

EDITORIAL PROCEDURE

NEW REVISION OR NEW EDITION?

This volume is to all intents and purposes a new edition, as may be judged from the following points.

1) *Louis Couperin's life*: In addition to the present introduction, I have compiled a calendar of the life of Louis Couperin which enables us for the first time to get a fairly full picture of his ten years of professional activity.

2) *Ornaments*: The substantial new table of ornaments, discussed above, has been derived from passages in the unmeasured preludes, making clear once and for all the true extent of Louis Couperin's repertory of ornaments.

3) *Preludes*: The fourteen preludes at the start of the book have all been entirely re-engraved.

4) *New pieces*: Other newly engraved pieces are nos. 124, 127-9 and 131. The first four of these have been discovered since Thurston Dart's 1959 revision; no. 131 was re-engraved because the revised text could not be incorporated within the original engraving. Here the engraver has imitated the style of Grandjean, the great engraver of the 1936 edition, whose beautiful work is preserved in the rest of the book.

5) *Corrections*: For nos. 15-122 and nos. 135-146, the pages of the 1936 edition have been corrected. This process of correction was very extensive indeed; it involved, among other things, the addition of many missing notes, inner parts, and ornaments, some transpositions from one clef to another, many changes of rhythms, etc.

6) *Lay-out*: In addition, by cutting up the original pages, it was possible to produce an entirely different page lay-out and thereby facilitate page-turns. (In the 1936 edition there were 45 inconvenient page-turns in the middle of pieces. In the present volume facsimiles have also occasionally been introduced to help further with the page-turns.) One result of the new lay-out is a variable number of systems per page; this was the method used by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century engravers (for exactly the same practical reason) and I am sure that players will feel it is justified.

7) *Numbering*: Brunold numbered the pieces following their order in the Bauyn manuscript; Bruce Gustafson's authoritative catalogue is also based on Bauyn, adding the newly discovered pieces at the end of his list. My numbering follows Bauyn and Gustafson; as a result, from no. 90 onwards it does not quite agree with Brunold's 1936 edition (or Dart's of 1959) owing to an error made by Brunold. (It does not agree at all with Alan Curtis' arbitrary *Le Pupitre* numbering.)

8) *Table of contents*: A result of this sequence is that pieces in the same tonality are not always next to each other in the edition. To facilitate the composition of suites, the Table of Contents now lists the pieces *by order of tonality*, rather than in a strictly numerical sequence. (The advantages of this will become apparent with use.)

9) *Accidentals*: In view of the frequent ambiguity of accidentals in seventeenth-century keyboard music, I have restored the original method of indicating them found in the manuscripts: *an accidental is normally valid only for the single note which it precedes and for any immediate repetition of the same note*. The implementation of this decision required, on the one hand, the addition of a great number of accidentals which do occur in the sources, and, on the other hand, the removal of a great number of naturals which are not found in any source but were added by Brunold to bring the notation into conformity with modern notation. As a guide and warning for the modern player, unused to this system, I have nevertheless added small editorial accidentals above or below the staff. In this way the genuine ambiguities of the notation are left intact on the staff, yet the player is always presented with an unambiguous solution as well as the freedom to disagree. Furthermore, the unmeasured preludes – in which validity of accidentals must conform to the seventeenth-century practice, owing to the lack of bar lines – are thus no longer out of conformity with the other pieces.

10) *The new text is a composite one*: Brunold and Dart were obliged to rely almost exclusively on the Bauyn text. I have used Bauyn as my primary source, but have accepted all variant readings from Parville that seem correct. There is no case to be made for these two sources representing two 'different traditions' of transmission for the pieces. Bauyn was probably copied directly from Couperin's own manuscripts, and Parville may well have been so copied (but by a rather less informed scribe). Despite the current trend in musicology towards 'source studies' rather than the preparation of artificial composites, Louis Couperin is best served by a composite text, where possible. This is due to various factors, not the least of which is the availability of the Bauyn MS in facsimile; furthermore, Alan Curtis' edition relies heavily on Parville; so that text is likewise available. Neither Bauyn nor Parville is autograph, and both sources contain evident errors which are corrected when the two texts are conflated. In a few cases both texts seem equally corrupt, but in different ways, so as to suggest that the manuscript from which the scribes were copying contained errors which they tried to correct, each in their own way. The documentary and manuscript evidence suggests that at the time of Couperin's death there was indeed a single set of autographs, and these must have contained a precise reading for each piece. I have tried always to see behind the two secondhand sources (Bauyn and Parville) to deduce what might have been in the original which could explain their errors and divergences. All the other manuscripts are of much less importance, and have been only used in cases of doubt. They usually seem to reflect a genuinely different tradition of transmission. I have nevertheless generally accepted all their ornaments (which, in any case are not thick on the ground): no ornament in any source can be said with certainty to stem from Louis Couperin himself,

but it is always instructive to see where contemporary players placed at least some ornaments.

11) *The notational irregularities of the manuscripts are respected*: I have retained many of the apparently 'inaccurate' notations which occur in the sources (as did Brunold and Dart), particularly in two kinds of cases:

a) At the central double bar of binary pieces, the rhythms often need to be adjusted by the player, depending on whether the bar is being played for the first time (leading back to the opening) or the second time (leading on into the second half). What needs to be done is usually so obvious that it is preferable to accept the simple seventeenth-century convention of notating such bars rather than to opt for the rather clumsy, even pedantic, modern method using first- and second-time bars in every case. For example, in no. 19, bar 8 is ostensibly a little strange. The bass G (being dotted) has six beats, whether the player returns to the opening or continues into the second half. The right hand, by contrast, is played as notated (five beats before the double bar) only when returning to the opening; it must be adjusted to four beats when going on, to allow for the three-note upbeat to bar 9. In some cases, in fact, Couperin's notation needs slight adjustments in either case (see nos. 38, 41, at the double bars), but his intentions are never in any doubt, and since players are probably free to vary these little upbeat figures there seems little point in artificially regularizing the notation.

b) In the case of the second kind of 'inaccuracy', sometimes the notation appears incomplete owing to the apparent lack of either a rest or a dot. For example, see no. 41, bars 1 and 2, in the bass. Should these low Ds last five beats instead of four, or is there a rest missing at the end of the bar? It is impossible to say. In bar 3 of the same piece, should the first bass note have a dot, or is there a rest missing? Logically, it would seem that the dot is missing; but Couperin often seems to leave off dots in precisely such places where there is a little scurry of activity in an inner part which is easier to play (and easier to hear) if the bass is not held under it. These three examples from no. 41 are all notated identically in Bauyn and in Parville, as are innumerable other such cases; this makes it hard to dismiss them simply as copyists' errors.

Both these kinds of notational 'laxness' occur primarily in courantes, and in fact neither presents any genuine problem once the player is alerted to them; one is quite free to decide whether a dot or a rest is more appropriate according to circumstances. (In practical terms, the question of exactly when to release the bass Ds in no. 41 depends very much on the instrument, the hall, the resonance, etc.) It is well to remember, also, that many such 'inaccuracies' might not have looked inaccurate to a seventeenth-century eye; the notational value of the dot was not in practice always considered absolute. A dotted semibreve could occasionally be considered equal to five or seven crotchets, depending on the circumstances, and especially where a mathematically precise notation would have been unduly complicated.

12) *Critical Commentary*: A substantial Critical Commentary has been added which players are

recommended to consult. It is designed not merely for the use of scholars, citing the main alternative readings found in the manuscripts, but also with players particularly in mind since it often discusses detailed problems of interpretation. (It also elucidates some of the more surprising new readings given in the music text, explaining them and, where necessary, defending them.)

I have deliberately kept the musical text as free as possible from the apparatus of scholarly display (which can get rather tiresome to look at and whose place, anyway, is usually more correctly in the Critical Commentary). Thus some notes, ties, and accidentals not appearing in any source have been added when I consider them to be essential, but they are *not* distinguished in the musical text by brackets or small print or the other notational conventions for such editorial additions; they are all clearly listed, nevertheless, in the Critical Commentary for each piece, in separate sections entitled '*Notes added*', '*Ties added*', and '*Accidentals added*'. This expedient will serve scholars as fully as the traditional system of square brackets, small notes, and all the dots and dashes which often only encumber the page with cryptic information which – for most musicians – is distracting, of secondary interest, and which they certainly do not need to see in front of them each time they play a piece. In fact, the present method in some ways serves the scholar rather better since all such editorial interference in the text is grouped in a single list, and can thus be assimilated more rapidly.

I have added no editorial ornaments. In the case of pieces preserved in more than one source, I have noted in the Critical Commentary (under '*Sources*') when Bauyn contains no ornaments; players can thus deduce that the ornaments in the text come largely from Parville.

13) *Pieces omitted*: For reasons discussed in the Critical Commentary and elsewhere in this Introduction, I have decided not to include nos. 123 and 130 (two anonymous unmeasured preludes from the Parville manuscript, attributed to Couperin by Alan Curtis and published in his edition); I consider it most unlikely that these two pieces are by Couperin.

Also missing from this edition are nos. 132-4, unique in the Oldham manuscript; Mr Oldham allowed me to record them yet refused permission to print them (but when they eventually become available, they may be incorporated into this edition). Players familiar with Thurston Dart's 1959 book will recall a rather bland little chaconne which he added to his revision (p. 134). I have decided to exclude it since, again, it seems most unlike Couperin's style. It occurs in a manuscript from Dart's private collection (now at the University of London, King's College) where the attribution is simply given as 'Monsr. Couperin'. The piece is probably by Charles Couperin (or possibly by the elder François Couperin) as Dart himself seems to have suspected. Finally, I have also excluded a fragmentary piece found in the manuscript *F-Psg* 2356 fol. 1, ascribed in a later hand to 'Couperin'. (This piece is not included in Gustafson's list of Couperin's works.)