

## *Caractères de la danse*



LES  
DÉLICES

DEBRA NAGY, DIRECTOR

<i>Bourgeois Gentilhomme</i> (1670) Ouverture Dancing Master scene Canaries Chaconne des scaramouches	Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), arr. Nagy
Pantomime from <i>Pigmalion</i> (1748)	Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764), arr. Nagy
Cinquième Suite from <i>Tibicides</i> (1717) Caprice <i>Le Cury</i> Allemande <i>La St. Germain</i> Sicilienne <i>La Reveuse</i> Gavotte en rondeau Chaconne en rondeau <i>La Besson</i>	François Chauvon (ca. 1700-1740)
Deuxième Balet from <i>Balets de Village</i> (1734)	Joseph Bodin de Boismortier (1689-1755)
<i>Caprice</i> from <i>Deuxième Suite</i>	Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747)
Folies d'Espagne	Marin Marais (1656-1728), arr. Les Délices
<i>Caractères de la danse</i> (1715)	Jean-Féry Rebel

*Debra Nagy, oboe*  
*Julie Andrijeski, violin*  
*Rebecca Landell Reed, viola da gamba and cello*  
*Mark Edwards, harpsichord*  
*Elena Mullins, dance*

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## Notes on the Program

Simultaneously signaling power and grace, refinement and discipline, the art of dancing held a singular status at the court of Louis XIV. Louis XIV elevated dancing to the level of high art, created the world's first ballet school (the *Académie Royale de la danse*), and turned a social pastime into a stylized professional pursuit. Les Délices' program explores dance from its social roots in the ballroom to the idiosyncratic, highly expressive music written for the first prima ballerinas on the theater stage.

Dance was a ubiquitous element of the social fabric in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> C France. Not just a leisure activity, skill at dancing signaled one's social status and quality of education. The refined steps and elegant physical deportment required strength, training, and – above all – discipline.

Noblemen could be so skilled at dancing that they were featured in the operas and ballets presented at court in the mid- to late-seventeenth century. The most influential dancer of all was Louis XIV, especially in his role as Apollo, the Sun King. Louis danced in court ballets until his sudden "retirement" in 1670. In the meantime, however, he established the *Académie Royale de Danse* in 1661 to define the principles of dance and train dancers for court ballets and the *Opéra*. In addition, the world's one and only notation for dance originated at the French court and was codified by Raoul-Auger Feuillet.

Jean-Baptiste Lully is best remembered today as an opera composer, but he was initially hired by Louis XIV as a dancing master. He also famously collaborated with the playwright Molière in several *comédie-ballets* – plays interspersed with music, dancing, and singing – including *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670). *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* pokes fun at aspirational social climbers who must hire teachers to learn the "gentlemanly arts of fencing, dancing, music and philosophy." The *ouverture* and Dancing Master scene serve as the perfect introduction to our program, as Molière wrote, "Observe my demonstration: a little essay of the most beautiful dances – and of the most desirable qualities can be variety!"

By the time of *Pigmalion*'s premiere in 1748, Jean-Philippe Rameau was well established as the most important theatrical composer in France after Lully. His *acte de ballet, Pigmalion*, was instantly popular. A one-act opera infused with dance, the story begins with the sculptor Pygmalion standing in ecstasy before the statue he has just finished, lamenting that his passion for her is in vain. But the statue miraculously comes alive. Love appears, who together with the Graces, educate the statue. Our scene begins with the statue's first halting steps and progresses through a suite of dances – ranging from gavottes to minuets, and ending with a rollicking *tambourin* – during which she is taught, little by little, how to move.

Outside the theater, dance forms and their signature rhythms also had a strong influence on French instrumental music, even after some dance types ceased to be danced. The instrumental suite has its origins in the Renaissance, where dances such as the Pavan and

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Galliard were performed in succession. By the mid-seventeenth century in France, the instrumental suite had begun to adapt a set progression of dances: virtually all suites were

introduced with a prelude followed by allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue. Variants might be added to the suite, such as menuets or character pieces or a traditional prelude might be replaced by quirky Caprice (as in Chauvon's *Cinquième Suite*).

Rebel's *Caprice* for violin and basso continuo and Marin Marais' famous *Folies d'Espagne*, on the other hand, are outsized exercises in ingenuity that easily stand on their own. Rebel's *Caprice* is a marathon 9-minute ground bass that's akin to admiring the changing forms and colors of a kaleidoscope. For Les Délices' version of Marais' *Folies*, we set the oboe and viola da gamba in dialogue with alternating variations.

*Les Caractères de la danse* – a fantasia in which music and dance turn on a dime – survives with an extensive performance history. Prévost enjoyed tremendous success with *Caractères*, in which she depicted several romances. As Rebel sped through a succession of courantes, menuets, bourrées, chaconnes, sarabandes, giges, rigaudons, passepieds, gavottes, and musettes, Prévost introduced a wide variety of characters. The courante depicts the blunders of an elderly lover; the gigue inspires a young fool; a deceived lover dances a grave sarabande; a gracious young girl does the menuet; an abandoned lover mourns her lost happiness with a gavotte; and a happy lover renders thanks in the form of a musette. Françoise Prévost—that elegant, sensitive dancer who Pierre Rameau described in *Le maître à danser* (1725) as characterized by “grace, correctness, lightness, and precision” with the rare power to use “all forms at will”—gave life to these brilliant and varied steps. Her performance and choreography for this work was such a success that it became a standard “debut” piece for her prize pupils.

Rebel's music for *Caractères* survives in both a “short” score, and in a full, orchestral five-voice scoring. Les Délices has created a fusion of these two versions for this weekend's performances that brings both richness and color to our “trio” forces. Most French baroque music adapts itself easily to a variety of instrumental combinations, and Joseph Bodin de Boismortier's *Balets de villages* (1734) is no exception. Performing forces could range from a trio (as we perform tonight) to a full orchestra consisting of violins, flutes, recorders, oboes, musettes (a highly-refined bagpipe) and vielle à roue (*hurdy gurdy*) plus bass instruments. The fun, folksy dance tunes of Boismortier's *Balets* are set as a single movement comprising several dance forms that makes the work reminiscent of Rebel's *Caractères*.

-Debra Nagy

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## Biographies

**Les Délices** (pronounced *Lay day-lease*) explores the dramatic potential and emotional resonance of long-forgotten music. Founded by baroque oboist Debra Nagy in 2009, Les Délices has established a reputation for their unique programs that are “thematically concise, richly expressive, and featuring composers few people have heard of.” *The New York Times* added, “Concerts and recordings by Les Délices are journeys of discovery.” The group’s debut CD was named one of the “Top Ten Early Music Discoveries of 2009” (NPR’s *Harmonia*), and their performances have been called “a beguiling experience” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), “astonishing” (*ClevelandClassical.com*), and “first class” (*Early Music America Magazine*).

Les Délices made its New York debut before a sold-out audience at the Frick Collection in May 2010. Recent and upcoming performances for the ensemble include the Da Camera Society (Los Angeles), Houston Early Music Society, Music Before 1800, Boston’s Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, San Francisco Early Music Society, the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, and Columbia University’s Miller Theater. In addition to touring engagements, Les Délices presents its own annual four-concert series in Cleveland art galleries and at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights, OH, where the group is Artist in Residence. Les Délices has been featured on WCPN, WCLV and WKSU in Ohio, WQXR in New York, NPR’s syndicated *Harmonia* and *Sunday Baroque*, and had their debut CD featured as part of the Audio-guide for a special exhibit at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art (Watteau, Music, and Theater). Les Délices fourth CD, *Songs Without Words*, was released on the Navona label in November 2018 to critical acclaim.

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“A baroque oboist of consummate taste and expressivity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) with a musical approach that’s “distinctly sensual...pliant, warm, and sweet,” (*New York Times*), **Debra Nagy, director**, is one of North America’s leading performers on the baroque oboe. In addition to her work with Les Délices, Debra plays principal oboe with Boston’s Handel & Haydn Society, American Bach Soloists, Apollo’s Fire, and many other ensembles. She also indulges her love of late-medieval music as a regular collaborator with Boston’s Blue Heron and Chicago’s Newberry Consort. Inspired by a creative process that brings together research, composition in historical styles, improvisation, and artistic collaboration, highlights of Debra’s recent projects include a critically-acclaimed multimedia production of Machaut’s medieval masterpiece *Remede de Fortune* and a Baroque-Jazz crossover program called *Songs without Words*. She has received many awards for her creative and scholarly pursuits and her discography includes over 30 CDs with repertoire ranging from 1300-1800. Debra is also an unabashed foodie and loves commuting by bike from her home in the heart of Cleveland’s historic Ohio City neighborhood.

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Lauded for her "invigorating verve and imagination" by the Washington Post, **Julie Andrijeski** is among the leading baroque violinists in the U.S. Her unique musical performance style is greatly influenced by her knowledge and skilled performance of baroque dance, and she often combines these two mediums in the classroom, on stage, and at workshops. Ms. Andrijeski is a Senior Instructor in the Music Department at Case Western Reserve University where she teaches early music performance practices and directs the Baroque Dance and Music Ensembles. In addition to her teaching, Ms. Andrijeski regularly appears with the Atlanta Baroque Orchestra (Artistic Director), Quicksilver (Co-Director), the New York State Baroque Orchestra (Concertmaster), Apollo's Fire (Principal Player), and the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, among others. She also teaches and performs at the Oberlin Conservatory's Baroque Performance Institute, Madison Early Music Festival, and the Vancouver Early Music Festival.

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**Elena Mullins**, dancer, has wide-ranging interests in the field of early music. She has sung with The Newberry Consort, Apollo's Fire, Three Notch'd Road, Generation Harmonique, and Quire Cleveland, and is the director of Early Music Singers at Case Western Reserve University. Elena takes a scholarly interest in the performance practices of early repertoires, reaching back as far as the twelfth century. In 2013 Elena co-founded Alkemie, an ensemble specializing in medieval music for voices and instruments, which was in residence at Fairmont State University in Fairmont, WV in 2016-17. She holds a DMA in Historical Performance Practice from CWRU and a BA in Musical Arts from the Eastman School of Music. Elena is an avid teacher of baroque dance, piano, and voice. In her spare time she loves to cook with friends and boulder at the neighborhood climbing gym.

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*Cellist and gambist* **Rebecca Landell Reed's** "luminous" (Cleveland.com) and "notable" (*The New York Times*) sound elicits a range of expression "from classically evocative to Hitchcock horrifying" (*Washingtonian*). Her solo appearances include performances with Apollo's Fire, Atlanta Baroque Orchestra, Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Three Notch'd Road, and Batzdorfer Hofkapelle. Rebecca pursues a diverse professional career, such as performing and acting in Studio Theatre's *An Iliad*, working with composer Eric Shimelonis on NPR children's show *Circle Round*, and developing educational programs with the Crumhorn Collective. She is currently based in Oberlin, Ohio, where she teaches cello and viola da gamba.

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First prize winner in the 2012 Musica Antiqua Bruges International Harpsichord Competition, Canadian harpsichordist and organist **Mark Edwards** is recognized for his captivating performances, bringing the listener "to new and unpredictable regions, using all of the resources of his instrument, [...] of his virtuosity, and of his imagination" (*La Libre Belgique*). An active chamber musician, he is the artistic director of Poiesis, collaborates regularly with Les Boréades de Montréal, and has performed with Il Pomo d'Oro, Pallade Musica, and Flûtes Alors!. He has also given solo recitals at the Utrecht Early Music Festival and Brussels' Bozar and performed concertos with a number of award-winning ensembles, including Il Gardellino (Belgium), Neobarock (Germany), and Ensemble Caprice (Canada). He is currently a PhD student at Leiden University and the Orpheus Instituut, Ghent, where his research examines the intersection of memory, improvisation, and the musical work in seventeenth-century France. Since 2016 he has been Assistant Professor of Harpsichord at Oberlin Conservatory.