

## Géraldine Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Rennes 2 University

Today, April 11th, 2017, I am going to present to you

a musical performance called “Memory and Baroque Opera”,

In a World premiere, 32 musicians will recreate extracts from the mythological opera *Thétis et Pélée* (1689)

by the philosopher Fontenelle (*Entretiens sur la pluralité des Mondes*)

and the composer Pascal Collasse;

with the cooperation of the Baroque Flume Orchestra (Claude Hamon Conductor),

with a dozen musicology students and also ERASMUS students from Rennes 2 University,

and Océanie Craveiro, a 24 –year old hearing-impaired and blind young woman, suffering from Alström Syndrome,

she will play the harpsichord or the organ,

while Marie Thomas will be at the post of harpsichordist during this re-creation.

First, I would like to thank the CREA team, who believed in this work from the very start,

as well as Claude Hamon, Conductor of the Baroque Flume Orchestra,

as well as François Cam (Conductor of the Sorbonne Ancient Choir), who made this performance possible.

This world re-creation of extracts from *Thétis and Pélée* seems to a major event in the rediscovery of the French operatic heritage.

In fact, this real masterpiece from the *Grand Siècle* is unknown today,

despite its real success at the Académie Royale de Musique from its creation till 1750, and has had to be recreated.

This work already embodies some of the great ideas of the age of Enlightenment,

no doubt thanks to Fontenelle but also to Collasse,

who belonged to anti-establishment circles where these ideas of Enlightenment were already emerging.

A forward-looking work from a historical perspective, but also from a musical practice perspective.

Indeed, for me this work cannot reach its full potential without youth participation (about ten students, by my side,

who have had between 18 to 36 hours of lessons with me).

Rennes 2, in particular, is an ideal place for this kind of musical re-creation.

In addition to being a Historically Informed Performance, this unique performance also includes Océanie Craveiro,

who suffers from moderate hearing loss, is fully blind with Alström Syndrome and who has accompanied us since the beginning in this endeavor

that could be qualified as superhuman for her, taking into account her various pathologies.

We can say that Océanie is a rising star as a *basso-continuo* player and is also amongst the harpsichord world's top performers.

She is a bright young musician, especially from an intellectual point of view.

In 2016 June, she was class valedictorian of her Bachelor's degree in musicology, at the University of Franche-Comté, France,

where I managed the Musicology department during 10 years.

First, I will explain what we did ... Michael Parisot, Océanie's teacher in *basso-continuo* at the conservatoire of Besançon (France),

made a transcription of the basso-continuo parts (source Christophe Ballard, ed. 1689),

which were then translated into Braille, so that Océanie could learn the scores, but some of these scores arrived too late,

so, through listening, she had to learn by heart parts of some choruses.

With my colleague François Cam (Conductor of the Sorbonne Ancient Choir) at the Besançon University we had previously prepared Océanie;

she *sang and danced* "in the dark!" in the *Carnaval de Venise* (1699) by André Campra.

32 musicians joined us: all volunteers – no funding allocated to us, all passionate for French Baroque Music,

just like Océanie Craveiro who has shared this love with us for several years at the Besançon University; thus, it is this very expertise which we are bringing to Rennes 2.

Thanks to the team of CREA, I will take with me these pictures and sounds - which will doubtlessly be wonderful! - to the *6th Symposium "Neuroscience and Music: Music, Sound and Health"* (Boston, June 15-18 2017)

I will present in a “Poster” Océanie Craveiro’s medical case, my goal is quite easy:

to help in showing the beneficial influence of music on human beings, in terms of the stimulation of its vital, intellectual, cognitive functions,

brought on by intensive musical practice, particularly when combined with theatre, music and dance practice.

This was already shown in the experiments conducted with the students and Océanie at Besançon,

with conclusive results, because Océanie was very fond of dancing the Minuets or the *Pavanes*, accompanied by students.

In fact, through intensive musical practice since her early childhood, Océanie

has completely changed the path of her own destiny regarding this particularly serious illness, however, this is currently just a scientific hypothesis...

I also think that the fact that Océanie is such a positive woman, with a great sense of humour and sometimes so...

epicurean, that all this has led to this alternative beautiful destiny!

Finally, this is an unprecedented human adventure, the performance presented here is a very short version played in concert (with some costumes)

With very representative extracts of different choruses (*Divertissements* from acts I, II, V acts,

and the dramatic event in act III when the Oracle reveals that the lovers, Thétis and Pélée, must be reunited.

Regarding Collasse’s music, its style is very different from that of Jean-Baptiste Lully’s.

I’ve become aware of it, particularly this year, when singing this opera with my students,

we realized that it contains “modern” musical devices in terms of chorus and orchestra.

And, on this subject, we know that Collasse is also known for his orchestrating skills

–Collasse is a true “hard core” of the French Baroque Opera!

Furthermore, the choral performance was very complicated as Collasse imagined, before Berlioz’s time,

spatial and scenic effects (by means of double-choruses), effects never used by Lully.

At last, I would like to explain the myth of *Thétis et Pélée* which is perhaps unknown by the general public!

Pélée is a Greek hero, a king of Thessaly, and Thétis is a Nereid, a goddess;

this myth is very important because it is a prelude to the Trojan War.

The wedding of Thétis et Pélée finishes the opera, depicting the representation of a golden age, of suspended time.

At the end, you'll hear a very large, festive chorus,

which represents something extremely significant and well known among Humanists,

because this wedding reflects the Union, the Harmony between the Human order and the Divine order

before the War and the Fall of Troy, in other words before the tragedy.

I think, in their opera, Fontenelle and Collasse show a kind of "warning" on the noxious effects of war.

(beyond its very entertaining sight, and in the same spirit as in the opera *Achille et Polyxène* in 1687 by Collasse),

This is why this "Tragédie en musique" is very special as it deals with a subject...

that is not the typical subject of a tragedy (thus it is here a kind of *Pastorale héroïque*),

but is rather a subject which foretells future tragedies, in a spectacular manner.

Hence, for me, it is the last moment before the Fall, Disaster. It is the vision of a Humanity that has not yet been destroyed by War.

As to the student's part, the very substantial improvements noticed in the learning of this music

(with pronunciation of French 17<sup>th</sup> century), taking into account the few teaching hours required,

shows that music plays a growing role in the neurosciences;

and I believe it is a beautiful symbol to begin with this opera which has not been played since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

MUSIC.....

### Acte I

#### Chœur des Divinités de la Mer :

« Tout reconnaît l'amour, tout se plaît dans ses chaînes,

Tout cède à ses lois souveraines ;

Mais il n'est rien dans l'univers

Qui lui soit plus soumis, que l'Empire des Mers. »

**Un Triton et Chœur des Divinités de la Mer :**

« C'est dans nos flots que Vénus prit naissance,

Nous fûmes les premiers sous son obéissance ;

La Mère d'Amour fit sur nous

L'essai de ses traits les plus doux. »

**AIR POUR LES TRITONS (danse)** (instrumental)

**Acte II airs et chœurs « Aimez, Déesse »...**

**Chœur des Grecs & des Perses :**

« Aimez, Déesse,

Tout vous en presse,

Rendez heureux

Jupiter amoureux.

Un Dieu puissant reçoit nos vœux sans cesse

Et de ce Dieu vous recevez les vœux.

Aimez, ....

De vos désirs si la Gloire est maîtresse ;

La Gloire même approuvera vos feux.

Aimez, ...

**Chœur des Ethiopiens et des Scythes**

Que ne peut point l'Amour par ses charmants

appas ?

Dans nos déserts on ne s'en défend pas.

Fière beauté, voyez de fiers courages

Rendre à l'Amour les plus tendres hommages.

Que ne peut point .....

N'espérez point braver une puissance  
À qui nos cœurs n'ont pas fait résistance.

Que ne peut point ..... »

### ACTE III

#### Ministres du Destin :

« Que tout l'Univers ressente  
Un respect plein d'épouvante !  
L'avenir va se révéler.  
Le Destin est prêt à parler.

### Acte V

#### Chœur de Tous les dieux du Ciel et de la Terre :

**« Célébrons tous, par des concerts charmants,**

Du souverain des Dieux le triomphe suprême.

Célébrons le bonheur extrême

De deux parfaits Amants.

*Dieux du Ciel*

Quels honneurs Jupiter ne doit-il pas attendre ?

Que ces tendres amants sont charmés en ce jour !

Qu'il est beau de vaincre l'amour !

*Dieux de la Terre*

Qu'il est doux de s'y rendre !

Tous

Célébrons tous, ... »