

A Manuscript, A Mystery, and Making Use of Local Archives

Alison C. DeSimone

On the third floor of the Miller-Nichols Library at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the LaBudde Special Collections houses a small manuscript. It measures 10.25" by 7.5"; peeling back the cover page reveals a learned, clear hand of a scribe, whose name is inked on an inside page: Sophie Benoist. In fact, the page shows her name written twice, in quick succession, as if practicing her hand (see figure 1). Her first attempt is a little messy, with unclear capital letters and without the embellished slant of the more elegant second attempt next to it. These two signatures offer a little insight into the contents of the commonplace book itself, and what little we know about the young lady who owned this book. Like most personal manuscripts of the time, this book was likely for Benoist's keyboard practice and general musical appreciation.

Outwardly, this is just another commonplace book owned by a young lady who was taking music lessons in the late eighteenth century. But commonplace books offer a great deal of historical insight into domestic musical culture in a particular time and place. More so than operas and concerts, which were expensive, one-off events, commonplace books preserve evidence of what music consumers were actually playing and listening to continually in a given historical moment. Sophie Benoist's book captures a moment in her time.

In order to identify the contents of her commonplace book, which are often untitled or given only the name of a composer, I used the RISM Advanced Search tool that allows researchers to search for melodic incipits. This search was mostly successful, although there are still a number of unidentified pieces. I have provided a table of the full contents of the manuscript at the end of this essay, but for the moment I shall introduce some of the more interesting contents discovered during the search process.

The first four pieces of the manuscript are written in what looks to be older ink, and the hand looks more formal and careful. Three

of the four pieces are also not identifiable in RISM, suggesting that perhaps they are keyboard exercises given to Benoist by her teacher—either written in her careful, younger hand or by her instructor. All four of these pieces are short and simple to play: they include a musette (f. 1r), two menuets (both on f. 1v), and an allemande (f. 2r). One of the menuets matches, melodically, an anonymous work found in other commonplace music books dating from the late eighteenth century in a variety of different keys: "Je con-

nois-tu ma chère Eléonore." In Benoist's version the melody is tuneful and simple; the right hand plays in thirds while the left hand maintains a broken octave pattern throughout. As a practice piece, perhaps Sophie was learning proper hand placement and melody/accompaniment technique.

On f. 2v, the ink suddenly changes to a darker, more defined color, suggesting perhaps the passage of time between the first few folios of the manuscript. The hand changes, as well; it becomes a little sloppier, as if the calligrapher wrote more swiftly—it may be that an older Sophie Benoist began adding again to her commonplace book. The first piece included after this ink change is "Ah vous-dirai je maman"—but it is not Mozart's familiar version. RISM shows that this short, binary form, 8-measure "Air" (as it is labeled) matches a number of different manuscript versions of the same tune, with some slight changes. It appears most closely related to a variation set held in Brussels, attributed to Joseph Antoine Lorenziti (but possibly by his brother Bernardo).

From this point on, most of the music in the manuscript can be matched to a pre-existing composition; in part, this is because Benoist began to notate, helpfully, the names of composers. There are many pieces by André Grétry, often keyboard arrangements of dances and arias from his operas; Nicolas Dezède (c. 1740–1792) is also well-represented, including airs from his operas *Julie* (1772) and *Les trois fermiers* (1777), among others. Mozart does make an appearance on f. 5v; the piece is titled "Menuet de Fischer" and matches the theme and first variation (with some simplifications) of Mozart's "12 Variations on a Menuet by Mr. Fischer" K. 179.

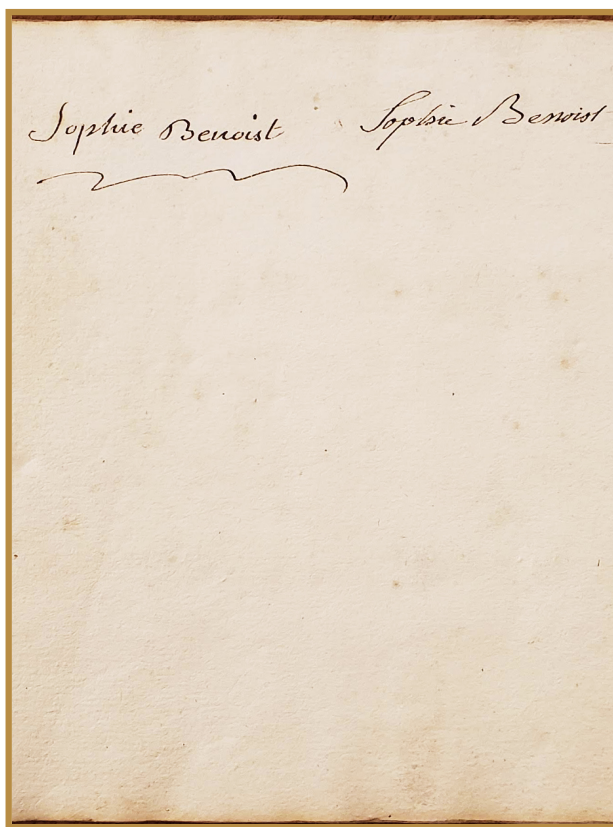


Figure 1: Benoist, Sophie. Commonplace Manuscript. Music Z Coll. M 20.M8 B4 1800. LaBudde Special Collections, University of Missouri-Kansas City. 2022.

From the Editor

Michael Vincent

The SECM Newsletter is published twice yearly, in October and April. Submissions in the following categories are encouraged:

- News of recent accomplishments from members of the society (publications, presentations, awards, performances, promotions, etc.);
- Reviews of performances of 18th-century music;
- Reviews of books, editions, or recordings of 18th-century music;
- Conference reports;
- Dissertations in progress on 18th-century music;
- Upcoming conferences and meetings;
- Calls for papers and manuscripts;
- Research reports and research resources;
- Grant opportunities.

Contributions should be submitted as an attachment to an e-mail message (preferably in Microsoft Word format) to the SECM Newsletter editor (michaelvincent@ufl.edu). Submissions must be received by August 1 for the October issue and by February 1 for the April issue. Claims for missing issues of the Newsletter must be requested within six months of publication. Annotated discographies (in the format given in the inaugural issue, October 2002) will also be accepted and will be posted on the SECM web site.

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President's Message

Drew Edward Davies

As Spring is arriving, I am already thinking ahead to our SECM conference at the University of North Texas in Denton, which will be held on October 6–8, 2023.

Although North Texas might preserve little tangible evidence of the eighteenth century, the area, which formed a borderland in multiple ways, does retain eighteenth-century history. People belonging to Wichita and Caddo Confederation groups, among others, hunted, farmed, and traded across the region, while both Spain and France drew theoretical imperial limits nearby at the Red River. Some European explorers, such as Althanase de Mézières, who described indigenous settlements near what is today Fort Worth, passed through. The religious orders did not establish mission communities in North Texas as in other parts of the province, and settler colonialism at any scale would not arrive until the nineteenth century. Few people would have heard of the 1762 Treaty of Fontainebleau, which quietly ceded Louisiana to Spain. It was a region between sovereign entities with established musical traditions.

As is increasingly well known, one of the few musicians of New World birth to have found success in a European sovereign entity during the eighteenth century was Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. I am delighted that this issue of the Newsletter includes an article about this composer, whose reappraisal over the past few years has produced a wealth of performances, recordings, and knowledge. Having seen Haymarket Opera's entertaining performance of his *L'Amant anonyme*, I find it fascinating to ponder how this figure can reorient us to multiple genres of eighteenth-century music from comic opera to the symphonie concertante, among others.

See you in Denton!



Spring 2023 Member News

Rachel Bani will complete her dissertation, "Land Reform and Protest in the Scottish Gaelic Songs of the Crofters' War," from Florida State University in spring 2023.

Bertil van Boer has published the three recently discovered viola concertos by Joseph Martin Kraus with Artaria Editions. He continues to write recording reviews for *Fanfare* magazine, focusing on the 17th and 18th centuries.

Stewart Carter was honored with life membership in the Society for Seventeenth-Century Music at the Society's 2022 annual conference at the University of Delaware in April. The award honors lifetime service to the Society and to the field. He was honored with the Curt Sachs Award from the American Musical Instrument Society at the Society's 2022 annual conference in Calgary. The award honors lifetime service to the field of organology.

Drew Edward Davies, together with Latin American colleagues Lucero Enriquez and Analía Chernavsky, presented the keynote lecture at the Third International RISM Conference "Musical Sources: Past and Future" at the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz in October 2022. In December, Orchid Classics released the album *El cielo y sus estrellas: Galant Cathedral Music from New Spain*, which features thir-

teen of Davies's editions of music by Ignacio Jerusalem and others performed by the Camerata Antonio Soler and Javier Jose Mendoza.

Martin Eybl (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna) has published a new book on music collectors in Eighteenth-century Vienna: *Sammler*innen: Musikalische Öffentlichkeit und ständische Identität, Wien 1740–1810* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022). The book explores the consumers on a newly and rapidly developed market of scores, instruments, and music education. The orchestra of the emperor's widow Elisabeth Christine and their repertoire of sacred music; the numerous opera scores of Archduchess Elisabeth; the communication networks some monks used to acquire chamber music; the expertise of middle class collectors in the field of ancient music; and the high number of middle class women whose collections did not survive, although they impressed their domestic contemporaries and travelers with their virtuosic play at the piano: they all display a rich and various picture of music in the Habsburg capital and its orbit. In this way, collectors accompany the reader into a newly established forum of public discourse about music and into a field of competition between first and second society, aristocracy and middle class, a field characterized, as the case may be, by exclusion and cooperation between the social ranks. For more information see: <https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-6267-2/sammler-innen/>

Paul G. Feller-Simmons has begun working at the University of Illinois at Chicago as a Lecturer. He also received the Honorable Mention for the Otto Mayer Serra Award for an article on 18th-century Italianate music at the Cathedral of Santiago, Chile (<https://cilam.ucr.edu/otto-mayer-serra-award/>). Together with Cesar Favila, they received the AMS Noah Greenberg Award for a concert about colonial conventual music from New Spain that includes some 18th-century pieces. Finally, he and Cesar Favila are organizing the concert linked to the Noah Greenberg for the Bloomington Early Music Festival that will take place between May 21–28.

Jane Schatkin Hettrick has published the article “Imitate the Lutherans: Catholic Solutions to Liturgical Problems in Late Eighteenth-Century Vienna” in *Athens and Wittenberg: Poetry, Philosophy, and Luther's Legacy* (Brill, 2023), 177–190. She recently premiered with her church choir two of her own editions, both first editions, published by GIA, series *Ars Antiqua Choralis*: Franz Schneider, “Pastorella, Parvulus filius,” Offertory for Christmas; and Florian Leopold Gassmann, “Reges de Saba,” motet for Epiphany. She received grant support for both projects: Schneider by the District of Columbia American Guild of Organists Foundation, and Gassmann by the Ruth and Clarence Mader Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Guido Olivieri is the recipient of a NEH Collaborative Research Grant for the project “Rethinking Eighteenth-Century Italian Culture and Its Transnational Connections” in collaboration with CSULB, to conduct research on Italian engagement with the literary, cultural, and intellectual discourses of the 18th century. In 2022 he published the article “Forgotten Virtuosi: Violin Tradition in 17th- and 18th-Century Naples,” in *La tradizione violinistica italiana del Settecento*, ed. Simone Laghi (UtOrpheus, 2022): 139–54, and contributed two new entries (“Giovanni Antonio Piani” and “Angelo Ragazzi”) to the *Dizionario biografico*

degli italiani (Treccani, 2022). Together with Nathan Reese he presented the paper “Reconstructing Early Music Networks through Financial and Religious Archival Sources,” during the session on Archival Research in the 21st Century: Skills and Resources, organized by the AMS Skills and Resources for Early Musics Study Group at the 2022 AMS meeting in New Orleans, LA.

Cameron Steuart completed his PhD dissertation “Carlo Goldoni and the Singers of the *Dramma Giocoso per Musica*” from the University of Georgia in 2023. The dissertation locates the origins of the operatic genre, the *dramma giocoso*, and the new role type contained within it, the role *di mezzo carattere*, in Goldoni's professional interaction with a number of his most important singers.

W. Dean Sutcliffe's article “What is Haydn Doing in a John Field Nocturne?” will be published later this year in *Music Analysis*. He discusses and analyses the quotation of the theme of the finale of Haydn's quartet Op. 76, no. 6 in a late Field nocturne—not just an unlikely place to find such a quotation, but an unlikely piece of Haydn to quote, coming as it does from a movement whose nervous rhythmic manipulations seem a long way from the world of earlier nineteenth-century solo pianism.



Announcement: Women, Opera and the Public Stage in Eighteenth-Century Venice

The multi-year, interdisciplinary, collaborative project “Women, Opera and the Public Stage in Eighteenth-Century Venice” (WoVen) brings together a research team dedicated to reimagining the links between women and European operatic culture in the eighteenth century. The project was detailed in the fall 2021 issue of the SECM Newsletter, and has advanced since that time. The theme of the first international colloquium in Venice was “Concepts, Sources and Methodologies,” and featured presentations from an international group of distinguished scholars. A full conference report is available in *Eighteenth-Century Music* 20, no. 1 (2023): 116–119.



The Chevalier in Chicago: Producing Joseph Bologne's opera *L'Amant Anonyme*

Craig Trompeter

Artistic Director, Haymarket Opera Company

Since 2011 Chicago's Haymarket Opera Company has been showcasing little-known operas and oratorios from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, using historically-inspired staging conventions and period instruments. In June of last year we presented a lavish full-scale production of Joseph Bologne's only extant opera, *L'Amant Anonyme*, in DePaul University's intimate jewel box theater, Jarvis Opera Hall.

Our production presented Bologne's charming and unique opera in its entirety, including the unabridged dialogues and complete dance music. Soprano Nicole Cabell, a well-known Mozart interpreter, led the cast of ten vocalists and dancers, with tenor Geoffrey Agpalo as the title character. The Haymarket Opera Orchestra of late-eighteenth-century strings, woodwinds, and brass was in



the pit, and I had the great pleasure of conducting the full ensemble.

Bologne's spirited creation was directed and choreographed by early dance and gesture specialist Sarah Edgar. Set designer Wendy Waszut-Barrett mixed her own dry pigment paints to evoke an idyllic French countryside, and the set was bathed in soft candle-like light by designer Brian Schneider. Elegant period costumes by Stephanie Cluggish and elaborate eighteenth-century wigs by Megan Pirtle gave the final touch.

Joseph Bologne, also known as the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, was born on Christmas day, 1745, in Guadeloupe to an African mother, Nanon, who was enslaved on his French father's plantation. His white father, Georges, brought him to France as a young boy in order to secure for him a brighter future. He developed into a superb violinist, becoming by age 26 the leader of François-Joseph Gossec's orchestra, *Le Concert des Amateurs*.

Before long he achieved celebrity status as a virtuoso violinist, conductor, and composer and also a superb fencer and sought-after socialite. He commissioned Haydn's Paris Symphonies and led their premieres in 1786 with his own virtuoso orchestra, *Le Concert de la Loge Olympique*. Like Haydn, he was a prolific composer of instrumental music: violin concerti, symphonies, and symphonies-concertantes.

As a bi-racial man, he faced adverse forces at almost every turn. When he was beginning to make a name as an opera composer, a small group of racist artists at the *Académie Royale de Musique*, later known as the *Paris Opéra*, managed to quash what might have been a brilliant tenure there as director. Even his posthumous reputation has been impacted. While some of his many instrumental compositions have appeared on concert programs and on recordings dating back as far as the late 1950s, his contribution as an operatic composer has been largely sidelined.

Despite this major setback, he composed and presented six operas. Only *L'Amant Anonyme* and an aria from *Ernestine* have come down to us. The strength and variety of Bologne's musical and dramatic expression in these operatic examples hint at what would have proven to be a substantial contribution to the canon of eighteenth-century theatrical music. That only one of his operas survives complete is a great loss, indeed.

The text of *L'Amant Anonyme* was based on a play by Felicité Ducrest, Comtesse de Genlis, and was adapted as an opera libretto by François Guillome Desfontaines for the intimate private theater

of Madame de Montesson, mistress to the Duke of Orléans. The comic plot centers on two main characters. The anonymous lover, Valcour, is deeply in love with Léontine, a young widow and owner of a large country estate. Although they are close friends, Valcour knows that Léontine's previous unhappy marriage has hardened her heart to love. He despairs of ever experiencing the joy of loving her openly and can only express his love covertly by sending anonymous notes and gifts through his friend Ophémon, who is also Léontine's tutor.

The action takes place on the wedding day of two villagers, Jeannette and Colin, who are dear to Léontine. Valcour decides to make a bold move and delivers through Ophémon another anonymous note, along with a bouquet. Léontine is noticeably shaken by the letter, which she shares with her confidant Dorothée (a speaking role which may have been performed by Madame de Montesson herself).

Dorothée insists that Valcour should read it aloud. He feigns surprise at the temerity of its contents. In the letter the anonymous one gives Léontine an ultimatum: She is to carry the bouquet to the village wedding in order to signify her tolerance for his affections; if she chooses not carry it, he will understand that she wishes him to leave the village—and her—forever. In the end, Valcour reveals himself as the anonymous lover and he and Léontine are married alongside Jeannette and Colin.

There is only one surviving musical source of *L'Amant*: a manuscript copy held in the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*. The score is difficult to read and is full of errors and omissions. We set about making our own performing edition, which was engraved by Greg Sewell. Deciphering the French text was challenging, too, as it was written in a sort of shorthand with little punctuation and abbreviated word endings. Edward Wheatley and Mary Mackay created a new English language translation. During staging preparations we were very fortunate to have on hand two native French speakers, soprano Nathalie Colas, who also took the speaking role of Dorothée, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French literature and theater professor Sylvie Romanowski of Northwestern University. Both made invaluable dramaturgical and linguistic sense of the sometimes arcane text.

One other complication is that the opera contains a substantial amount of dance music without specific indications for action. Choreographer Sarah Edgar created original narrative dances, employing members of the Haymarket Opera Ballet in amusing subplots.

Bologne's individual musical voice is fresh and inventive. For Léontine he provided several arias of emotional depth beyond what the libretto seems to suggest, and the act one finale anticipates by ten years the high-energy closers in Mozart's greatest operas. It was thrilling for our company and our audiences to experience it live in an historically-inspired period production.

Haymarket also partnered with Chicago's premiere recording company, Cedille Records, to produce the first recording of this important work. This recording launched the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Fund for Vocal Recordings that honors the late Justice's love of vocal music, especially opera. The recording was released in February, 2023, during Black History Month. The production and recording were generously funded by Greg O'Leary and Patricia Kenney.

Joseph Bologne's musical legacy holds a trove of treasures. We at Haymarket are delighted to make his only opera available to lovers of eighteenth-century music everywhere.

Musicians of the Old Post Road Presents “Baroque Diva”

For over three decades, Musicians of the Old Post Road have delighted in their mission of uncovering, exploring, and performing the works of historically overlooked communities and individuals. Based in the Greater Boston area, the ensemble specializes in the period instrument performance of dynamic and diverse music from the Baroque to early Romantic eras, focusing on works that have been lost to audiences for centuries.

In March, the group returned for the second half of its 34th season with more live performances for both in-person and online audiences. On March 11 and 12, the ensemble paid homage to one of the original superstar prima donnas, Faustina Bordoni. Born to an aristocratic family in Venice on March 30, 1697, she studied with Michelangelo Gasparini under the patronage of brother composers Alessandro and Benedetto Marcello. She made her operatic debut in Venice in 1716 in Carlo Francesco Pollaro's *Ariodante*, and continued singing in her home city for 10 more years, performing in operas by Albinoni, the Gasparini brothers, Giacomelli, Leonardo Leo, Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, the Pollaros (father and son), and Leonardo Vinci, among others.

It was during this time in Venice she met and sang with soprano Francesca Cuzzoni, who would later become her greatest rival. “Faustina,” as she was commonly known (apparently even in the eighteenth century, divas knew about the power of the mononym!), quickly gained celebrity status throughout Italy, Germany, and Austria. Her impressive vocal range and breath control, combined with her acting skills and beauty, made her one of the most sought-after performers in Europe; by 1722 her fame in her home country was such that a medal was created in her honor in Naples. After seeing her perform at the Vienna Court Opera in 1724, Handel was immediately captivated; he persuaded her to join his opera company, the Royal Academy of Music, and in 1726 she made the move to London. The company also included the star castrato Senesino, and, of course, Faustina's rival, Francesca Cuzzoni.

Faustina was already a superstar by the time she moved to London, and her debut as Rossane in *Alessandro* was so successful, over the next two years Handel wrote four more roles for her: Alceste in *Admeto*, Pulcheria in *Riccardo Primo*, Emira in *Siroe*, and Elisa in *Tolomeo*. Journalists and musicians alike raved about her voice and her performances; composer and music historian Charles Burney commented on her perfect pitch and musical intelligence, and Johann Quantz wrote that she was “born for singing and for acting.”

As her fame and celebrity grew during these years, so did her rivalry with Cuzzoni. Their supporters displayed the passion and animosity seen in modern-day sports fans, as they booed and catcalled each other's rivals on the stage, often to the point where the singers could not even perform over the noise. Their rivalry reached a head at an infamous performance of Bononcini's *As-tianatte* on June 6, 1727 in the King's Theatre, when a riot broke out in the audience between the opposing supporters. Some sensationalized accounts state that the two singers engaged in a physical altercation on stage, coming to blows and pulling at each other's hair. Pamphleteer John Arbuthnot wrote of the “most horrid and bloody battle between Madam Faustina and Madam Cuzzoni,” but most likely the scuffle was primarily between the ladies' fans in the audience, as the singers continued to dutifully work together for another year. In the end, it was not the rivalry that ended their relationship, but the dire financial state of the

Royal Academy, forcing the directors to dissolve the company in 1728.

Faustina returned to Italy and continued to enjoy success in her home country, without the distraction of her erstwhile rival. She also found love in Venice, with German composer Johann Adolf Hasse, whom she married in 1730. The following year the couple moved to the court of Augustus the Strong at Dresden, where Hasse would serve as maestro di cappella for over 30 years. Faustina was also engaged by the court (notably, her salary was twice her husband's), singing in at least fifteen of Hasse's operas; described by the librettist Metastasio in 1744 as “truly an exquisite couple,” Faustina and Hasse's collaborations were always successful. Faustina continued to travel to Italy during this time, performing often in Naples, Venice, and Parma, until she retired from the stage in 1751. Fascinatingly, Faustina kept her salary and title of virtuosa da camera to the Elector until the death of Augustus' successor, Frederick Augustus II in 1763. The couple moved to Vienna for a few years (during which Faustina was visited by Mozart in 1769), and eventually retired to Venice in 1773. She remained active through her twilight years; when visited by Charles Burney in 1772, he observed her to be “a short, brown, sensible, and lively old woman . . . with good remains . . . of that beauty for which she was so much celebrated in her youth.” Her final years were happy and prosperous, and Faustina died on November 4, 1781. She was survived by Hasse, who lived another two years, and two daughters, who were of course both trained singers, and a son.

Despite her incredible life and career, she is not widely known today outside of niche music circles, and much of her husband's work is rarely performed, even though he was one of the leading composers of opera seria of his time. In their quest to shine light on overlooked musicians and works, Musicians of the Old Post Road bring the musical presence of Faustina to life in its March concert, “Baroque Diva: A Tribute to Faustina Bordoni.” The program features works that were inspired by her immense talent, written specifically with her skill in mind, as well as instrumental selections by composers within her musical circles.

Grammy-nominated Teresa Wakim was featured as the guest vocalist, performing outstanding and virtuosic arias by Pietro Torri (“Senti ti voglio ancor trafiggere quel cor”) and Jan Dismas Zelenka (“La sua disperazione”). The program also included two arias by Handel written for Faustina from his opera *Admeto* (“Luce Cara” and “Io son qual Fenice”). And of course, a tribute to Faustina would not be complete without a work by her husband J.A. Hasse, so the ensemble performed what was likely a regional modern-day premiere of his cantata “Pallido il volto.” Instrumental selections included the Flute Concerto in A Minor by Francesco Gasparini (which the ensemble originally revived in 2011), overtures by Handel and Hasse, and a trio sonata by Nicolo Porpora, who penned many arias with Faustina as his muse.

Ms. Wakim was joined by flutist Suzanne Stumpf, violinists Sarah Darling and Jesse Irons, violist Marcia Cassidy, cellist Daniel Ryan, and harpsichordist Sylvia Berry, all of whom will play on period instruments. The first performance was on Saturday, March 11th, 2023, at First Parish in Wayland, MA, and the second will be the following day at 4 pm EST at the Old South Church in Boston, MA. In order to reach a wider audience, as well as patrons who might still be wary of the risks of Covid, the Saturday concert was live-streamed at www.oldpostroad.org. The Wayland concert was co-presented with the Wayland Museum & Historical Society. The Boston concert was supported in part by a grant by the Boston

Cultural Council. Programming was supported in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, an agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The final concerts of the season for Musicians of the Old Post Road promise to be equally exciting; on April 29th and 30th, 2023, “Into the Light: Unearthed Treasures by Christoph Graupner” will celebrate the unveiling of lost works by Graupner, an unsung German composer who was as legendary in his day as his contemporaries Bach and Telemann. Unseen for centuries, his compositions are gradually coming to light. The program will include some of his concertos, suites, and sonatas along with works by his Darmstadt court colleague Count Ernst-Louis, his talented student Johann Fasch, and his good friend Telemann.

For more information, visit <https://oldpostroad.org>, email musicians@oldpostroad.org, or call 781-466-6694.



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Gluck's music appears with some regularity towards the middle and end of the manuscript, as pieces get subsequently more difficult. Sophie Benoist included excerpts from *La Rencontre imprévue* (1764), *Orphée et Eurydice* (1774), *Armide* (1777), and *Alceste* (1767/1776).

Perhaps the most difficult piece in the manuscript comes in the middle; Benoist titled it “Air de Roland” (ff. 9r–10r), and it appears in two other commonplace collections found in Torino. This matches a gavotte from Niccolò Piccinni's *Roland* (1778), the first French opera by the composer. Benoist has made some changes from the keyboard transcription of the original; she removes some of the right hand octave doubling, and does not include any tied notes in the left hand, which she changes at points to repeated notes or chords. It is possible this is because she was playing on a harpsichord, rather than a fortepiano. Nevertheless, the gavotte showcases a new level of virtuosity for the manuscript, including continued sixteenth-note passages for both hands, and some high passagework for the right hand that soars above the staff (at one point she even adds “plus haut,” as if reminding herself of the difficulty). The grand finale, starting on f. 10r, differs from Piccinni's version, mimicking his style but wrapping up the gavotte in fewer measures. The changes here indicate that Benoist herself (or perhaps her teacher) made necessary adjustments to a difficult and very long piece, making it fit a different instrument and shortening and simplifying where necessary.

The final pages of the manuscript differ from the earlier works. Benoist began to notate lyrics for some of the pieces, showing that perhaps she was learning how to sing and accompanying herself on

the keyboard. The airs included are simple and strophic; one titled “Entendre ma vois dans Balise et Babet” (by Dezède) includes a second stanza with some measures scratched out due to errors—a small hint that this was a working book, although most of it is cleanly copied.

One final tantalizing piece appears towards the end of the manuscript (see figure 2). In C major and 2/2 time, it is a simpler piece than some of those that precede it. It is also more sloppily copied out, with ink splotches and some scratches. Unlike some of the other works, it also includes dynamic marks: a “F” at one point, and “Piano” at another—did Benoist acquire a new fortepiano? After the final bar, Benoist has written: “Fin / Le 12 Juillet / 1800”—and yet this is not the final piece in the manuscript, and it remains unidentifiable in RISM. Could it be an original composition? Or was she simply marking the date at which she thought she was done adding to her manuscript?

Now that you've read about the manuscript, let us turn to the mystery: who was Sophie Benoist? As I dug into her background and history, I had to rephrase the question: which Sophie Benoist? Unsurprisingly, the French National Archives turned up a number of different possibilities. I searched for a young woman who was between the ages of 10–25 around 1800 and came up with three different women. The first is a Sophie Benoist, daughter of Pierre Benoist and Catherine Marcou who married a Pierre-Augustin Jousse on October 20, 1808 in Paris; she was twenty-two on her wedding day. I have not yet been able to trace her path earlier or later, but given the date on the manuscript—1800—she seems a likely candidate to have owned the commonplace book. Yet birth records show two other potential Sophies: one born on 27 May in 1787 in Chateauroux, France, and another baptized in 1786 in St.-François-du-Lac, Quebec. These other Sophies would have been around thirteen or fourteen in 1800, but I am less certain of their connections to the manuscript because of where they were born. Chateauroux is a provincial town in central France, and St.-François-du-Lac is even more rural, located about halfway between Montreal and Trois Rivières. The manuscript's contents support that Sophie Benoist probably lived in France, and very likely near the French capital—the pieces included indicate a knowledge of contemporary, in vogue composers and operas, and also show that Benoist likely had access to printed keyboard reductions of opera excerpts, as well as other types of musical prints. Yet I still cannot definitively place her as Mrs. Sophie Jousse, née Benoist.

The provenance of the manuscript—how it got from its origins in France (?) to Kansas City, Missouri—does not clear up the story. The manuscript includes a sticker on the inside cover, showing that it was a gift to the University of Missouri Special Collections from Dr. James W. Evans, a former professor of organ in the Conservatory of Music at UMKC. Evans seems to have traveled widely, and likely purchased the manuscript during his travels, donating it to UMKC upon his retirement. Unfortunately, Evans passed away in 2001 and I have not been able to locate his wife, who has likely also passed.

In many ways, though, it does not matter. What I have learned from this experience, and what I think we should all value, is the importance of what is hiding in our local archives. It is one thing to travel to the British Library, spending thousands of dollars on a research trip, being surrounded by some of the most important manuscripts and printed books of Western history. But there is something just as appealing in driving ten minutes to sit in a small,

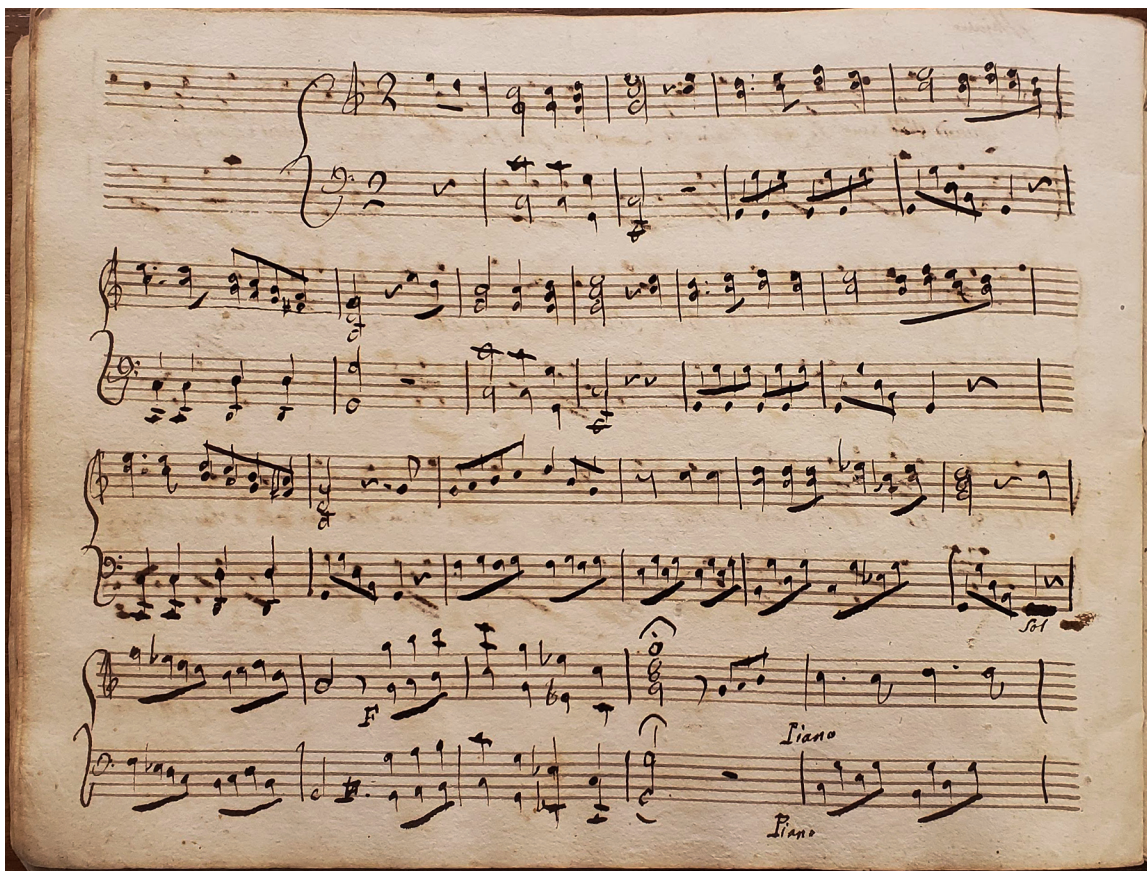


Figure 2: Benoist, Sophie. *Commonplace Manuscript*. Music Z Coll. M 20.M8 B4 1800. LaBudde Special Collections, University of Missouri-Kansas City. 2022.

empty reading room in my university's library, looking at one of the only eighteenth-century items they have in their collection. When Sophie Benoist was collecting music in her commonplace book in 1800, Kansas City was just a small settlement on a big river, populated by a small handful of French fur traders and a larger population of Indigenous people. Lewis and Clark were still four years away from their fateful stop before embarking on their quest for the West coast. The Mormons had not yet heard the call of Zion in the Missouri River Valley. I'm sure Sophie Benoist would have been in awe of her personal manuscript now sitting in a library in the bustling metropolis of Kansas City, Missouri. Although still a mystery in many ways, she and UMKC are connected across time through her little music book.

Appendix: Contents of Sophie Benoist's Manuscript

Music Z Coll. M 20.M8 B4 1800

Musette (f. 1r)

2/4 time, C major. Same tune, transposed, found in Basel (CH-Bu Handschriften, kr II 182).

Menuet (f. 1v)

3/4 time, C major. Not identifiable.

Menuet (f. 1v)

3/4 time, G major. Matches "Le connais-tu ma chère Eléonore" (F-Pn RES VMD MS-48).

Allemande (f. 2r)

2/4, D major. Not identifiable.

Air (f. 2v)

2/4, A major. "Ah, vous-dirai je maman). Matches Joseph (or Bernardo) Lorenziti's variation set held at B-Bc 34935. Similar variations by Pleyel (in G major, D-Bsa SA 4622) and Giovanni Giuliani (in E-flat major, IPAc Borb.302.j).

Air (f. 2v)

6/8, A major. Matches Grétry's "Entrée de Paysons" from *Lucile*, transposed from D major.

Air (f. 3r)

6/8, A minor. Matches a variation air "O ma tendre musette" (S-Skma Ff-R) cross-referenced with Pierre-Alexandre Monsigny.

Air (f. 3r)

2/4, G major. Matches the melody of "Since then I'm doomed" (GB-HFr D/EHx/F2/1) in D major with small adjustments to rhythm. Related to a song sung by Mrs. Jordan in *The Spoiled Child*.

Air Des trois fermiers (f. 3v)

2/4, C major. Matches "Faut attendre avec patience" by Nicolas Dezède from *Les trois fermiers* (D-Mbs Mus.ms.3195).

Menuet de Mr Gretry (f. 4r)

3/4, G major. Not identifiable.

Air (f. 4v)

2/4, G major. Melody based on an aria from *Julie* by Dezède.

Air Des trois fermiers (f. 5r)

2/4, D major. Based on "Sans un petit brin d'amour" from Dezède's *Les trois fermiers*.

Menuet de Ficher (f. 5v)

3/4, C major. Based on Mozart's "Menuet de Mr. Fischer."

Air Vif (f. 6r)

2/4, C major. Not identifiable.

Air Lent (ff. 6v – 7r)

C major/minor, 2/4. Minor version matches Variations in C minor ("L'Erreur d'un moment") by Marc-Antoine Charpentier,

possibly arranged by Nicolas Dezède (D-B Mus.ms 3420/1/[3]). Major version matches a "Brass Music in C major" found in another commonplace book owned by the Hubner Family (US-NH Misc. Ms 636).

Tambourin du Seigneur Beinfaisance (f. 7v)

6/8 and 2/4, A minor. The first half matches a piece with the same title (F-Pn VMA Ms-2361 and B-Bc 40561/1).

Menuet D'iphigenie (f. 8r – 8v)

3/4, G major/minor. Matches Gluck's minuet (no. 25) from *La rencontre imprévue*. Also looks like it was a ballet used in *Zéphire et Azor*.

Air de Roland (ff. 9r – 10r)

2/4, A major. Matches the gavotte from *Roland* by Niccolò Piccinni.

Menuet d'Orphée (f. 10v)

3/4, C major. Solfège syllables written into the upper right hand corner of the manuscript (Sol mi). Matches Gluck's "Menuet gracieux" from *Orphée et Eurydice*, but without added ornaments in the original.

[Valzer?] Danse Allemande (f. 11r)

3/8, D major. Matches an anonymous keyboard piece found in GH-Fcu Archives musicales, LM12 B/1.

Marche (f. 11v)

2/4, C major. Not identifiable.

Untitled (f. 12r)

2/2, D major. Not identifiable.

Air d'Armide de Mr. Gluck (ff. 12v – 13r)

2/2, F major. Matches a possible arrangement by Bernard Viguerie held in PL-KOXmzk, bound with 1001087861.

Entre acte de la pièce d'Henri Quatre (ff. 13v – 14r)

2/4, C major. Matches part of the overture to *Henri IV* by Johann Paul Aegidius Martini.

Air d'Armide de Mr. Gluck (ff. 14v – 15r)

2/2, C major. Matches an Andante from Gluck's *Armide*.

Menuet d'Alceste de Mr. Gluck (ff. 15v – 16r)

3/4, G major. Matches a minuet from *Alceste*.

Romance du Prisonnier (ff. 16v – 17r)

6/8, G major, three stanzas of text, including instrumental intro and outro. Matches "Lors que dans une tour obscure" from *Le prisonnier* by Pierre-Antoine-Dominique Della Maria.

Vaudeville des Visitandines (f. 17v)

2/4, A minor. Not identifiable, but probably from the opera (see next entry).

Romance (f. 18r)

3/4, A major. No bass line included, just the melody. Matches "Dans l'asile de l'innocence" from *Les Visitandines* by François Devienne. This romance was published separately from the opera and was likely very popular.

Entendre ma vois dans Blaise et [Babet] (ff. 18v – 19r)

2/4, C minor/major. Matches "Entends ma voix viens cher amant" from Dezède's *Blaise et Babet*.

Untitled piece (ff. 19v – 20r)

2/2, C major. Signed at the end Fin le 12 Juillet 1800. Not identifiable.

Romance du Seret (ff. 20v – 21r)

3/4, A major. Includes a separate vocal line from the piano part. Matches, somewhat, *Souvenirs des bords du Seret* by Johann Ruckgaber but he was born in 1799. However, this piece does seem like it was added later.