Doulce Mémoire

Margaret Little & Sylvain Bergeron

(photo © François Gélinas)

Margaret and Sylvain take you on a thrilling journey through time with their exotic instruments, the viola da gamba and the lute. Along the way, you will discover the great hits of the 16th and 17th centuries: lively, virtuoso dances and songs evoking joy and nostalgia in turn. Strong emotions guaranteed!

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Margaret Little, treble and bass viols
Sylvain Bergeron, archlute

PROGRAM

Recercada primera, quarta, ottava — Diego Ortiz (1510-1570)

Divisions on a ground — Mr John Banister (c. 1624–1679)
The Duke of Norfolk (Pauls Steeple)
The Division Violin (John Playford – 1684)

Gagliarda – Chiacona - Gagliarda - — Andrea Falconieri (c. 1585-1656)
Corrente a la Francese (solo luth)

Ricercata Ottava — Giovanni Bassano (1560? – 1617)
Diminutions sur « Ancor che col partire » — Ricardo Rogniono (c.1555 – c.1620)

Roger of Coverly — The Division Violin
Divisions upon "John come kiss me now"

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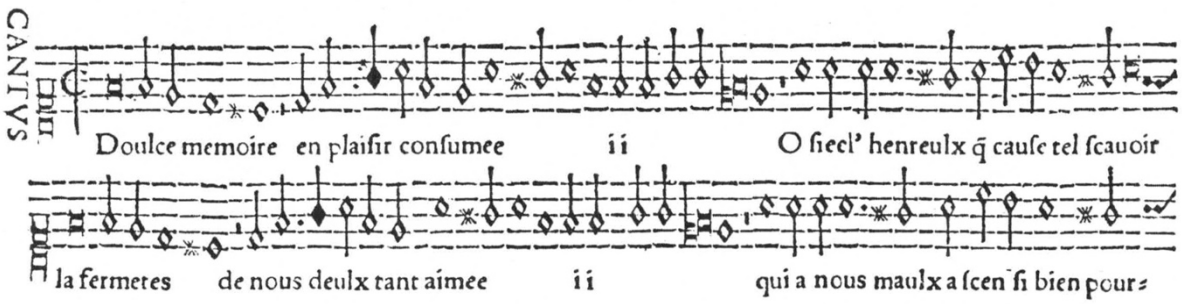
Duo « Doulce Mémoire » (1539) — François de Layolle (1492-1540)
Recercada seconda sobre « Doulce Mémoire » — Diego Ortiz

Another Ground — Mr John Banister
Tollets Ground — (The Division Violin)

Toccatta, Corrente I – II (solo luth) — Andrea Falconieri

Ricercata per viola bastarda — Aurelio Virgiliano (c. 1540-c. 1600)
Dolce Memoy — Vincenzo Bonizzi (début XVIIe siècle)

Faronells Division on a Ground (Folia) — The Division Violin



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Or the art of improvising variations in the 16th and 17th centuries

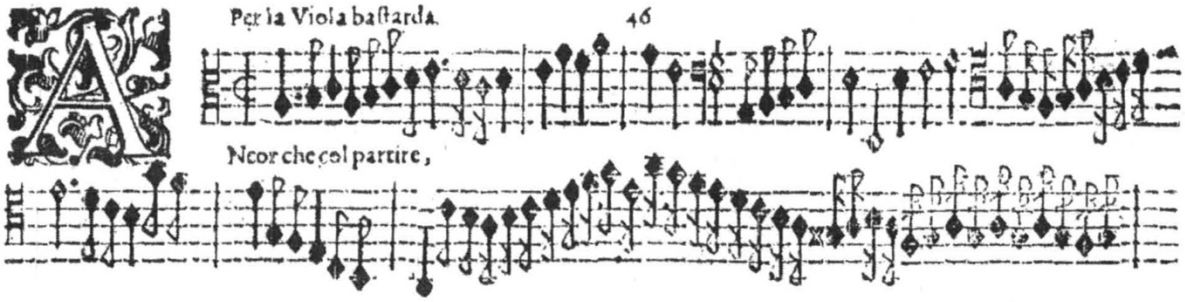
Who among us hasn't been amazed by the virtuoso improvisations of jazz musicians or surprised and charmed to hear our favorite song performed in a new arrangement? Our ancestors were just like us! The art of improvisation and variation was an integral part of the musical repertoire of every musician in the 16th and 17th centuries, even giving rise to competitions, much like our improvisational theater league.

Our program takes its name from one of the most famous madrigals of the 16th century, Doulce Mémoire by Pierre Sandrin. The beauty and simplicity of its melodic lines and the elegance of its poetry undoubtedly explain the immense popularity of this song throughout the century. There are more than thirty versions, for all kinds of instruments and combinations, ranging from the simplest to the most complex. We have chosen three versions for you.

The madrigal Ancor che col partire also inspired many ornate versions. Ricardo Rogniono's ornamentations are among the most inspired. The type of ornamentation in question is that of “diminutions,” a technique that consists of adding lots of small notes between those of the original song. A very simple melody then becomes unrecognizable and is transformed into a virtuoso piece!

The pieces by Diego Ortiz that open our program are composed on the bass line of the “Passamezzo Antico,” a series of four chords that served as the harmonic pattern for many popular dances of the time in Italy.

John Playford published The Division Violin in 1684. We have chosen a few of these “divisions” that work very well on the treble or bass viol. These variations are written either on grounds (repeated bass lines, as in Pachelbel's famous Canon) or on popular songs such as John Come Kiss Me Now, and the style is reminiscent of the art of our own fiddlers!



MARGARET LITTLE

Margaret Little is one of the leading figures on the viola da gamba scene in Canada and internationally. Renowned for her deep artistic commitment, musical intelligence, and expressive clarity of playing, she has devoted her career to promoting the viola da gamba, both as a soloist and in ensembles. She also plays the baroque viola.

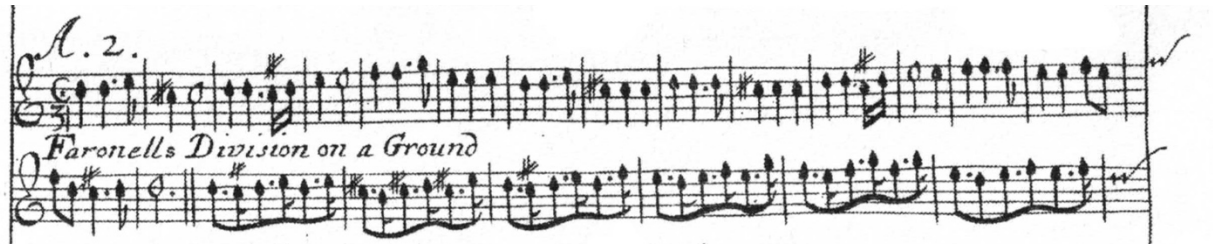
In the 1990s, Margaret founded the viola da gamba ensemble Les Voix humaines with Susie Napper. Together for more than thirty years, they have redefined the art of the viola duo, recording over forty albums and performing on stages around the world. Their musical complicity has made them outstanding ambassadors for the viola repertoire. They have earned critical acclaim and several prestigious awards (Prix Opus, Adisq, Diapason d'Or, etc.).

More recently, Margaret has been playing in a duo with Christophe Gauthier (harpsichord), Sylvain Bergeron (lute), and Antoine Malette-Chénier (harp). She has explored the dialogue between music and dance with Stéphanie Brochard and contributed to the creation of the show Atempor/elle. She performs frequently on both sides of the Atlantic, either as a soloist or with ensembles such as the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal, Clavecin en Concert, Les Violons du Roy, Les Boréades, Pallade Musica, Les Idées Heureuses, the Spinoza and Poiesis ensembles, and Capriccio Stravagante. She has performed in concert with renowned soloists such as Skip Sempé, Jordi Savall, Wieland Kuijken, Barthold Kuijken, Charles Daniels, Suzie LeBlanc, and Daniel Taylor. She is regularly invited to perform the viola da gamba solos in J. S. Bach's Passions with various orchestras.

Margaret has recorded over a hundred albums (mainly on the ATMA label), including three solo albums, the most recent of which is devoted to J. S. Bach's sonatas for viola da gamba and obbligato harpsichord with Christophe Gauthier.

She has taught viola da gamba at Concordia University, Cegep Saint-Laurent, and Université de Montréal, where she has trained several young up-and-coming violists. In the summer, she teaches at the CAMMAC Music Centre. She gives workshops and master classes in Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, and Mexico. Margaret regularly serves on juries for the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec, the Conseil des Arts de Montréal, Musicaction, and the Mathieu Duguay Competition in Lamèque.

Margaret Little plays a seven-string bass viol made by Judith Kraft and Bernard Prunier in Paris (1982) based on Colichon. Her bows are made by Quebec bow maker Louis Bégin.

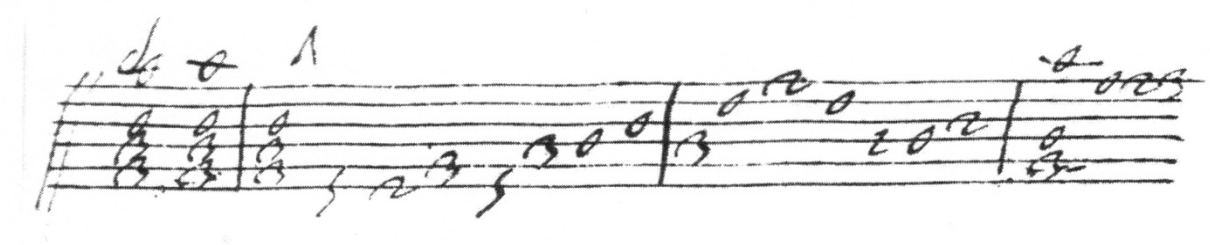


SYLVAIN BERGERON

Considered "a supremely refined, elegant and cerebral musician" (Ottawa Citizen), Sylvain Bergeron is a master of the lute and family of plucked instruments, including the theorbo, archlute and baroque guitar. He is in great demand on the North American music scene as a soloist and continuist. He is one of the pioneers of early music in Canada and has helped establish the lute as a viable instrument at the highest level of professionalism. His work has confirmed the importance of plucked instruments and helped validate their place in Baroque ensembles and orchestras in Canada.

Sylvain Bergeron has participated in more than 70 recordings, many of which have won prizes and awards. His most recent solo album, Gioseppe Antonio Doni's Lute Book, published by ATMA Classique in 2015, was widely praised for his "strong lute technique combined with outstanding musical intelligence and impeccable phrasing" (The WholeNote), while the magazine Goldberg described his game as "imbued with both great rhythmic vitality, delicacy and nuance".

Co-founder and co-artistic director of La Nef, Mr. Bergeron has directed several award-winning productions of this Montreal ensemble since 1991. He has taught lute at McGill University and the Université de Montréal since 1992.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- *Access to the hall: three hours before the concert.*
- *One straight-backed chair with a flat seat and one adjustable piano bench, or two piano benches*
- *We bring our own music stands*
- *Adequate stage lighting to see our scores, but we can also bring music stand lights.*
- *Light lighting in the hall so that we can see the audience.*