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"Performance Practice and Technique in Marin Marais' 'Pièces de viole.'" By Deborah A. Teplow

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Deborah A. Teplow. *Performance Practice and Technique in Marin Marais' Pièces de viole*. Studies in Musicology, no. 93. Edited by George J. Buelow. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986. xii, 156p.

Over the past few years we have come more and more to see the importance of paying attention to the specific repertoires to which particular performance information most properly applies. Since late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century French notation is so highly detailed, such information may be obtained as readily from the musical scores themselves as from theoretical writings. This point of view is admirably reflected in Deborah Ann Teplow's revised thesis now published by UMI Research Press.

Another similarly practical study covering the same repertoire is John Hsu's *A Handbook of French Baroque Viol Technique* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1981). While Hsu attempts to deal with the whole of French baroque viol music and Teplow limits herself to the music of Marin Marais, these two studies correspond with each other more closely than their titles suggest. Although Hsu discusses French treatises and the music of other French viol composers seventy-six of his ninety-six numbered examples are taken from the music of Marais.¹ Teplow, while using a title suggesting limitation to Marais, indicates in a preface that her study applies

by extension, [to] other works in the French baroque repertoire. . . .
[and] is intended as a guide in the development of a more general
and comprehensive technical foundation required of players by . . .
the solo virtuoso music of other national schools.²

Neither does she neglect the French treatises and other French musical repertoires dealt with by Hsu. She does say that "all of the music included . . . is taken from Marais' five volumes of *Pièces de viole*."³

Each book is intended for a different audience. Hsu states categorically that his book "is not a method for beginners: it is a handbook for viol performers who are already proficient. . . . For this reason, such basic principles of viol bowing as bow grip and arm movements" are not dealt

1. Of the remaining twenty examples thirteen are from Forqueray, three from De Machy, two from Rameau, and one each from Dollé and Morel.

2. Teplow, ix.

3. Ibid. While this is true of the complete pieces, noted below, the musical excerpts include quotations from others such as Rousseau, St. Colombe, Simpson, D'Anglebert, Couperin, and Lambert.

with.⁴ Conversely, discussion of bowing-arm movements represents one of the strengths of Teplow's work, which is intended for "intermediate gambists . . . those playing at a more advanced level . . . [and] accomplished players."⁵

The most important difference has to do with the degree of specificity that is provided between the techniques discussed and the musical style they are intended to serve. Hsu's fifty-one page *Handbook* is devoted entirely to matters of bowing and left-hand technique applicable to all music requiring "the 'French style' of viol playing as practiced from ca. 1685 to ca. 1730."⁶ Only the first chapter (about six pages) of Teplow's one hundred fifty-six page study deals with these matters in this general way. The titles of the remaining six chapters show that each deals with a specific piece and the musical form that it represents:⁷ "Menuet IV/5," "Le Basque IV/39," "Prelude I/2," "Allemande IV/2," "Gavotte V/79," and "Gigue III/5." Thus, Teplow wishes to come even closer to the goal of matching technique with musical style.

Her approach (chs. 2-7) is to provide an extensive discussion of the model, followed by brief commentaries on four to six supplementary "practice pieces" appended to the end of the chapter. While the discussion begins with matters of special relevance to musical form (rhythm in particular) it flows into other technical problems raised by the model but not necessarily specific to it. For this reason some of the practice pieces represent different musical forms and a variety of contexts in which to master problems encountered in the model.⁸ Topics covered in each chapter are listed below.⁹

4. Hsu, 1.

5. Teplow, x.

6. Hsu, 1.

7. In chapter titles the name of the model piece is followed by a Roman numeral showing in which of the books by Marais it is found and Arabic numerals identifying the position of the piece within its book.

8. The music for the model and practice pieces is presented in reduced size from the facsimile publication by Ruedy Ebner of Marais' five books of *Pièces de Viole* (Bibliothek der Musik-Akademie der Stadt Basel). Teplow states that they "were selected from among those defined by Marais as the most easy. [Consequently,] . . . the sarabande and courante . . . have been omitted because they exceed the technical limits of the method" (pp. x, 137). Thirty-eight complete pieces have been included.

9. Teplow's three main chapter sections appear across the top of each column. (A brief section in Chapter 4 titled "Clef Changes" has been omitted here.) Subtopics discussed within each section are listed in the columns. Those enclosed in brackets were extracted from the text; others are represented by subtitles.

<u>Bowing Techniques</u>	<u>Left-Hand Techniques</u>	<u>Ornamentation</u>
Chapter 2, Menuet IV/5		
multiple bow patterns	shifting	{ <i>tremblement appuyé</i> }
<i>enflé</i>	<i>doigt couché</i>	{ <i>tremblement lié</i> }
<i>inégal</i>		{ <i>pincé</i> }
Chapter 3, Le Basque IV/39		
{dots above notes}	using the fourth finger	{ <i>pincé</i> }
{ <i>petits coups d'archet</i> }	shifting	{ <i>cadence sans appuy</i> }
{ <i>détaché</i> }	<i>doigt couché</i>	
{ <i>sec</i> }		
Chapter 4, Prelude I/2		
right-hand gestures	horizontal fingerings	
<i>inégal</i>		
dynamics		
Chapter 5, Allemande IV/2		
<i>tapé-sec</i>	shifting	<i>l'unisson double</i>
<i>enflé</i>	fingering	<i>flattement</i>
<i>filé</i>	<i>tendue</i>	<i>plainte</i>
<i>elevé</i>		<i>agréments</i>
<i>jetté-elevé</i>		
Chapter 6, Gavotte V/79		
double push strokes	shifting & playing above the frets	
dynamics		
chords		
Chapter 7, Gigue III/5		
bowing the characteristic rhythm	fingering & shifting	rhythmic placement of the <i>agréments</i>
bowing nuances	<i>plainte</i>	
tone color		

Both viola da gamba and continuo parts are provided for the model and practice pieces. Each continuo part appears, in choir book format, below the corresponding viola da gamba part with one exception.¹⁰ It is

10. I.e. figure 3.13 "Double III/53" (to Menuet III/52). Because of insufficient space at the bottom of page 36, the continuo part is on the following page. Since it alone appears on that page, the viola da gamba part could have been placed there too, thus maintaining the format of the other pieces.

not clear why the continuo parts have been included. If the purpose is to provide opportunity for ensemble performance the continuo parts ought to appear as a separate partbook. If, on the other hand, they are intended to help the viola da gamba player relate the underlying bass and harmonic structure of the continuo to the viol part the pieces ought to have been copied into score form.

In addition to the complete pieces numerous helpful musical excerpts, too, are included. Some are of Teplow's devising; others are quotations, mostly from the music of Marais. Many of the quotations are in facsimile; some are in modern copy. All the music — complete pieces, quotations, and the author's own exercises — form part of the same numerical series for each chapter. While each has a number, the application of further descriptive identification seems inconsistent, even haphazard, and there is no clarifying comment about this in the preface. Only the complete pieces have been consistently identified fully with a figure label. The procedure for identifying the excerpts, however, is considerably variable. Some labels are complete down to the measure numbers (figures 5.62 and 5.63), but most include nothing more than the figure number.¹¹ Some figures include more than one discontinuous segment. For instance, figure 6.4 includes mm. 1-3, and 18-20, and figure 6.7 includes mm. 3-4 and 7-8. In each case the two segments appear on the same staff with only a double bar to distinguish the end of one and the beginning of the next. It would be clearer were the staff itself made discontinuous and sublettering provided for each segment. This is particularly true for figure 6.7, in which a double bar forms part of the first segment itself.¹² No attempt has been made to distinguish between facsimiles and modern copies. Nor is there a system for distinguishing editorial additions to the facsimiles.¹³ These together with other editorial inconsistencies and anomalies obstruct smooth assimilation of the valuable material in this study.

Teplow incorporates the work of Mary Elliott, her colleague from Stanford University, who has examined manuscript annotations found in a copy of Marais' second book in the Sibley Library at the Eastman

11. Figure 6.16, on the other hand, is identified fully but by means of an endnote referenced from the text rather than in its label, while figure 7.8 is identified (though not the measure numbers) both in the text and with a label.

12. Sublettering is used on occasion as for figures 6.14 and 6.17, and it increases clarity, even though the segments (five in figure 6.17) appear on one continuous staff.

13. These include primarily clef signs, measure numbers (sometimes circled and sometimes not, on occasion preceded by "m." but often not), and left-hand position numbers (figures 5.13-21 and figure 7.23).

School of Music.¹⁴ Given the large number of facsimile figures in Teplow's study, it is disappointing to find that her excerpts from the Sibley book are modern copies. The Sibley book is less readily available for consultation than the Ebner facsimiles, and the exact placement and appearance of the annotations would be of considerable interest. Nonetheless, inclusion of this material represents a valuable aspect of the study. It shows how even the highly specific French scores of this period were amenable to considerable interpretative amplification.

Teplow displays a knack for breaking down technical problems and providing step by step methods for overcoming them. This is illustrated in her instructions for shifting the hand to a higher position (figures 6.19-21) and for shifting in order to repeat a note with a different finger (figures 6.22-24). She provides useful graphic illustrations of the path taken by the bow in the performance of various technical maneuvers. These show bow movement as it appears from the player's vantage point (see especially ch. 4). Discussing Marais' use of *doux* and *fort* (p. 99) Teplow identifies the contexts in which these are found (change between major and minor modes, introduction of a new motive). She then describes specifically how the player may achieve the appropriate quality of sound with attention to the bow's point of contact, speed, pressure, and length of stroke.

Players of the viola da gamba who aspire to mastery of the music of Marin Marais will find this a valuable book. Its attempt to relate French viol technique to the particular requirements of specific forms raises it above the level of technical exercise alone. This justifies its inclusion among the many important studies in the UMI series Studies in Musicology. Before inception of the series the results of much early career research activity languished, far less readily accessible, in the archives of University Microfilms. The series editor, George Buelow, and the press deserve our gratitude for providing an incalculable service to the field of music historical studies.

Frank Traficante

14. Mary Elliott, "Technique and Style in the Performance of Marais: an Examination of Eighteenth-Century Handwritten Markings in Livre II *eme*" (Master's thesis, Stanford University, 1979).