

In the French Golden Age, during the reign of Louis XIV, « the Sun King », France becomes the most powerful nation in Europe. The newly created court of Versailles, as envied as admired, was itself a centre of propaganda for the glory of the kingdom to the rest of the world. Created by J. B. Lully and the librettist J. Ph. Quinault, the *Tragédie Lyrique* represents the ideals of grandness and absolutism of the « Grand Siècle », joining the plastic arts, the music, the theater and the dance in a genuinely French show.

But these works weren't just one more part of the court showcase created for the high nobility. From Versailles and Paris, they were exported to other cities of France and the rest of Europe. All the performed operas were published and often reedited in expensive and luxurious editions, under Lully's exigencies, and after his death, in the so called « partitions réduites », much more practical for its performance out of the theatre, in a domestic context.

We wanted to focus on this intimal and informal side of the French opera, still very unknown despite it's this way of making music -at home, in the drawing room and in the social gatherings- and not at the theater, the one that was a part of the daily life at the time.

We have drawn up a program with the most important expressive elements from this language, taken from some of the most representative works of the early *Tragedie Lyrique* and *Comedie-ballet*. We have conserved the logic of the rhetoric paying a great attention to the tonal relations and the proportions, and placing each dramatic stereotype where it would be in any of these tragedies.

The "partitions réduits" have been the historical support that had allowed us to explore this forgotten dimension of the opera, and to get inside the privacy of the French musical circles of the time. The goal is to tell a story without words – helped just by some key quotations by the librettists themselves- and to make the most of the biggest advantage that chamber music owns towards (against, i don't know how to say it) orchestral : individualty.

These reduced scores transform the five-parts orchestral writing in a 2 voices texture with basso continuo, becoming three or even four parts when trios or special contre-parties were originally written. Its sound result is often very similar similar to the chamber music of that period, like pieces en trio, by Marais, Sonates en trio, by Hotteterre or the Concerts Royaux by François Couperin-who imitates this very style in his « Concert dans le goût theatral », but sometimes, the dramatic exigences of the context this pieces were originally thought for, suggest new unexplored colours when translated into a chamber setting.

We present this "living room (lounge) opera" as a little sample of works that were so strong and so deep-rooted in the French spirit that only stopped being performed more than one century after their creation, when the Revolution considered them a too powerful symbol of the past splendour.