

Titled "*Amours contrariées*," this CD album contains a selection of the most celebrated cantatas — with stories of star-crossed love — and instrumental works by two influential French Baroque composers, Clérambault and Rameau. Louis-Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749) came from a musical family whose members had served the French kings since the 15th century. The son of a member of the *Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy* ("The King's Twenty-Four Violins"), he studied organ with the noted organist André Raison (c.1650–1719), and composition and singing with Jean-Baptiste Moreau (1656–1733). Widely recognized as one of France's finest organists, Clérambault was music superintendent to Madame de Maintenon, second wife of King Louis XIV, and had held organist positions at several churches in Paris — the Grands-Augustins, Saint Sulpice, and the Grands-Jacobins, and at the Maison Royale de Saint-Cyr near Versailles.

Clérambault's compositions include works for organ and for harpsichord, solo and trio sonatas, airs, divertissements, motets, and five volumes of cantatas published between 1710 and 1726. While his cantata output was considerably modest compared to his colleagues, Clérambault was hailed by his contemporaries and many historians as the leading composer of the French cantata. In the preface of *Recueil de cantates* (1728), an important source to the early history and aesthetics of the genre, J. Bachelier (fl. late 17th–early 18th c.) gives accounts of praises of Clérambault's cantatas as "works of the greatest beauty, and there are few that can compare with their grace of melody, their forceful accompaniments, and the difficulty of their

execution," and as musical gems "reserved for the most important holidays and Sundays."

Many of Clérambault's twenty-five cantatas were drawn from mythological subjects. The tale of *Pirame et Tisbé* (Second Book, 1713), famously adapted by Shakespeare in his *Romeo and Juliet*, is taken from the Fourth Book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (c.8 AD). Pyramus and Thisbe, two young Babylonian lovers forbidden from marriage by their feuding families, arrange to meet one night outside the town to elope. The recitative "*Elle cherche l'Amant*" describes Thisbe's waiting for Pyramus and her encounter with a fierce lion, portrayed by a fast and aggressive bass line. She manages to escape but drops her veil, which is seized by the lion and smeared with blood. Convinced that Thisbe has been killed, Pyramus takes his own life. When Thisbe returns and finds her beloved dead, she takes her life to be with him.

Regarded by many as Clérambault's finest cantata, *Orphée* (First Book, 1710) has also been described as the most admired French cantata in the eighteenth century. It was performed on multiple occasions at the *Concert Spirituel*, a public concert series in Paris, and even inspired parodies by several composers such as Charles Piroye (c.1668–c.1730) and Nicolas Racot de Grandval (1676–1753). The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice has been the source of countless works of art, literature, and music over the centuries. Clérambault's version begins with Orpheus's lament after the death of Eurydice. In the Underworld, Orpheus attempts to use the power of music to move Pluto to restore his

beloved. Withholding the tragic ending of the legend, the cantata concludes with a joyful aria "*Chantez la victoire éclatante*" celebrating the hero's victory.

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) was not only a preeminent composer of the eighteenth century, but also an influential theorist in the history of music. Not many details are known of the early years of Rameau's life, which were mostly spent in the French provinces. Born in Dijon, Rameau was the son of Jean, a local organist, and Claudine Demartinécourt, the daughter of a notary. He probably received his early musical education from his father, and may have taken lessons from Claude Dery (1670–1714), organist of the Sainte-Chapelle in Dijon. After attending the Jesuit College of Godrans, where he developed an interest in music theater, he had a brief sojourn in Milan. On his return, he toured with the Lyons Opera as a violinist and subsequently held organist positions in Avignon, Clermont, and Dijon. His first published work, *Premier livre de pieces de clavecin* (1706), appeared during his first residency in Paris in 1706–1709, where he was organist to the Jesuits of the Rue Saint-Jacques and the Mercedarians of the Rue du Chaume. The opening *Prélude en la mineur*, containing a repeated unmeasured section followed by a measured passage in 12/8 time, is one of the last examples of the unmeasured harpsichord prelude and Rameau's only contribution to the genre.

Rameau's cantata *L'Impatience* may have been written during his second appointment at the

cathedral of Clermont from 1715 to 1722, during which he composed many motets and cantatas and wrote his monumental theoretical work *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722). Comprised of three arias of different characters (gay, tender, and light), each preceded by a recitative, this romantic pastoral work depicts a lover impatiently longing for his beloved at dawn in the woods. During his wait, he comes to envy the birds singing in happiness. Finally Corine arrives, and promises happiness thereafter.

The *Pièces de clavecin en concert* (1741), Rameau's only instrumental chamber output, was written during his mature years with an established reputation as an opera composer. The collection, featuring the virtuoso obbligato harpsichord with the accompaniment of the violin or flute and the viola da gamba, contains five concerts of three to four movements bearing character titles or the names of dedicatees. The *Cinquième concert* contains three movements in D minor/major. *La Forqueray*, containing extensive passages of hand-crossing, is a fugal work in honor of Antoine Forqueray (1672–1745), or his son Jean-Baptiste (1699–1782), both acclaimed viol players and composers. The expressive *La Cupis* is probably a tribute to Marie-Anne Cupis (1710–1770), often referred to as La Camargo, a celebrated dancer of the *Académie royale de la musique*, and took part in the premiere of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733). *La Marais* is undoubtedly a dedication to the composer and viol player Marin Marais (1656–1728).

—Sonia Lee

1

**Récitatif**

Pirame, pour Tisbé, dès la plus tendre enfance,  
 Du Dieu qui fait aimer éprouva le pouvoir.  
 L'himen alloit enfin couronner leur constance,  
 Quand les auteurs de leur naissance  
 Leur deffendirent tout espoir.  
 "Quoi, je vous pers," dit l'amoureux Pirame,  
 "Je verrois vos beaux yeux pour la dernière fois?  
 Ah! si vous partagez mes transports et ma flâme,  
 Fuions, dérobons-nous à de si dures loix."

**Air**

"Si votre tendresse est extrême,  
 R'assurez un fidèle Amant.  
 Doit-on reconnoître en aimant  
 D'autres loix que de l'Amour même?  
 En un bonheur rempli d'apas,  
 Changez le trouble qui me presse.  
 Le tendre Amour vous rend maîtresse  
 De ma vie et de mon trepas."

2

**Récitatif**

Tisbé, pour résister à l'ardeur de ses vœux,  
 Opose en vain son devoir et ses larmes.  
 La raison a de foibles armes  
 Contre un Amant aimé, fidèle et mal'heureux.  
 Elle promet enfin d'accompagner sa fuite.  
 "De nôtre sort," dit-il, "laissez-moi la conduitee."

**Lentement et marqué**

Aux pieds de ces tombeaux sacrés,  
 Qui par les Thebains reverés

1

**Recitative**

From his tenderest youth, Pyramus felt the power of  
 the God of Love.  
 In his passion for Thisbe their loyalty was to at last be  
 rewarded with marriage.  
 When their fathers shattered all such hope,  
 "What! Must I lose you?" said the enamoured  
 Pyramus, "Must I for the last time gaze upon  
 your beautiful eyes?  
 Ah! If you share my feelings of love,  
 Flee then with me and escape such unfair laws."

**Aria**

"If your tender feelings know no bounds,  
 Reassure a faithful lover.  
 In love, should one abide by any laws  
 Other than those of love itself?  
 Transform the fears which oppress me  
 Into joy filled with charms.  
 Tender love gives you dominion  
 Over my life and my death."

2

**Recitative**

Futilely resisting the flame of her lover's vows,  
 Thisbe counters them with tears and a sense of duty.  
 Reason is but a feeble weapon  
 Against a lover who is loved, faithful and unhappy.  
 Finally, she agrees to flee with him.  
 "Let me," he says, "now steer our fate."

**Slowly and emphatic**

At the foot of these sacred tombs,  
 Venerated by the Thebans

Conservent de nos Rois les cendres immortelles,  
 Quand la nuit calmera nos allarmes cruelles,  
 Venez dans ces augustes lieux  
 Confirmer nos serments à la face des Dieux.

**Récitatif**

Bientôt au gré de leur impatience,  
 La nuit couvre le jour de ses voiles épais.  
 Tisbé dans l'ombre des forests  
 Est conduite par l'espérance.

3

**Air**

"Vole," dit-elle, "Amour,  
 Vien dans l'obscurité guider mes pas timides.  
 Tes feux sont pour les cœurs de plus fidèles guides  
 Que les feux du flambeau du jour."

4

**Récitatif**

Elle cherchoit l'Amant  
 qui la tient asservie,  
 Quand d'une Lionne en furie  
 Les fiers rugissements la remplissent d'horreur.  
 Elle fuit, tremblante et craintive,  
 Son voile tombé sur la rive,  
 Du Monstre assouvi la fureur.  
 L'infortuné Pirame en relève les restes,  
 "Grands Dieux!" dit-il,  
 "à ces marques funestes,  
 Puis-je douter de mon mal'heur."

**Plainte**

"Quoi? Tisbé tu n'es plus?  
 Et ma douleur mortelle,  
 Me laisse respirer dans ce moment affreux?  
 Quel Amant fut plus mal'heureux?"

And where the immortal ashes of our kings are housed,  
 When night has cased our distress,  
 Come to this solemn place  
 To confirm our oaths before the Gods.

**Recitative**

Soon, in keeping with their impatience,  
 Night smothered day with its thick veil.  
 In the shade of the forest,  
 Thisbe is led on by hope.

3

**Aria**

"Fly, Love," she says, "Come guide my uneasy steps in this  
 darkness.  
 For a loving heart, your fire is more faithful a guide  
 Than is the fire of day."

4

**Recitative**

As she sought out the lover  
 who had enslaved her heart,  
 the proud roaring of a furious lion  
 Filled her with terror.  
 She fled, trembling and fearful.  
 Her veil, which had fallen to the ground,  
 sated the beast's fury.  
 The hapless Pyramus picked up what was left of the veil.  
 "Almighty Gods!" he cried,  
 "seeing these dire remnants,  
 Can there be any doubt of my misfortune?"

**Lament**

"What? Thisbe, you are no more?  
 And my mortal pain lets me live at such a woeful time?  
 What lover was ever more miserable?"

La Parque inflexible et cruelle  
Précipite tes pas dans la nuit éternelle  
Quand l'Amour t'accorde à mes vœux."

5

**Vivement**

"Venez Monstres affreux,  
Ma douleur légitime  
Ose braver votre courroux."

**Lent**

"Aimable et cher objet,  
ton trépas est mon crime.  
Ah! quand tu meurs pour moi,  
Mon cœur seroit jaloux  
Qu'une autre main t'immolât ta victime."  
À ces mots,  
de son dard il se perce le cœur.  
Quel spectacle pour une Amante  
Qui vient lui prouver son ardeur!  
De Pirame mourant, elle connoît l'erreur.  
Elle tombe sans voix, éperdue et tremblante,  
Et relevant le fer qui lui perça le sein,  
Pour s'unir à son sort  
termine son destin.

6

**Air**

Amour, qui voudra désormais s'empresse à porter tes chaînes?  
Si tu fais ressentir tes plus cruelles peines  
Aux plus zélés de tes sujets.  
Tu refuses tes récompenses aux plus fidèles cœurs que tes  
trais ont soumis.  
A qui n'en connoît pas le prix,  
En aveugle tu les dispenses.

The cruel and inexorable fates have dragged you into  
eternal nights.  
Just when my love has won you over."

5

**Vividly**

"Come, dreadful monsters,  
My righteous sorrow  
dares challenge your rage."

**Slow**

"My dearly beloved,  
your death is my doing.  
Ah! Since you die for me,  
My heart would be jealous  
For another hand to slay you."  
With these words,  
with his dagger he pierced his heart.  
What a cruel fate for a lover  
Who has come to confess her passion!  
Finding Pyramus as he lay dying.  
She fell, speechless, lost and trembling.  
Then, grabbing the weapon up from his heart  
She pierced her own breast  
to forever join their fates.

6

**Aria**

Love, who now will rush to bear your chains?  
If you inflict your cruellest sorrows  
On your most loyal subjects.  
You deny your rewards to your most faithful followers,  
Yet you dispense them blindly to those unaware of  
their value.

L'IMPATIENCE

8

**Récitatif**

Ces lieux brillent déjà d'une vive clarté.  
Depuis longtemps j'ai vu  
naître l'aurore;  
Le charmant objet que j'adore  
Devait la précéder dans ce bois écarté.  
Mais je ne la vois point encore.

**Air gai**

Ce n'est plus le poids de ma chaîne  
Qui me fait pousser des soupirs!  
La seule attente des plaisirs  
Fait à présent toute ma peine!  
Attends-tu pour payer ma flamme,  
Amour, que je sois plus épris?  
Tu connais l'ardeur de mon âme,  
En peux-tu retarder le prix?

9

**Récitatif**

Les oiseaux d'alentour chantent  
dans ce bocage,  
Et je connois à leur ramage  
Que rien ne manque plus au bonheur de leurs feux, Ils  
goûtent avant moi  
les fruits de la constance;  
Peut-être mieux traités, sont-ils plus amoureux.

**Air tendre**

Pourquoi leur envier leur juste récompense?  
L'amour ne me fait point d'offense  
Quand il rend les amants heureux!  
Il songe à redoubler, par mon impatience,  
Le doux plaisir qui doit suivre mes vœux.

IMPATIENCE

8

**Recitative**

Already do these vales dazzle with brilliance.  
Hours ago have I witnessed  
the birth of the dawn;  
The charming object of my affection  
Should have preceded it into these secluded woods,  
But I have not seen her as of yet.

**Aria (gay)**

It is no longer the weight of my chain  
That makes me sigh and moan!  
Now it is the sole anticipation of pleasure  
That causes all my suffering!  
Before rewarding my passion, are you waiting,  
Love, for me to be more impassioned?  
Knowing the desire of my soul,  
Can you still withhold the prize?

9

**Recitative**

The surrounding birds sing  
in this grove,  
And I can tell from their warbling  
That their desire is fulfilled,  
They savor, before I do,  
the fruits of loyalty;  
Perhaps better treated, they are more loving.

**Aria (tender)**

Why envy their just reward?  
Love does not offend  
When it makes lovers happy?  
Love would increase, by my impatience,  
the tender pleasure which should follow.

10

**Récitatif**

Mais Corine paraît,  
je vois enfin les charmes  
Qui vont dissiper mes alarmes.  
Allons tomber à ses genoux!  
Oiseaux, de votre sort,  
je me suis plus jaloux!

**Air léger**

Tu te plais, enfant de Cythère,  
A faire acheter tes douceurs.  
L'amant que tu veux satisfaire  
N'est point exempt de tes rigueurs!  
Pour être heureux dans ton empire,  
Il faut qu'il encoûte des pleurs.  
Plus un fidèle amant soupire,  
Mieux il connaît le prix de tes faveurs.

ORPHÉE

14

**Récitatif**

Le fameux chantre de la Thrace  
Par les regrets les plus touchants  
Par les plus tendres chants  
Déplorait ainsi sa disgrâce.

**Air tendre et piqué**

Fidèles échos de ces bois,  
Cessez de répondre à ma voix.  
Rien ne peut soulager la douleur qui me presse,  
Je ne reverrai plus  
l'objet de ma tendresse.  
Fut-il jamais amant plus mal'heureux,  
Fut-il jamais un destin plus barbare?  
Le tendre Amour nous unissait tous deux,  
La mort cruelle nous sépare.

10

**Recitative**

But behold Corine;  
I finally gaze upon the charms  
That will dispel all my fears.  
Let me fall to her knees!  
Birds, I am no longer jealous of  
your good fortune.

**Aria (light)**

You take pleasure, child of Cythera,  
In making one pay for your delights.  
The lover you wish to please  
Must first endure to your cruelties!  
To be happy in your realm,  
One must pay with tears.  
The more a faithful lover sighs,  
The more he enjoys your prize.

ORPHEUS

14

**Recitative**

The celebrated bard of Thrace,  
in the most touching sorrow  
and in the tenderest of songs,  
thus lamented his loss.

**Aria (tender and brisk)**

Faithful echoes of these woods,  
cease replying to my voice.  
Nothing can ease my sorrow,  
Never again will I see  
the object of my affection.  
Was there ever unhappier lover.  
Was there ever a more savage fate?  
Gentle love united us,  
Cruel death now separates us.

15

**Récitatif**

Mais que sert à mon désespoir  
De gémir et me plaindre encore?  
Pluton retient les charmes que j'adore,  
Allons implorer son pouvoir.  
Ce gouffre obscur m'offre un passage  
Pour pénétrer aux sombres bords,  
Portons-y mon amour, ma douleur,  
et ma rage, R'amenons Euridice  
ou restons chez les morts.

16

**Air gai**

Allez Orphée, allez, allez,  
que votre amour extrême  
Serve d'exemple à l'Univers.  
Il est beau qu'un mortel  
passe jusqu'aux Enfers  
Pour se rejoindre à ce qu'il aime.  
Hâtez-vous, hâtez-vous généreux Amant,  
Votre amour sert à votre gloire  
L'avenir aura peine à croire  
Qu'on ait aimé si constamment.  
Une tendresse conjugale  
N'a point encore forcé d'époux  
À passer la barque fatale,  
Cet honneur n'était dû qu'à vous.

17

**Récitatif**

Cependant le héros arrive  
sur l'infemale rive,  
Et malgré les loix d'Atropos,  
Au fier Dieu des Enfers  
il adresse ces mots:

15

**Recitative**

Yet what good are these moans,  
my despair and self pity?  
Pluto detains my beloved,  
Let me now beseech him.  
This dark chasm offers me a way  
to reach his somber shores,  
Let me carry my love, my pain,  
and my rage there, and retrieve Eurydice,  
or else remain among the dead.

16

**Aria (gay)**

Go, Orpheus, go, go,  
that your tremendous love  
may serve as an example to the Universe.  
It is right that a mortal  
should travel to the Hells  
to reclaim the one he loves.  
Make haste, generous lover,  
your devotion increases your glory.  
The future will hardly believe  
that anyone could have loved so faithfully.  
Even wedded bliss  
does not endow a husband with such strength  
as to cross over in that lethal boat,  
that honour is yours alone.

17

**Recitative**

Meanwhile the hero arrives  
at the infernal shore,  
and despite the decree of Atropos,  
to the proud God of Hades  
he addresses these words: