

The Classics Labels



CC1028

Fleur de Lys

THE SOLO SUITE BEFORE BACH

French Bass Viol Suites

from **1660 –1700**

CHARLES MEDLAM BASS VIOL

Fleur De Lys

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French Bass Viol Suites from **1660 – 1700**

Nicolas Hotman 1610 – 1663

SUITE IN D MINOR

1	Allemande I	1:37
2	Allemande II	1:33
3	Courante et double	2:01
4	Sarabande	2:28
5	Bourée	1:09
6	Ballet	0:37
7	Gigue	3:56
8	Ballet	
(Variations on "The Scolding Wife")		4:05

Le Sieur Dubuisson ? – 1688

SUITE IN D MINOR

9	Prelude	2:07
10	Allemande et double	2:52
11	Courante	0:44
12	Sarabande	1:37
13	Gigue	1:54
14	Ballet et double	1:42

Le Sieur de Machy ? – 1692

SUITE NO.4 IN G, from PIECES DE VIOLE

15	Prelude	0:49
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16	Allemande	3:08
17	Courante	1:42
18	Sarabande	2:08
19	Gigue	1:43
20	Gavotte en rondeau	1:12
21	Chaconne	3:40

Jean de Sainte-Colombe

c.1615 – c.1701

SUITE IN D MINOR

22	Prélude	2:33
23	Allemande	3:41
24	Courante et double	2:30
25	Sarabande et double	5:00
26	Gavotte	0:56
27	Ballet	1:51
28	Gigue en Bourrasque	1:37
29	Chaconne	3:08

Marin Marais 1656 –1728

TOMBEAU POUR MR. DE STE.

30	COLOMBE, LIVRE DEUXIÈME (1701)	6:18
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Total Time: 71:04

Charles Medlam: Bass viol, Barak Norman? London c.1680 • **William Carter:** Theorbo by Klaus Jacobsen
Recorded at: The Studio, Brick Kiln Cottage, Hollington, Hampshire, UK, March 22/23 2010 • **Engineer:** Philip Hobbs

The idea of combining allemande, courante and sarabande occurred quite early on in the seventeenth century and was particularly popular in France and England. It is said that Louis XIII's sister Henrietta-Maria brought the sarabande to London upon her marriage to Charles I in 1625 and that André Maugars, diplomat, linguist, lutanist, viol player and teacher of Hotman could have been partly responsible. At this time a rhythmically complex courante was preceded by an exploratory allemande and rounded off with an elegant and probably quite lively sarabande. Towards mid-century the sarabande began to be played less rapidly and began to feel more like a slow movement.

During the 1650s, as if by some formal agreement, composers all over Europe began to add a gigue and a prelude and insert minuets, gavottes and bourrées between the sarabande and the gigue. These preludes were often notated without barlines with the rhythm at the discretion of the performer. By about 1660 therefore the structure of the French Suite was in place and, alongside the trio sonata, dominated until the arrival of classical sonata form.

Close to five hundred dance movements for solo bass viol composed between 1650 and 1700 survive in manuscripts and this wealth of material could have had a number of functions. They could be performance material for the virtuoso, teaching material for the maîtres de viole (with the doubles perhaps representing challenges for the more advanced pupils), and even perhaps rehearsal music for dancers practicing their steps.



Jean de Sainte-Colombe - Prélude

The family of **NICHOLAS HOTMAN** (c.1610 – April 1663) came originally from Flanders, his name appearing as Hotman, Hotteman, Hauttemant, Autheman and Otteman in the various manuscripts containing his work. He became a French citizen in May 1626 and “Bourgeois de Paris” by 1639. By 1655 he was employed by Louis XIV’s brother, the Duc d’Orléans, and in 1661 entered the service of the king himself. Hotman taught both de Machy and St. Colombe. He died in 1663 and his are the first surviving suites for bass instrument with the classical core of allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue. His contribution is described by Jean Rousseau in his *Traité de Viole* of 1687:

“Hotman est celui qui a commencé en France à composer des Pièces d’Harmonie réglées sur la Viole, à faire de beaux Chants, & à imiter la Voix, en sorte qu’on admiroit souvent davantage dans l’exécution tendre d’une petite Chansonette, que dans les Pieces les plus remplis & les plus sçavantes. La tendresse de son Jeu venoit de ces beaux coups d’archet qu’il amimoit, & qu’il adoucissoit avec tant d’adresse & si à propos, qu’il charmoit tous ceux qui l’entendoient, & c’est ce qui a commencé à donner la perfection à la viole, & à la faire estimer preferablement à tous les autres Instruments.”

“Hotman was the first in France to compose real Pièces d’Harmonie on the viol, to compose beautiful melodies and to imitate the voice, so that one often admired him more for his sensitive execution of a little song than in chordal or contrapuntal pieces. The tenderness of his playing came from those beautiful bowstrokes which he animated or softened with such skill and so appropriately that he charmed all those who heard him. And it was this which started to bring the viol to perfection and which caused it to be admired more than any other instrument.”

LE SIEUR DUBUISSON started life as Jean Lacquemant in Roye in Picardy in about 1622. By 1655 he had established himself as a maître de musique in Paris just east of the Louvre where instrument makers and musicians like Sainte-Colombe and Marais lived. By the 1670s he had begun to refer to himself as “Du Buisson, Bourgeois de Paris,” and seems to have had some

success as a landlord renting out houses in the neighbourhood. A 1680 description of musical trends in Paris mentions Hotman, Sainte-Colombe, Desmarets (Marais?) and Du Buisson. Much of his surviving output is found in the so-called “Krakow” manuscript (Warsaw, Bibliotheka Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Muzycznego R221), which contains more than one hundred pieces. The first twenty-two pieces are in d minor and appear to be four classical suites. The other major source of his music (Library of Congress M2.1.T2 17C dated September 1, 1666) has twenty-one pieces grouped into four suites followed by two preludes in tablature.

MONSIEUR DE MACHY's dates are unknown but he was active in the 1680s and 90s and had a court appointment. On the title page of his *Pieces de Viole* of 1685 he claims that these are the first viol pieces ever to appear in print, which is true for France. The collection contains four classical suites with prelude, minuet and gavotte in staff notation, and four in tablature; only one ends with a chaconne. If some of the manuscripts give rise to questions about the order and content of suites, de Machy's print is an authoritative statement of how at least he expected them to be laid out. In the 1680s he became involved in a dispute with Rousseau about the precise position of the left hand, his contention being that the thumb should be held directly opposite the first finger. Loulié, Danonville and Rousseau himself (who also criticises de Machy's *Jeu d'harmonie* style) would have the thumb opposite the second finger. It would appear that he was defending an earlier, more lute-like hand position and that others were moving towards the eighteenth century grip used by cellists. The great Marais sets himself above all this in a remark in the preface to his *Pièces à une et deux Violes* of 1686.

“Ces chiffres designent les doigts dont il se faut servir, mais quoy qu'ils sont marqués selon le port de main qui est à present en usage, ceux neantmoins qui auront contracté une habitude contraire, ne doivent pas s'arrester à cette nouvelle manière.”

“The numbers indicate the finger to be used, and although they are designed to work with the hand position presently in use, those who are used to another are not obliged to attempt this new manner.”

Considering how revered he was in his own lifetime, we know little about **Jean De Sainte-Colombe** other than that he is credited with the addition of the seventh string on the bass viol, that he taught Marin Marais and that he gave concerts with his daughters. It may well be that as a Protestant he was denied a court appointment; as late as 1700 one Sainte Colombe, presumably a relation, is mentioned as being '*fort suspect de religion*' - highly suspicious as to his religion. The two main sources of his output are a collection of sixty-seven *Concerts à Deux Violes Esgales* and a manuscript of solo pieces dating from the 1690s which somehow found its way into the municipal library of Tournus near Mâcon. It contains one hundred and fifty-one pieces for solo bass viol, of which the first ninety-seven are in d minor. The collection begins with twenty-eight preludes, followed by a random sequence of dance movements, which can be grouped into suites.

MARIN MARAIS (1656 – 1728) is the undisputed classicist of the bass viol in France. He learnt with St. Colombe and studied composition with Lully, in whose operas he performed as continuo player. His five books of pieces (1686, 1701, 1711, 1717 and 1725) are the staple diet of any bass violist attempting to come to terms with the forms, techniques and spirit of the French repertoire. In the first two books the classical suite predominates, subsequently more and more '*pièces*' appearing with programmatic content and eccentric titles, reflecting a shift in taste from the classical to the rococo, which coincides more or less exactly with the death of Louis XIV. A few suites survive in manuscript, which are similar, and in some cases identical to the pieces in his first book. It is not clear whether they are suites for solo viol or whether a continuo part is lacking, the style being such that the solo viol provides nearly all of the harmony by means of chords and arpeggio figurations. They represent the transition from the normal unaccompanied suite of the seventeenth century to the normal accompanied (i.e. with a basso continuo of harpsichord and second bass viol) of the eighteenth. Marais' '*Tombeau pour Mr de Ste. Colombe, Livre Deuxième 1701*' from his '*Pièces de Violes of 1701*' is a homage from pupil to teacher. Tombeau actually means a tombstone but French composers borrowed the word to denote a type of funeral oration

in music. The tradition was started by lutanists and harpsichordists in mid-century and was taken up by violists such as Marais and Dollé, by violinists like Leclair and even by ensembles, as in the *'Tombeau de Monsieur Lully of Jean-Ferry Rebel* in 1712.

The Suites:

The Hotman and Du Buisson suites are more or less as found in the manuscripts. De Machy's suite is performed as printed and the Sainte-Colombe is compiled from the Tournus ms.

Footnote for cellists:

For most cellists the suites by **Johann Sebastian Bach** are the beginning of their repertoire, but they are also the culmination of a fifty year tradition of French suites for solo bass instrument. The German gambist **Ernst Christian Hesse** (1676-1762), who had spent his school years in Eisenach and studied the viol with both Marais and Forqueray, might well be largely responsible for the dissemination of the French suite for solo bass viol in Saxony. It seems inconceivable that Bach, though nine years his junior, would not have picked his brains about recent developments in the French capital. And even if Hesse did not have de Machy's print in his luggage, he would have had the style of the pieces here recorded in his head and fingers, while Hesse's pupil **Johann Christian Hertel** is known to have performed in Eisenach and Köthen, the very place where Bach is thought to have written his suites.

My thanks go to Nikolaus Harnoncourt, who shepherded me through my first steps in performance practice and was kind enough, many years later, to pass on to me the wonderful old English viol used on this recording and pictured on the cover of this Cd. C.M.



CHARLES MEDLAM studied the cello in London, Paris, Vienna and Salzburg before becoming interested in the bass viol and early performing styles. After a year lecturing and playing in the resident string quartet at the Chinese University of Hong Kong he returned to Europe and worked with Maurice Gendron at the Paris Conservatoire, Wolfgang Herzer in Vienna and subsequently performance practice with Nikolaus Harnoncourt in Salzburg as well as cello there with Heidi Litschauer. In addition he attended courses with Wieland Kuijken for the gamba. He founded London Baroque with Ingrid Seifert in 1978 and most of his work in the last three decades has been with them, playing some 2500 concerts worldwide in that time.

Born in Florida, **WILLIAM CARTER** received a rigorous but conventional training as a classical guitarist with Bruce Holzman at The Florida State University before falling in love with the earlier plucked instruments and the world of historical performance. Following initial guidance from Pat O'Brien in New York City, he traveled to London as a Fulbright Scholar where he studied the lute with Nigel North and quickly established himself as one of the leading players on old instruments. He is an enthusiastic teacher and Professor of Baroque Studies and Lute at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. Starting in 2005 a series of early guitar CDs have been released to great critical acclaim, one of which was named in the Gramophone 'Critic's Choice' list for 2005.