

The Sound of Antiquity: Chinese Musical Instruments in Eighteenth-Century Paris

Qingfan Jiang

On October 1, 1786, Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot (1718–1793), a Jesuit missionary then serving in Beijing, penned a letter describing a Chinese musical instrument sent as a gift to his benefactor in Paris:

In the same case, you will find the yun-lo that was missing from your Chinese cabinet, to complete the number of musical instruments used here. The sound of the yun-lo is produced by means of a single mallet, and this mallet must not exceed the size of the one in the compartment held at the foot of the instrument. I believe your musicians will not be tempted to play their *sonates* or *arietes* on the Chinese yun-lo. Each people has their own taste and style. In your place, everything is done rapidly, and like jumping. You need movement in everything, the pause kills you.

...This is not the case in the Chinese climate. We do everything calmly and with temperance: if we sing, it is to be heard without effort or contention from those who listen to us; if we play an instrument, it is so that each sound we extract from it can penetrate to the depths of the soul to produce the effect we have in sight. Thus, the sounds we get from the yun-lo are not linked to each other: they serve to link together all the sounds of the other instruments.¹

The “yun-lo,” commonly known as Yunluo, is a set of gongs held within a wooden frame. Earlier in 1754, Amiot had sent a Yunluo illustration to Paris (see Fig. 1).

Amiot’s act of transporting a Yunluo from Beijing to Paris is significant in three ways. First, it allows us to view the Sino-

Western musical exchange afresh from the perspective of material transfer. Upon his arrival in Beijing in 1751, Amiot, in his capacities as missionary and musician, dedicated considerable time to studying Chinese culture, focusing particularly on Chinese music. Notably, he authored the *Mémoire sur la musique des Chinois tant anciens que modernes* (1779), the first comprehensive treatise on Chinese music written in French. The story surrounding the Yunluo and other musical instruments sent by Amiot complements recent studies in the English language focusing on this treatise and its impact in Europe.²

Second, in the description above, Amiot did not try to bridge the cultural gap between France and China. Instead, he identified with the Chinese and highlighted the almost impenetrable barrier between French and Chinese musical culture. The French could not comprehend the sound of the Yunluo, but this incomprehensibility was precisely what made the Yunluo a curious object.

Third, the Yunluo was only one of many musical instruments Amiot sent to his French benefactor over a span of twenty years.³

He believed that these instruments, though made in the present time, represented China’s antiquity. In Amiot’s own words, “[the instruments] are of the first institution, from the very time of the inventors of the musical system: for the Chinese of later generations have not

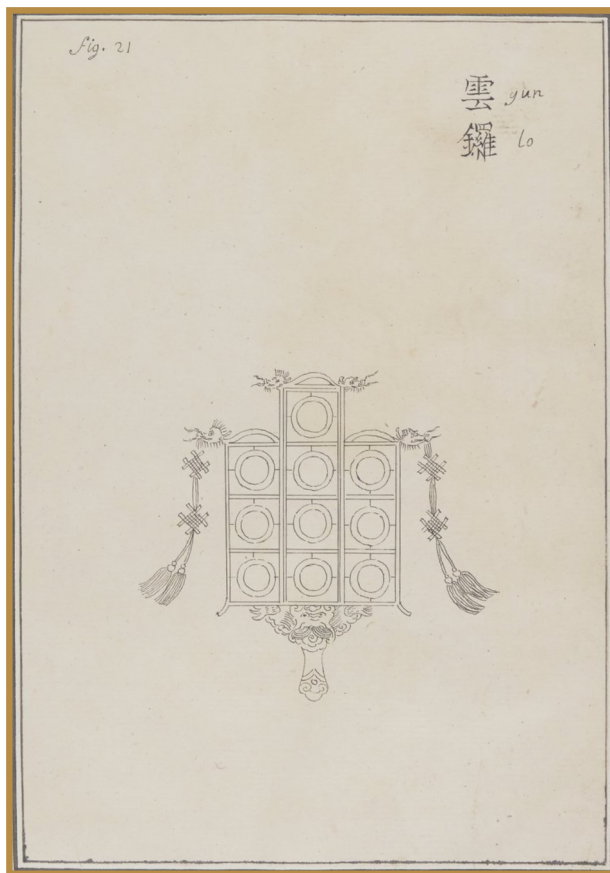


Figure 1. An illustration of Yunluo, from Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot, *De la musique moderne des Chinois* (c. 1754), *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (F-Pn)*, RES VMB MS-14, fig. 21. Reproduced from *gallica.bnf.fr*

2. See Nii Yoko, “The Jesuit Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot and Chinese Music in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Europe and China: Science and the Arts in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. Luís Saraiva (Singapore: World Scientific

Publishing, 2013), 81–92; Qingfan Jiang, “In Search of the ‘Oriental Origin’: Rameau, Rousseau and Chinese Music in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 19, no. 2 (2022): 125–149; Nathan Martin, “Rousseau’s Air Chinois,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 18, no. 1 (2021): 41–64.

3. For a more detailed discussion of the instruments sent by Amiot, see François Picard, “Joseph-Marie Amiot, jésuite française à Pékin, et le cabinet de curiosités de Bertin,” *Musique, images, instruments: Revue française d’organologie et d’iconographie musicale* 8 (2006): 68–85.

1. Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot, et al., Correspondence, MS 1516, 405v–406r, Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France, Paris. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

From the Editor

Michael Vincent

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

- Original research articles;
- 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 (rachel.bani@converse.edu). Submissions must be received by September 1 for the Fall issue and by March 1 for the Spring issue. The digital edition of this Newsletter contains active hyperlinks, which can be identified by text in this color.

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President's Message

Drew Edward Davies

I have felt honored to serve as President of SECM for the past four years and remain grateful to Vice Presidents Alison DeSimone and Kimary Fick, Secretary-Treasurer Evan Cortens, and all the Directors-at-Large who have served on the Board throughout that time. Not only has it been an honor, but also a pleasure to work together in a congenial environment with mindful colleagues with shared interests. As I write this, I am especially relieved that Evan is well along the pathway to recovery after the accident he suffered during the summer, and I am thrilled that Alison will return to office as my successor. I have great confidence that the incoming Board will actively and responsibly lead SECM.

Among the various goals and initiatives set forth over the past few years, I am perhaps most pleased with the incremental modernization of SECM. We have turned toward an exclusively digital environment for our publications and communications, thereby improving accessibility and reducing distribution time and expense. Likewise, recent updates to the by-laws, including the separation of the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, promise that the workload of leading the society is shared more evenly among volunteer officers and ensure that practice is aligned with structure in general. As a group of scholars, I think we have significantly broadened the ways in which we study the eighteenth century, and I trust that going forward we will continue to embrace inclusive perspectives in order to better understand the musical works and cultures of that period and their legacies in the contemporary world.

The most exciting event on the horizon for SECM is the Eleventh Biennial Conference, which will be held jointly with Divino Sospiro – Centro de Estudos Musicais Setecentistas de Portugal at the Mafra National Palace near Lisbon on May 29–31, 2026. Lisbon and its surroundings are home to so many music genres, historical sites, and beautiful vistas that you may wish to spend a few extra days to explore the area. Submit your paper proposal before the deadline of December 15, 2025 and I will see you there!



Fall 2025 Member News

Dorian Bandy has two new publications: “When is the brilliant style not the brilliant style? Topical mention, ambivalence, and negation in Mozart and Beethoven,” in the *Journal of Musicology* 42/4 and “Variation at the intersection of performance and composition in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,” in the *Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*, ed. Jeffrey Swinkin. In May 2025, Dorian and two colleagues hosted a Mozart performance-practice symposium at McGill University, supported by the Historical Keyboard Society of North America.

Ruta Bloomfield recently performed a guest harpsichord recital at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The program titled *Music from the French Baroque* included works by Louis Couperin, François Couperin (*Huitième Ordre*), and Bernard de Bury. As president of the Historical Keyboard Society of North America, she extends an invitation to submit a proposal (deadline December 15) for next year's conference in Italy: <https://hksna.org/conferences>.

Clemens Kemme's 2017 dissertation entitled *Mozart's Unfinished Mass in C minor, K. 427 ('Great Mass'). History, Theory, and Practice of Its Completion* is now available on <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=16b91561-514e-4d42-9e03-0166f6701c3b>. The 2018 new Breitkopf Edition based on this dissertation is perusable at <https://www.breitkopf.com/work/9534>.

Catherine Mayes's book *Hungarian Dances and Musical Life in Eighteenth-Century Vienna* was published by Oxford University Press (July 2025).

Michael Vincent has begun a new position as Assistant Professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen.

The Packard Humanities Institute is pleased to announce the new critical edition, Johann Christian Bach: Operas and Dramatic Works, edited by **Laura Buch**, **Paul Cornelson**, and **Jason B. Grant**. Seven of fourteen operas are now available, plus two books. For more information visit the website: jcbach.org.



SECM Conference “Transnational Musical and Theatrical Influences in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World” in Portugal in May 2026

Danielle M. Kuntz

The Society for Eighteenth-Century Music will be holding a joint conference in collaboration with the Portuguese early music ensemble Divino Sospito and their affiliated research center, the Center for Eighteenth-Century Music Studies of Portugal (DS-CEMSP). The conference will be held on May 28–31, 2026 at the Museu Nacional da Música (National Music Museum) of Portugal, which is located in a newly-renovated space within the Real Edifício de Mafra (Royal Building at Mafra), just 30 minutes outside Lisbon city center. Proposals for presentations are being accepted through the extended deadline of December 15, 2025; selections will be announced in December with complete program, travel, and registration information available on the SECM website by early January. The conference theme is “Transnational Musical and Theatrical Influences in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” which will serve as the focus of a keynote address by Dr. Javier Marín-López of Universidad de Jaén (Spain).

The Museu Nacional da Música, which is primarily a museum of musical instruments, holds a significant collection of rare eighteenth-century items of special interest to conference participants. Among these are instruments by eighteenth-century Portuguese builders, such as a 1758 harpsichord by Joaquim José Antunes (1731–1811), as well as a collection of eighteenth-century cellos and violins by Joaquim J. Galvão (active 1765–1825), who is considered one of the finest luthiers of eighteenth-century Portugal. Additionally, the

collection is home to other significant instruments, such as a 1725 Stradivarius cello, once owned by King Luís I of Portugal, and a 1782 harpsichord by Pascal Taskin, built for King Louis XVI of France. Members of the society are invited to consider submitting proposals for lecture-recitals that would utilize the instruments of this impressive collection. Formerly located in central Lisbon, the Museu Nacional da Música was relocated to Mafra in 2025; the new museum at Mafra includes not only the instrument exhibits but also modern recital and presentation spaces. Conference sessions will be held in one of the museum's sizable conference rooms.

In addition to special access to the collections of the Museu Nacional da Música, participants will receive a guided visit to the Real Edifício de Mafra. This site—a sprawling complex that includes the royal palace, convent, and basilica—is of significant interest for eighteenth-century music studies. Built over the course of the early 1700s at the behest of Portuguese king D. João V (r. 1707–1750), the palace at Mafra is renowned for its stunning Rococo library housing more than 30,000 volumes. The library's music collection contains many musical treasures, including music written especially for Mafra's basilica organs. These organs—six in total, built between 1792 and 1807 by the two most important Portuguese builders of the time—António Xavier Machado da Cerveira (1756–1828) and Joaquim António Peres Fontanes (1750–1818)—were restored in 2010 to their original state after many interventions across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Additionally, the basilica at Mafra is home to an impressive eighteenth-century carillon. Divided between the basilica's north and south towers, 119 bells comprise the combined carillon, liturgical, and clock ensemble. Restored in 2018–2019, the south tower carillon is fully operational and was heard for the first time in more than two decades in a concert on February 2, 2020; the north tower, which remains in its original eighteenth-century state, was also restored, though is meant as an artifact for study.

As part of the conference activities, Divino Sospito will perform a concert program at Mafra featuring eighteenth-century Portuguese masterworks. Divino Sospito and the Center for Eighteenth-Century Music Studies of Portugal (DS-CEMSP)



have grown over the last decade as an integrated and innovative force for the study and performance of eighteenth-century music. Led by artistic director Massimo Mazzeo and director of research Iskrena Yordanova, DS-CEMSP produces a wide range of academic and artistic work—from annual international conferences and publications, to concert tours and masterclasses—focusing on elevating the music of the eighteenth century with a special focus on the Portuguese repertoire. Their reputation has increasingly garnered collaborations with major European musical organizations, such as the Centre Européen de Musique, as well as musicians including Emma Kirkby, Ton Koopman, Enrico Onofri, and Andreas Scholl.

In addition to the conference activities centered at Mafra, conference participants are invited to explore the rich history and musical resources of nearby Lisbon. Made famous in the eighteenth century by the devastating 1755 Lisbon earthquake, the city today is a vibrant combination of structures from both the pre- and post-earthquake periods. Although the earthquake toppled the Ópera do Tejo—the royal opera theater that stood for only seven ill-fated months following its inauguration in early 1755—the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, inaugurated in 1793, still stands at the heart of the city and remains a testament to the continued influence of Italy on Portuguese music and architecture across the eighteenth

century. Beyond the historical sites, many scholars will be interested in exploring the music collection of the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (National Library of Portugal), as well as the Biblioteca da Ajuda (Ajuda Library), located at the Palácio Nacional da Ajuda (Ajuda National Palace) in the Belém suburb of Lisbon. The Biblioteca da Ajuda is considered to hold the richest collection of musical documentation in the country, spanning more than seven centuries and 12,000 artifacts. The collection is particularly rich in eighteenth-century manuscripts by Portuguese composers, such as Francisco António de Almeida, Pedro António Avondano, and Marcos Portugal, as well as foreign composers, including Giovanni Paisiello, Niccolò Jommelli, and many others.

Marking the society's 25th anniversary, the 2026 conference promises to be a memorable and historic event for SECM. The opportunity to collaborate on the conference with DS-CEMSP in Mafra presents a unique opportunity for members of the society to immerse themselves deeply in the rich eighteenth-century music history of Portugal, while also engaging with one of southern Europe's most important scholarly and artistic organizations. We hope that many of our members will join us in Mafra in May 2026. For any questions about the conference or call for papers, please contact the co-organizers Dr. Danielle Kuntz and Dr. Iskrena Yordanova at secm.dscemsp2026@gmail.com.



The GuDiE Project

Digital Edition of Philipp Gumpenhuber's Theatre Chronicle (1758–1763)

Ingeborg Zechner and Véronique Braquet

The *Digital Edition of Philipp Gumpenhuber's Theatre Chronicle* (GuDiE) is an interdisciplinary research project on the intersection of musicology and digital humanities that is financed by the Austrian Science Fund and runs at the University of Graz as a collaboration between the Departments of Art and Musicology and Digital Humanities from April 2024 to April 2028 (FWF Grant-DOI: 10.55776/P36729). The project team comprises Ingeborg Zechner (PI), Véronique Braquet, Selina Galka, Diana Korol and Jakob Leiter.



The GuDiE-project logo

The GuDiE project is devoted to the scholarly editing and semantic modelling of Philipp Gumpenhuber's Theatre Chronicle, a unique source that records on a daily basis the operations of the Viennese court theatres (Kärntnertortheater, Burgtheater and castle theatres Laxenburg and Schönbrunn) in the years 1758 and 1763. Gumpenhuber was a dancer and ballet master under the then theatre director Giacomo Durazzo. His chronicles provide a systematic record of the Viennese court's theatre life, encompassing information on performances, rehearsals, repertoire, personnel, and administrative matters. The seven surviving volumes of Gumpenhuber's chronicles are currently dispersed across two continents: four volumes are preserved as part of the Theatre Collection in the Houghton Library of Harvard University (US-CAh, MS Thr 248; US-CAh, MS Thr 248.1; US-CAh, MS Thr 248.2; US-CAh, MS Thr 248.3), and three volumes are located in the music collections at the Austrian National Library in Vienna (A-Wn, Mus.Hs.34580a; A-Wn, Mus.Hs.34580b; A-Wn, Mus.Hs.34580c). GuDiE will contribute to bringing these sources together as a critical digital edition and as a structured dataset that can support research into eighteenth-century theatrical, musical, and administrative practices. The project's data will be archived in GAMS (<https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:gams?mode=&locale=en>) following FAIR-use standards.

The GuDiE project's objectives extend beyond textual editing: it aims through the development of a database to reconstruct networks of performative collaboration (on- and back-stage), repertorial circulation across genres, and administrative organization that shaped mid-eighteenth-century Viennese theatre culture. By transforming Gumpenhuber's records into a machine-readable and semantically enriched dataset, GuDiE contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how ephemeral theatrical events—their production processes (i.e., rehearsals), and modifications (i.e., sub-

stitutions, and cancellations)—can be represented and studied via digital methods.

Methodological Approach and Workflow

The manuscripts are being transcribed using Transkribus (<https://www.transkribus.org>), which allows for automated layout recognition, including complex tabular structures. All transcriptions undergo subsequent manual correction. As the hands in the volumes differ considerably transcription guidelines have been developed for every single volume. The texts and the edition's critical apparatus and source description are then semantically encoded in TEI/XML. The data for the database will be extracted from the digital edition following the procedure of "assertive edition."¹ To ensure semantic interoperability and reusability, the GuDiE-project adopts an ontology-based approach to data modelling. Entities such as works, events, and persons are represented according to international conceptual frameworks including CIDOC CRM (<https://cidoc-crm.org>), FRBRoo (<https://www.iflastandards.info/fr/frbr/frbroo.html>), DOREMUS (<https://www.doremus.org>), and the Swiss Performing Arts Ontology (SPA).² This modelling enables the integration of GuDiE data into broader Linked Data ecosystems, fostering connections with other resources in musicology, theatre studies, and digital humanities (such as the digital catalogue of Christoph Willibald Gluck's works, the databases Corago (<https://corago.unibo.it>), Musiconn.performance (<https://performance.musiconn.de>), and DialectCultures (<https://gams.uni-graz.at/context:dic>)).

In the field of theatre studies, data models, such as the Swiss Performing Arts Model (SPA), implicitly use modern theatrical practices as underlying conventions for their ontologies. Under the perspective of performativity theatrical practices nevertheless evolve as hybrid social practices that are closely linked to the cultural surroundings of their times.³ As a result, the number of sources relating to eighteenth-century theatrical practices preserved in archives and libraries around the world is enormous, limiting research to the exploration of selected theatrical genres, or case studies. Additionally, the theatrical works being performed in Vienna between 1758–1763 comprise different theatrical genres such as French and Italian operas (i.e., opéra comique, opera seria, opera buffa), German and French plays, and dance (ballet, pantomime, divertissements). Music was an important part in most of these pieces. German spoken comedy often incorporated musical numbers, such as arias, or dances; however, the music has rarely been preserved over time. These diverse pieces, spanning various genres, constantly underwent adaptations, translations, and partial performances of their content.

A central methodological challenge for GuDiE lies in capturing the dynamic and nature of performance in eighteenth-century theatre in a digital ontology, which allows modelling modifications

1. Georg Vogeler, "The 'Assertive Edition': On the Consequences of Digital Methods in Scholarly Editing for Historians," *International Journal of Digital Humanities* 1 (2019), 309–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-019-00025-5>.

2. See Beat Estermann and Christian Schneeberger, *Data Model for the Swiss Performing Arts Platform*, Draft version 0.51, https://www.bfh.ch/dam/jcr:78a5e853-3c03-4ed8-8e28-86e2791a5829/SPA_Data_Model_v0-51_20170926.pdf, accessed online Nov 17, 2025.

3. See Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, 12th ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2021), 47.

Celebrating the Carl Theodor Jubilee (1724–2024)

Anders Muskens

In tribute to Prince-Elector Carl Theodor (1724–1799)—the visionary patron behind the Mannheim Court Orchestra—Anders Muskens & Das Neue Mannheimer Orchester present four new albums in 2025: two on solo fortepiano, and two with orchestra. Many listeners associate the Mannheim School with a narrow set of clichés—rockets, crescendos, and tidy galant and early-Classical formulas. But with this project, we aim to break those preconceptions and reveal a much richer and more diverse musical world under Prince-Elector Carl Theodor. His court attracted a wide array of visionary composers whose styles stretched far beyond textbook definitions.

Cannabich and Vogler were at the forefront of efforts to draw drama and music ever closer together, reshaping the expressive language of theatre. Their works explore *Sturm und Drang* psychological soundscapes, heightened character portrayal, and the extension of ballet into a proto-Romantic *ballet en action*. Additionally, Vogler, ever the visionary, also pursued an extraordinary agenda of cultural exchange. His extensive travels—including journeys to North Africa—inspired compositions that sought to represent the distinctive character of national melodies and folk traditions not as exotic curiosities but as authentic musical voices, making him a pioneering figure in what we might now call ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology. Meanwhile, Beck's piano sonatas reveal a different facet of the Mannheim aesthetic: the refined sensuality of the rococo, combining the elegance of the French keyboard tradition with a fiery vitality inherited from his teacher, Johann Stamitz. Together, these composers reflect the breadth and complexity of Carl Theodor's court—a crucible not only of style and taste, but of profound artistic innovation. These composers were not merely precursors to Mozart and Haydn—they were experimental, expressive, and often provocative in their own right. The Carl Theodor Jubilee year invites an opportunity to look back at these artistic and cultural achievements and celebrate them, reigniting the bold visions and sublime sentiments of composers who were at the top of their game and forefront of innovation in their day. This is still sensed through their music when it is performed with sensitivity to this context.

The project website is available here: <https://www.neue-mannheimerorchester.de/carl-theodor-jubilee-releases>.

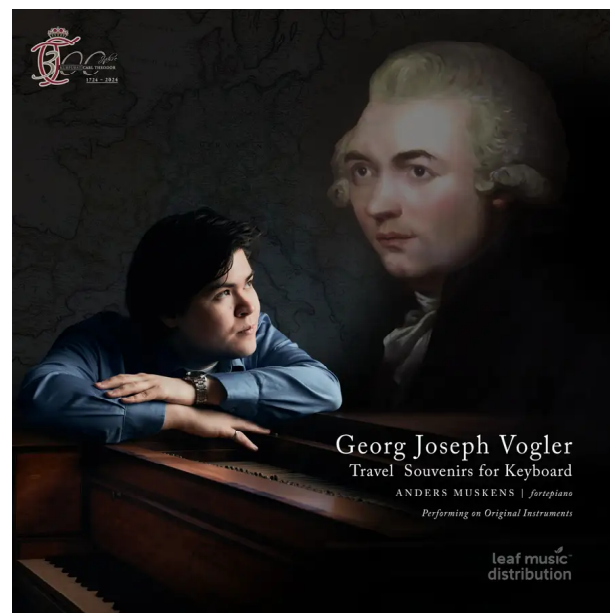


Recording Review

Georg Joseph Vogler: *Travel Souvenirs for Keyboard*, Anders Muskens, fortepiano; 2025 Leaf Music Distribution

Paula Maust

In his newest album, Canadian harpsichordist and fortepianist Anders Muskens presents a collection of fascinating never-before-recorded solo keyboard works by Georg Joseph Vogler (1749–1814). Containing just over 100 minutes of music, including Vogler's 1798 *Pièces de clavecin* and 1791 *Variations sur l'Air de Marlborough*, the recording is lengthy but well worth a close listen.



Vogler's life exemplified the Enlightenment-era ideals of pursuing knowledge and cultural exchange. Across his career, he traveled extensively from the Arctic Circle to North Africa and everywhere in between. The recipient of numerous prestigious court musician appointments, Vogler never stayed in one geographical location for very long. In his essay for the album's liner notes, Rüdiger Thomsen-Fürst describes Vogler as one of the earliest ethnomusicologists. Indeed, Vogler was particularly invested in learning as much as could about the local musical traditions in all the places he visited, and several of his published musical collections aimed to share folk music from around the world. He was especially interested in studying ancient modal singing in Gibraltar and Tangier.

Muskens's new album features repertoire that Vogler wrote during his tenure in Stockholm, where he was the music director for Gustav III (1786–1792) and Gustavus Adolphus IV (1793–1799). The *Pièces de clavecin* are arranged in order of pedagogical difficulty and were published as a companion to Vogler's multi-volume Swedish method for playing the piano. The collection's title is a nod to French influences in the court and likely also hearkens back to earlier eighteenth-century French keyboard collections containing a variety of pieces in different styles and genres. Across the fourteen pieces in the 1798 *Pièces de clavecin*, Vogler transmits his versions of traditional Venetian, African, Swedish, Finnish, Chinese, Polish, and Russian songs and dances in delightful keyboard arrangements. Essentially, the *Pièces de clavecin* is a musical scrapbook of the many places Vogler had visited and a few places he hoped to visit, such as China.

Vogler was quite drawn to the theme and variation genre and was famous for improvising stunning keyboard variations at public concerts. The substantial *Variations sur l'Air de Marlborough* that closes this album exemplifies Vogler's fascination with bending our expectations for the genre. The theme is a popular French tune about the alleged death of John Churchill, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, in the 1709 Battle of Malplaquet. It was such a popular

song that many other composers used it as well, including Beethoven in his *Wellington's Victory of the Battle at Vittoria*, op. 19. Typically, we expect the theme to be stated plainly without embellishment before the first variation, but Vogler begins experimenting with florid ornamentation before the opening statement of the theme has even concluded. Perhaps Vogler's most stunning compositional moment in the piece is the larghetto section in F-sharp Major, which interrupts the jaunty fugue in the final variation.

In addition to curating an album with a compelling story, Muskens's performance of the repertoire on his new album is stylish, sensitive, and exciting. The music ranges from technically simple to virtuosic, and Muskens is able to make each piece come to life. The simple opening "Pastorale" in the *Pièces de Clavecin*, for example, is derived from one of Vogler's most famous improvisations, and Muskens brings a delightful sense of nuanced freedom and spontaneity to the music. There are many complex lenses through which we can view these pieces, and it seems evident that Muskens has made a lot of thoughtful decisions about how to play movements like the "Phantasie tracée sur Cheu Teu. Air chinois," for example. As Thomsen-Fürst aptly notes in the liner notes essay, "In reviving this repertoire, it is important to see and understand Vogler's efforts within the constraints of his time, and to celebrate above all the great artistic curiosity and experimentation in his exploration of national themes—while acknowledging the problematic historical context of the colonial period."

Themes and variations are admittedly not my favorite genre of repertoire from this time period, but Muskens's rendition of Vogler's *Variations sur l'Air de Marlborough* kept my attention for the entire piece. The slower movements are played with what feels like just the right amount of expressive poignancy, and the fast movements are full of brilliant, virtuosic fireworks. I especially appreciate Muskens's sense of timing and phrasing, and his touch brings out a wide range of colors on the original instruments he is playing. All of these fine details were captured quite well by the recording engineers, making it feel almost like I was in the same room as the piano when listening to the recording with a good pair of headphones.



Of particular interest for keyboardists is Muskens's descriptions of the two English pianos used in the recording: a 1788 Longman & Broderip square piano and an 1806 John Broadwood & Sons grand piano. Both instruments are from Muskens's personal collection and were restored by Paul Kobald in Amsterdam. In addition to photos of the instruments, Muskens details the specific action and pedal technologies of each piano and describes how they facilitate his performance of Vogler's late-century music. Muskens also notes that he tuned the instruments using the method and temperament outlined in Vogler's 1807 *Gründliche Anleitung zum Clavierstimmen*, a nice attention to detail that brings us deeper into Vogler's sonic world.

Anyone looking for a unique aural journey through Vogler's multicultural musical world will appreciate Muskens's new album, particularly since the repertoire is played so well and has not previously been recorded. For those whose curiosity about Vogler's travels has been piqued, Muskens previously released *Vogler à la chambre de Marie-Antoinette* (2023, Leaf Music Distribution) in collaboration with Elisabeth Hetherington (soprano) and Das Neue Mannheimer Orchester. That album highlights music from Vogler's early 1780s journey to Paris and London and is also worth a listen



Musicians of the Old Post Road

Two-time winner of the Noah Greenberg Award, Musicians of the Old Post Road kicked off its 37th season with the release of its 8th album, *Into the Light*, featuring the music of German composer Christoph Graupner and his colleagues. The Boston-based period instrument chamber ensemble is already being hailed for this "excellent" CD, now available for purchase at www.oldpostroad.org/cd-recordings.

Musicians of the Old Post Road's 2025-2026 season, "Cross-Pollinations," celebrates inspiration among composers and across cultures with the ensemble's signature blend of musical "rediscoveries" in dialogue with familiar, beloved 18th-century works. Concerts are again offered in-person and live-streamed.



The series opened on October 25th and 26th with *Brilliant Borrowings*, a program highlighting ways that Baroque composers inspired each other, starting with one of Georg Philipp Telemann's "Corelli" sonatas. In this piece, Telemann incorporates the style of Arcangelo Corelli's trio sonatas, including dance forms, walking basses, and the harmonic language that took Europe by storm in the early 18th century.

A fascinating piece from Nicolas Chédeville's *Le Printemps ou Les saisons amusantes* (*Spring, or the Amusing Seasons*) follows. A French oboist and hurdy-gurdy virtuoso, Chédeville freely arranged Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* concertos. Although many of the passages and melodies from Vivaldi's original are recognizable, Chédeville imbued his own style into the work. The ensemble performed the *Autumn* concerto, Chédeville's lively and rustic reimagining of the season. Chédeville composed many works that included the hurdy-gurdy or musette. In the original partbooks, the accompanying treble parts to the musette are designated "violino secondo" and "flauto ou violino terzo," implying that a violin could substitute for the musette, an option the ensemble will employ in its performances.

George Frideric Handel was very much inspired by Telemann. The two became close early in their careers, with frequent visits and correspondences between them beginning in 1701. Handel's Adagio and Allegro for flute, strings, and continuo reflects the influence of Telemann's Concerto in B-flat Major for three violins and continuo, and clearly demonstrates Handel's talent at borrowing and reimagining his friend's motifs and themes. The final movement of Telemann's concerto contains a characterful "hammer-blow" motif that Handel borrows to great effect in the last movement of his Adagio and Allegro. Whereas Telemann uses this theme only loosely imitatively, Handel composes a full-fledged fugue that makes dramatic use of this motif in a variety of keys.

Charles Avison's *Concerto Grosso No. 2 in G Major* is a fascinating adaptation of works by the outstanding harpsichordist Domenico Scarlatti. Scarlatti's *Essercizi per cembalo*, a set of 30 harpsichord sonatas published in England in 1738, are among the most virtuoso of his oeuvre. The work inspired Avison to refashion them and other Scarlatti sonatas as concerti grossi for strings and continuo. Published around 1744, Avison's concertos are extensively re-imagined orchestrated versions of Scarlatti's works.

The concert concluded with the ensemble's own arrangement for chamber ensemble of Bach's *Italian Concerto*, BWV 971, for solo harpsichord. This beloved piece represents the culmination of Bach's nearly lifelong examination of the Italian concerto format. In his early years, he made a study of the string and wind concertos of Vivaldi, Albinoni, Marcello, and others by arranging them for solo keyboard. Old Post Road's transcription of his *Italian Concerto* can be viewed as a "reverse engineering" of this process, taking his work for solo keyboard and orchestrating it for chamber ensemble. For this arrangement, Artistic Directors Daniel Ryan and Suzanne Stumpf surveyed Bach's own orchestration techniques to model their adaptation after his approach.

The December program, *Christmas in the Bach Workshop*, features festive works by J.S. Bach, his students, and family members, including J.C.F. Bach's charming mini-oratorio *Die Kindheit Jesu*. Vocalists include Michele Kennedy, soprano, Sophie Michaux, mezzo-soprano, Jason McStoots, tenor, and Daniel Fridley, bass. The season continues in March with *A Hive of Creativity*, a program evoking the buzzing, convivial atmosphere of Sara Levy's

Berlin salon gatherings. Works include a cutting-edge piece by Levy's teacher W.F. Bach, a trio she commissioned by C.P.E. Bach, chamber works by Janitsch and Schobert, and engaging readings penned by Enlightenment thinkers. The season concludes in May with *Ben Franklin's Musical Curiosity*, exploring the fascinating history of Franklin's musical circles in America and in Paris at the soirées of composer Anne Brillon de Jouy. The program includes songs and instrumental works by Francis Hopkinson, John Antes, James Oswald, C.F. Abel, Brillon de Jouy, and Franklin himself. The ensemble is joined by soprano Emily Siar and fortepianist April Sun, who will perform on an original American-made fortepiano from the early 1800s. This program is supported, in part, by a grant from the MA250 Committee of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.

For more than three decades, Musicians of the Old Post Road has captivated and delighted audiences through its innovative programming, with dynamic and diverse music from the Baroque to early Romantic eras. Performed on period instruments, the group's subscription series brings concerts to historical venues in cities and towns along the original route of the old Boston Post Road, the first thoroughfare connecting Boston and New York City in the 1670s. Core ensemble members include flutist Suzanne Stumpf, violinists Sarah Darling and Jesse Irons, violist Marcia Cassidy, and cellist Daniel Ryan. For more information, visit www.oldpostroad.org.



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changed the form or the construction [of them]."⁴ That is, musical instruments possess an extraordinary attribute that resists temporal change: they embody an antiquity that one could touch and hear.

Amiot's presentation of the Yunluo as a curious object representative of China's antiquity was influenced by his benefactor and, more broadly, by the Egypt-China debate in eighteenth-century France. His benefactor was Henri-Leonard-Jean-Baptiste Bertin (1720–1792), Minister and Secretary of State. As a politician of considerable influence, Bertin generously provided yearly stipends to the French missionaries in China, who faced financial hardship following the global suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773. In an effort to secure Bertin's continued support, the missionaries routinely sent gifts that ranged from porcelain and stationery to flower seeds and musical instruments, believing they would appeal to Bertin's tastes. These gifts ultimately furnished Bertin's personal cabinet of curiosities, which, by 1787, had become a popular tourist destination in Paris. In fact, the instruments sent by Amiot were so prominent that the author of a tourist guide claimed that Bertin's cabinet held "the most complete collection that exists in Europe of musical instruments used in China."⁵

4. *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c. des Chinois*, volume 11 (1786), 526.

5. Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Guide des amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris*, vol. 1 (Paris: Hardouin and Gattey, 1787), 135.

The Yunluo and other Chinese musical instruments, beyond their role as objects of curiosity in Bertin's cabinet, served as a monument to demonstrate China's unrivaled antiquity. With increasing access to global information, particularly regarding China, European scholars began to reassess the established timeline of ancient civilizations. This reassessment sparked a vigorous debate regarding whether Egypt or China was the world's most ancient nation. Among those partial to Egypt, Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) theorized that China was an Egyptian colony and an off-spring of the Egyptian civilization. Subsequently, the French scholar Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800) asserted the discovery of further evidence supporting this theory. To refute de Guignes' assertion, Amiot sent both textual and material proofs, including Chinese musical instruments, to argue to the contrary that China, and not Egypt, was the world's oldest nation and the birthplace of arts and sciences.

As a teenager, de Guignes received instruction in Chinese from Étienne Fourmont (1683–1745), an orientalist known for his pioneering work on Chinese characters, whose own teacher was Arcadio Huang (1679–1716), a Chinese linguist serving at the Bibliothèque royale. The ability to interpret Chinese texts allowed de Guignes to examine Chinese sources and made three conclusions in support of Egypt's antiquity. He argued that the consistent recording of eclipse observations by the Chinese, beginning around 722 BCE, was not a mere coincidence, as it aligned precisely with the Egyptians' initiation of astronomical observations in Babylon. Based on the temporal proximity, de Guignes claimed that "it seems evident that the Chinese, with regard to their astronomy and ancient astronomers, copied and inserted into their History what has been said of the Chaldean and Egyptian astronomers."⁶ Moreover, he contended that the Egyptians and the Chinese used the same method to construct words based on his comparative analysis of the two writing systems.⁷ Furthermore, de Guignes examined the names of China's first emperors and asserted that these Chinese emperors were in fact the Egyptian kings whose names had been Sinicized.⁸

Amiot learned about de Guignes' work through Bertin, who corresponded regularly with both the missionaries in China and scholars in France. In his monograph *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire universelle de l'empire chinois* (1788), Amiot responded to de Guignes' three points above. Evidenced by a recorded eclipse dating back to 2155 BCE, the Chinese engaged in astronomical observation before the Egyptians.⁹ Amiot admitted that he also found similarities between Egyptian hieroglyphs and Chinese characters; however, the Chinese did not learn the method of creating words from the Egyptians, nor the Egyptians from the Chinese. Finally, the Chinese early emperors maintained a separate lineage independent of the Egyptian kings.¹⁰

6. Joseph de Guignes's preface to Antoine Gaubil, *Le Chou-king, un des livres sacrés des Chinois* (Paris: N.M. Tilliard, 1770), xxx.

7. Joseph de Guignes, *Mémoire dans lequel on prouve, que les Chinois sont une colonie Égyptienne* (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1759), 67.

8. De Guignes, *Mémoire*, 75.

9. Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot, *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire universelle de l'empire chinois* (1788), 109.

10. Amiot, *Abrégé chronologique*, 150–160.

Amiot not only directly disproved de Guignes' three pieces of evidence but also contended that China's antiquity could be verified through its numerous monuments. Before Amiot, Voltaire identified three monuments to challenge Christian superstitions: the Chinese records of eclipses from 2155 BCE, the Babylonian astronomical observations from 2234 BCE, and the Parian Chronicle, a stele bearing inscriptions of Greek history from 2063 BCE.¹¹

Although we do not know whether Voltaire's use of the monument had a direct impact on Amiot, both used the word "monument" to denote a concrete object or a piece of knowledge that could prove the existence of an ancient civilization. Significantly, Amiot believed that music was an important monument. Again in his book *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire universelle de l'empire chinois*, Amiot asserted that China's antiquity could be verified by

the very songs that were prevailing among the people. Some are still preserved, said to have been composed during the time of Yao and Chun. In truth, they do not mark any period; but they are an undoubtable testimony to the immemorial belief in China of the existence of these great figures, and the degree of esteem held for their virtue.¹²

Moreover, to show an example of an ancient Chinese song, Amiot included his translation of *Jirang ge* 擊壤歌 [the Song of Tossing Sticks] in a footnote. The lyrics read:

When the sun comes up, I work;
when the sun goes down, I rest.
I dig a well for drink,
I plow the fields for food.
What does the emperor's power have to do with me?¹³

The song, allegedly composed during the time of Emperor Yao (ca. 24th century BCE), is an illustration of the simple life enjoyed by commoners. It serves as evidence of Emperor Yao's notable virtue and effective governance, which protected his people from the turmoil of warfare and the devastation of natural disasters. Amiot observed that, while *Jirang ge* and other Chinese songs lack specific period markers, the songs themselves sufficiently demonstrate the existence of China's ancient rulers and the virtues they exemplified.

Like the songs, musical instruments attest to the existence of China's ancient past. Given their material properties, the instruments present a tangible and direct pathway to China's distant heritage, making them ideal for those without prior knowledge of Chinese history or language. For this reason, Amiot assiduously procured Chinese musical instruments and arranged for their shipment to France, intending to convince his opponents, like de Guignes, and the French audience of China's historical significance. For Amiot, music and musical instruments do not belong to an ephemeral art; rather, they embody an enduring sound that has resonated since the beginning of Chinese civilization.

11. Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), in Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1879), vol. 19, 348–351.

12. Amiot, *Abrégé chronologique*, 84–85.

13. Amiot, *Abrégé chronologique*, 84–85. Translation is from Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and Manuscript Culture: The Record of a Dusty Table* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 123–124.