondeau
Double du 2e Rondeau

Quatrième Suite

La Brillante
La Dampiere
La Michelin
La Jeunesse
Chaconne

Première Suite

The first suite of Bernard de Bury's publication has "A" as its home key; all movements are in either A major or A minor. In the character piece *La Minerve* de Bury makes reference to the Roman goddess of wisdom and the arts. *Sarabande, Les Regrets* is followed by a gavotte entitled *Les Grâces Badines*. *La Tendre Agitation* is an inventive character piece in binary form. Two rondeaux, *Le Plaidoyer de Cithère 1er Rondeau* and *2e Rondeau*, close out the first suite. They are among a number of movements in the collection marked "gracefully, not too slowly" (*gracieusement sans lenteur*). *Gracieusement* implies the freedom to change the beat, or to apply rubato, in accordance with the doctrine of affects. The title can be translated as "In Defense of [the island of] Cythera." These movements, along with *La Cithérée* from the second suite (as well as François Couperin's *Les Pélerines* and *Le Carillon de Cithère*), all make reference to this island birthplace of the Roman goddess Venus.

Seconde Suite

The second suite is in C minor (with the exception of the first rondeau of *La Cithérée* in C major). *La Belle Brune* is followed by *Sarabande La Prude*, which is serious in tone and complex harmonically. *L'Enfantine* refers to a "Child-Like" manner, demonstrated by frequent shifts of range. Both the first and second rondeaux of *La Cithérée* are unnamed gavottes. *L'Enfantine* and *La Cithérée* are also marked *Gracieusement*.

Troisième Suite

Six of the eleven movements of this longest suite are rondeaux. They bookend the collection, opening with a paired set and closing with a second (plus variations for each). Centering on “G,” seven of the eleven movements are in the minor mode. Ornaments help provide forward motion to the opening syncopated rondeau theme of *Les Amusemens*. It is not known to what or to whom the “***” in *La *** ou les Sentimens* refers, though the indication of *Gracieusement* adds to the tender affect expressed in the movement. Typical of a sarabande, this triple time, slow, serious piece sometimes places an accent on the second beat. The two movements titled *Zephir* and *Flore* are in the form of the popular French menuet, the latter being more dramatic and harmonically complex. *La Pithonisse* identifies the priestess presiding over the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. It was commonly believed that the vapors rising from the ground induced the priestess to deliver the oracles in a frenzied state, the intensity of which is conveyed in this central movement conceived on a grand scale. Known in the 18th century as a slow, noble, majestic dance, *Loure* is characterized by many low-ranging thick chords. Also marked *Gracieusement*, paired *La Séduisante* rondeaux are followed by paired variations (*Double du 1er Rondeau, Double du 2e Rondeau*).

Quatrième Suite

The final suite focuses on E major, with only the second movement and the middle section of the final movement in E minor. *La Brillante* is certainly a bright opening piece. *La Dampiere* is a dramatic sarabande reminiscent of François Couperin’s *La Ténébreuse* and *La Raphaële*. *La Michelin* is a lively Italian giga, contrasting with *La Jeunesse*, a French menuet. *Chaconne* is built from groups of four measures which are immediately repeated for a total of eight in each unit. At 258 measures, this chaconne is the longest single, continuous French harpsichord movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and is second in performance length (due to longer repeats) only to another chaconne written in 1756 by Jacques Duphly (1715-1789).