

French Baroque recorder music from Marin Marais

Following 18th-century musical practices, Michael Lynn has adapted this newly discovered flute music for recorders and explains how to play it.



WRITTEN BY MICHAEL LYNN

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As recorder players we often borrow repertoire from other instruments. Among the most popular is music written for transverse flute, also called the Baroque flute or traverso. On the other hand, modern flute players also include in their repertoire lots of music written specifically for the recorder, borrowing pieces such as the G.Ph. Telemann A Minor suite, various G.F. Handel sonatas, J.S. Bach's Brandenburg concertos nos. 2 and 4, and much more.

In operas and larger ensemble music, the recorder had always held a firm place up to the 1680s. About then, the transverse flute began to replace the recorder, and the major wind composers began writing solo sonatas and suites, as well as chamber music, for the traverso.

By the time solo music for the Baroque flute first appeared in France, there was almost no solo repertoire specifically for the recorder. (In England more music was being written for the recorder and less for the traverso.)

It is somewhat surprising how little actual recorder music was published in France, compared to repertoire for the traverso. Jacques-Martin Hotteterre (1674-1763, the most celebrated member of the family of famous wind instrument makers) was probably the most important composer of early 18th-century flute music in France. His publications, and those of others, often had instructions for playing the music on recorder by transposing it up a minor third. Thus, when taken up a minor third, a piece in the flute's native key of D major would be in F. This is the native key of the alto recorder that was popular then. The process usually works quite well.

France was, in the late 17th century and early 18th century, a place with a strong interest in music for wind instruments—the recorder, traverso and oboe. The earliest French published chamber music for wind instruments

was the *Pieces en Trio* of Marin Marais (1656-1728). People often think of those works as being the first chamber music for the traverso, at least from France. I think those pieces by Marais are really pitched specifically for the recorder, though you can also play them on the transverse flute or oboe.

The title page says *Pour les Flutes, Violin, & Dessus de Viole* (treble viol). At this time, the word “Flute” was used for the recorder, not the transverse flute. The cover engraving does include the recorder, oboe and transverse flute, which can all play the music perfectly well—but the range is restrained to perfectly fit the recorder, with the lowest note being F. This is an exception because, after this chamber music from Marais, most all wind music in France was published to fit the flute and had to be adapted to work on the recorder.

The recently discovered music collection

In early 2023, I acquired a large collection of French flute music with publications from 1707-11 by Hotte-terre; the flutist Michel de La Barre (1675-1745); the composer/opera director Pierre Gaultier de Marseille (c.1642-96); the composer mostly of motets, Edme Foliot (died 1752); and Marais. Most of the music included is well known and easily available, although it is very rare to find these printed editions that are 300+ years old—but the music of Marais in this manuscript is unknown and a very special addition to the flute (and now recorder) repertoire.

Marais tells us in the preface for one of his five books of gamba music: “These pieces are written in a different way than those of my first book. I took care to compose them in such a manner that they can be played by all kinds of instruments, such as organ, harpsichord, theorbo, lute, violin, and german flute (traverso), and I dare to flatter myself that this has succeeded,

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by having tested it on the latter two instruments.” Thus we know that Marais himself played the Baroque flute.

The auction house that sold me the volume of music stated that most of the Marais flute music was arrangements of pieces from his second book of viol music. When I received the book and started examining the music, I found only one piece from the gamba suites. It appears, at least at this point, that the majority is all fresh, undiscovered music, at least in this version for flute and bass.

The Marais section contains 70 pieces, with the pieces alternating between those for flute and bass and those for two flutes. These duets, also previously unknown music, will work nicely on two recorders using the normal technique of transposing

up a minor third. Along with my edition for flute of the 70 Marais pieces for Alry Publications, I will also publish a volume containing the duo movements in editions for both flute and recorder, all in the same book.

In this article I have included one of these movements plus another duo that Hotteterre arranged from a famous piece of Marais’s viol music, both edited here for recorders.

How to play the music by Marais

The first piece (on pages 32-33) is entitled “Bouquet–Les Caracoleurs.” The interesting subtitle, “Les Caracoleurs,” refers to a special step or movement performed by dancing horses, making a half circle and then jumping forward. Evidently the term could be applied to jugglers or other people doing a similar type of gymnastic dance. As I play the piece, I can sense the idea of going in circles, with the different voices chasing each other.

As is often the case with music for traverso transposed up a minor third for recorder, we get to play in the high register, with pieces often going up to high F or even G. This piece works nicely at a fairly quick tempo, counting in half notes. Be aware that the second page includes some runs in 16th notes, so don’t start faster than can be

LINKS OF INTEREST:

- Previous American Recorder articles on Baroque ornamentation by Michael Lynn: AR Fall 2020, “An Introduction to the Trill and Appoggiatura,” https://americanrecorder.org/docs/AR_Fall2020_Ornaments1_appog_trill.pdf; AR Winter 2020, “An Introduction to the Mordent/Battement,” https://americanrecorder.org/docs/AR_winter2020_Education_mordent_FIN2.pdf; AR Spring 2022, “An Introduction to notes inégales,” https://americanrecorder.org/docs/AR_Spring_2022_LEARN_notesinegales.pdf
- An additional LEARN ornamentation series article by Michael Lynn covers flattement, or finger vibrato: AR Spring 2021, https://americanrecorder.org/docs/AR_202103Spring_Flattement.pdf
- Videos demonstrating these ornaments are on the ARS YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/americanrecordermag

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▲ Bouquet-Les Caracoleurs by Marin Marais. Transcribed for recorders by Michael Lynn.

sustained throughout the whole piece.

The only ornament sign Marais uses in these pieces is the trill sign, “+,” meaning a trill from the upper note.

As is often the case with French music, we should consider playing the eighth notes unequally—or *inégalement*, as sources call this style. For a more complete explanation of *inégalement*, see my previous article in *AR*, listed in the LINKS section for this article, along

with the associated video. Because the tempo is fairly quick, the *inégalement* would be rather light—not too dotted. Play the first note in the eighth-note pair only slightly longer than the second, somewhat like “swung” notes in jazz.

The second piece (on pages 34-35) is an arrangement of a dancelike *Musette* movement, also by Marais and arranged by Hotteterre. This was clearly a very popular piece, as I have

found it in many different sources, including scored for flute and bass in my manuscript of Marais music. It was originally for viol and continuo and is in Marais’s book II for viol. Hotteterre includes it in his *Airs et Brunettes* for two or three flutes.

The piece on the next two pages is for two traversos, and I have transcribed it for recorders using the normal manner of transposition up

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▲ **Musette de Mr. Marais**, composed by Marin Marais, arranged by Jacques-Martin Hotteterre. Transcribed for recorders by Michael Lynn. A sign has been added for the “B” section repeat, which was unclear in the manuscript.

The image displays a musical score for a French Baroque recorder piece by Marin Marais, spanning measures 33 to 48. The score is written for two staves, both in treble clef and featuring a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is characterized by its continuous, flowing nature, typical of the bagpipe family. It includes various ornaments: trills (marked with a '+'), turns (marked with a '∞'), and mordents (marked with a 'v'). The notation uses many slurs, which are to be taken literally, meaning the tongue only plays the first note of the slur. The piece is divided into four systems, each containing two staves. The first system (measures 33-39) shows a melodic line with trills and a bass line with a drone. The second system (measures 40-43) features a more complex melodic line with trills and a bass line with a drone. The third system (measures 44-47) continues the melodic line with trills and a bass line with a drone. The fourth system (measures 48-54) concludes the piece with a final melodic line and a bass line with a drone.

a minor third. A very popular member of the bagpipe family, the musette was considered an indoor bagpipe, as it is not loud and has a refined sound. It isn't an instrument that can be tongued, so its articulations are mostly very fast finger gestures. The overall sound is quite continuous, with a drone throughout.

One can see that Hotteterre uses many slurs, which are to be taken literally; tongue only the first note of the slur.

Hotteterre's edition uses four differ-

ent ornament signs in this piece. The "+" specifies a trill as described above. In one place (measure 6), he designates a turn, marked with a "∞." The third ornament sign, also used only once (measure 12), is the "v" symbol, by which Hotteterre means a port de voix, or appoggiatura from below.

The other ornament he notates is the mordent or battement. This appears as the short vertical stroke above a note, and is played quickly, on the beat. Play the written note,

then very quickly move to the note below and back up. This is a way to give a lively accent to a particular note. (See my previous article and video on the mordent/battement.)

Be careful to begin this piece at a moderate speed, as there are some very fast passages—they require good finger control, especially playing smoothly through instances of the E^b.

These are both fun pieces that will be an enjoyable addition to the recorder repertoire. ❁