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20|21

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# Episode 6: Rare French Cantailles

*season@HOME*

## La Grande Bande

Chelsie Propst, soprano  
Elizabeth York & Ginna Watson, violins  
Maryne Mossey, viola da gamba  
Michael Thomas Asmus, harpsichord

Friday 13 November 2020

### Program

Two Cantailles

Louis Antoine Lefebvre (1700–1763)

- I. L'Amour protecteur (1756)
- II. Les regrets (1748)

### Program Notes

La Grande Bande's sixth *season@HOME* episode remains in France as we move almost 70 years after the publication of Lambert's *Airs de cour*. This episode features two pieces written by Louis Antoine Lefebvre in the mid-1700s. These pieces are some of the best of the genre. And we're thrilled to be presenting them for you.

We had such a beautiful and artistically rich venue to record these videos. If you've been watching from the beginning, you've seen us explore the venue through the stained-glass windows and our changing performance locations. This week has us performing in the so-called Lady Chapel, with a beautiful painting of the Virgin Mary and Child on the altar behind us.

This recording of *L'amour protecteur*, in addition to the *récitatif* and second air from *Les regrets*, are the modern premieres of these pieces. We so hope that we can present these pieces and more by Lefebvre in the months and years to come.

#### *Louis Antoine Lefebvre*

Like many of my favorite unknown composers, we know very little about Lefebvre's life. We know that he was born around 1700 in Peronne, France, a small town in northern France. Sometime before 1750 Lefebvre became the organist at Saint- Louis-en-l'île. In 1756 he became the organist at Notre-Dame des Blancs-Manteaux about 15-minute walk from Saint-Louis.

His compositions were almost exclusively vocal music. In 1747, his third cantatille, *L'absence*, was reviewed in the *Mercur de France*, a important journal-literary publication for the French nobility:

Monsieur Le Fevre [sic], Organist at The Royal Church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Île, has published a short cantata (“cantatille”) for solo voice with instruments (“avec symphonie”) entitled *L'Absence*; the words are by Monsieur Heurtaux. The music in the cantatille is agreeable and it has a sweet melody. The pieces are sold at [...].

This composer has already acquired a reputation from those [cantatilles] which he has already published; public opinion seems to encourage him to do better and better, and one presumes that connoisseurs will be no less contented with these new works than they were with those which preceded it.<sup>1</sup>

In 1748, the year after this review, Lefebvre published *Les regrets*, and in 1756, *L'amour protecteur*. Lefebvre's larger vocal works, his motets, were performed at the Concert Spirituel beginning in 1749. In sum, Lefebvre composed 23 cantatilles, one cantata, twelve motets, and two divertissements (“entertainments”). Various airs, duets, and a Te Deum setting are lost.

Lefebvre's compositional style obviously leans towards the Italianate-style which was becoming a bit more popular beginning in mid-1700s France. In fact, the whole Italian vs. French style debate erupted into the Querelle des Bouffons (1752 – 1754), a battle between the supporters of the Italian opera and the French *tragédie lyrique*—the French opera style created by Jean-Baptiste Lully. The Querelle,

complete with a pamphlet war, ended with the opening up the French opera to more Italianate features.

The Italianate features begin to appear in Lefebvre's 1748 cantatille *Les regrets*. Although Lefebvre retains important French features—the *récitatif* and French ornaments—while incorporating Italian ideals like melodic focus and more adventurous harmonies.

*Les regrets* is a short, three movement cantata which tells the story of lost love and how it's human nature to need to love. As is often the case of French cantatas, Lefebvre begins with an air that establishes the “plot” of the cantata.

The first air is followed by a *récitatif*—a sung version of a dialog—which is given by a narrator. In this case, the narrator tells of the story of Hylas, the companion of Hercules.

The cantatille concludes with a moral-inspired air: human nature and destiny make us susceptible to Cupid's (Love's) charms.

Lefebvre's later cantatille, *L'amour protecteur*, is even more strikingly Italianate. In the first air, which talks about overcoming a love, is a beautiful and powerful air pleading with Cupid to release us from his power.

The *récitatif* for this cantatille is much less involved than that in *Les regrets*. Even though it is still in the French style, the *récitatif* feels more Italianate than the one in *Les regrets*.

In the final air, which talks about Love (Cupid) triumphing over human will to not love. The strength of Cupid's powers is accentuated by Lefebvre use of triple stops in the violin parts—playing three notes at a time. This technique can be found in the music of Arcangelo Corelli and is quite rare in France until the mid-1700s.

Program notes by MTA.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mercur de France*, June 1747 (vol. 2), 136. If you'd

like to see the original print you can do so [here](#).

## About La Grande Bande

With performances called “warm and sensitive” by the Minneapolis Star Tribune, La Grande Bande strives to present innovative, unique, and inspiring musical programs played on the instruments that premiere audiences might have heard. LGB is composed of musicians from across the United States and from around the world who are specialists in the field of Early Music—music written between c. 1600-1800—and who play on historical instruments and sing in an historical manner.

We aim to present “masterworks” alongside lesser-known compositions, illustrating the extensive musical production during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Education is crucial to our mission, be it through program notes, through directed-educational events, open rehearsal sessions, or another method. We see incredible value in resurrecting the music written by the great masters of our past; it's a historical, cultural, and musical lesson rolled into one.

To learn more about our musicians, or about our programming, visit [www.lagrandebande.org/about](http://www.lagrandebande.org/about).

## Acknowledgements

The *season@HOME* would not be possible without the help and support of our volunteers, including Brian & Diana Asmus, Adam Asmus, and the musicians who helped with venue set-up and clean-up as we made these recordings. We also need to thank Big A Productions for graciously donating your time for preparing, recording, and editing all of the videos in this series. If you want to become a volunteer, fill out the questionnaire at [www.lagrandebande.org/volunteer](http://www.lagrandebande.org/volunteer).

Lastly, we want to thank all of you for tuning in! Producing a series like this has not been without challenges. Regardless, we passionately believe that our programming is something which our communities should have access to for years to come. Tell your friends! Tell your family! Tell your neighbors! We cannot thank you all enough for the support that you have shown us. We hope you will continue to support us in the years to come.

We look forward to seeing you, once again in-person whenever it is safe enough to do so.

Warmest wishes,

*La Grande Bande*

## About the Musicians



**Chelsie Propst** (soprano) is an active performer of early music currently living in Madison, WI. She regularly sings with the Mirandola Ensemble (Minneapolis, MN), Transept (Sioux Falls, SD), the Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble (Madison, WI), the Madison Bach Musicians, and the Madison Choral Project. Chelsie was also a member of the Rose Ensemble for several years. She has performed on stage with various early music ensembles, including Liber, Piffaro, Dark Horse, and Incantare. In addition to her ensemble work, Chelsie performs as a recitalist and concert soloist, most recently as a featured artist with the Western Piedmont Symphony (Hickory, NC). Stage appearances include *Second*

*Woman and Belinda* in Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas*, *L'Amour* in Rameau's *Pygmalion*, and *Donna Elvira* in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Upcoming solo performances include Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Western Piedmont Symphony. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Historical Musicology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Violinist **Elizabeth York** lives in St. Paul, MN and is active as a performer and teacher across the region. She is Associate Principal Second violin of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, and performs on baroque violin with the Lyra Baroque Orchestra. She is violin faculty at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University, Upper Midwest String Camp, and Birch Creek Music Performance Center, and teaches violin and viola privately.

Recent performance highlights include chamber music projects with La Grande Bande, 113 Composers Collective, and Sioux Falls Chamber Music Collective, and solo violin recitals at The Baroque Room in St. Paul and at the BARC in Windom, MN.

Elizabeth holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts in violin and viola performance from Stony Brook University in New York, where she also received a Masters of Music in violin performance.



**Ginna Watson** is a Minneapolis-based violinist who specializes in historically informed performance. She plays baroque violin and viola with the Lyra Baroque Orchestra and medieval bowed strings and harp with The Rose Ensemble for Early Music. Ginna also performs with Consortium Carissimi and Sprezzatura, ensembles dedicated to performing 17th-century music on historic instruments.

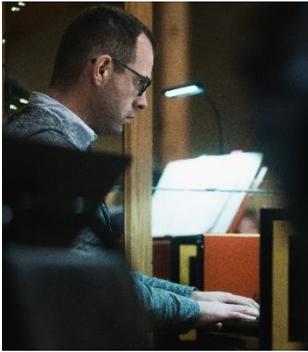
Ginna has performed in concert series and festivals around the country, including the Boston Early Music Festival, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix, and Princeton University.

She is concertmaster of the annual Early Music Montana festival. Internationally, she has performed throughout France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Bolivia. Ginna frequently gives masterclasses on medieval and baroque performance practice, including Houston Baptist University, Colorado State University, Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity in Los Angeles. Ginna is the violin instructor at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Hailed by the Minneapolis Star Tribune as “nimble expressive” and possessing “warmth and sensitivity”, Baroque cellist and violist da gamba, **Maryne Mossey**, is an active performer and teacher based in the Twin Cities. She has performed regularly at venues ranging from Carnegie Hall and Merkin Concert Hall in New York, to the Baroque Room and Sundin Music Hall in Minnesota, with such ensembles as Ensemble 212, the New York Youth Symphony, and the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. On Baroque cello and viola da gamba, she currently plays with La Grande Bande, and Lyra Baroque Orchestra, as well as other collaborative early music projects around the upper midwest.

Maryne was selected as violist da gamba for the 2019 American Bach Soloists Academy. She has also performed at workshops for the Amherst Early Music Festival and International Baroque Institute at Longy. Maryne’s teachers have included cellists Jerome Carrington (Juilliard Pre-College), Clive Greensmith (Tokyo String Quartet), and Marcy Rosen (Queens College). Her studies in early music have been with Julie Elhard, Sarah Cunningham (Juilliard), and Phoebe Carrai (Juilliard). She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Queens College and a Masters from the University of Minnesota. Maryne plays on an 1806 Thomas Dodd cello and a 1991 François Bodart viola da gamba. Maryne resides in St. Paul with her two Italian greyhounds.





Harpichordist & Conductor, **Michael Thomas Asmus**, is currently studying at Stony Brook University for a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Harpsichord Performance with Arthur Haas. As a conductor, he has been praised as a “conscientious [conductor]” with “a natural talent” and “a bright future” by audiences and ensembles alike. He has been lauded as a “versatile” continuo player (CNVC.org) with “judicious, rhythmically supple harpsichord playing” (Star Tribune). He is consistently lauded by his colleagues as a great musical collaborator.

Since June 2011, Michael has acted as the Music and Artistic Director of La Grande Bande, a non-profit, period instrument orchestra and chorus he founded in the same year. La Grande Bande will produce its first full concert series for the 2019–2020 season.

## 2020 – 2021 Concert Season Contributors

Current as of 12 November 2020

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The *season@HOME* would not be possible without generous financial support from the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation and the following individuals and businesses.

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# LA GRANDE BANDE

*season@HOME*

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## **Episode 4: William Boyce *Concerto Grosso***

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## **Episode 5: Michel Lambert's *Airs de cour***

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## **Episode 6: Rare French Cantatas**

Friday | 13 November 2020

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