

**THE BLANCROCHER *TOMBEAUX*:
INTERPLAY BETWEEN LUTE AND HARPSICHORD
IN MID-SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE**

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1. Introduction

In 1652, Paris served as a center of musical and cultural unity for some of the most famous composers and musicians throughout Europe. These musicians included Froberger, the skilled German harpsichordist whose fame allowed him to travel to such places as Rome and London; Louis Couperin, the harmonically innovative keyboardist who pioneered the harpsichord's genre of the unmeasured prelude; Denis Gaultier, one of the most well-known lutenists in France, and two other great lutenists of equal merit, François Dufaut and Charles Fleury, Sieur de Blancrocher. Unfortunately for Sieur de Blancrocher, that year would be his last—sometime in November, the lutenist and young father tragically fell down a flight of stairs to his death. In response, the four other composers each wrote musical works to commemorate their patron and friend in light of his untimely death. These works were called *tombeaux* (with the singular form *tombeau*), a musical form that had emerged in the previous half-century in the lute repertoire with the purpose of paying homage to a notable individual after his or her death.

The *tombeaux* for Blancrocher (two for harpsichord and two for lute) provide a useful framework for the study of how the lute and harpsichord repertoires informed one another in 1650s France. Not only does presence of these *tombeaux* show that lutenists and harpsichordists had close

contact with one another during this time period, but each piece also demonstrates characteristic stylistic elements that testify to manners of style and techniques on both the harpsichord and the lute. The French lute had peaked in its popularity by the mid-seventeenth century and would begin to decline in the decades following, but the harpsichord had just begun to become fashionable in the 1650s.¹ Thus, the decade in which the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher were composed marks the only time period in which both instruments had equal social footing and hence is when the lute and harpsichord repertoires were most likely to be informed by each other.

Through an analysis of the four *tombeaux* dedicated to Sieur de Blancrocher, I will argue that these pieces mark the first time that French harpsichordists substantially utilized the lute's style in a contextually comprehensive way. Although we will examine musical examples in which composers for the harpsichord sporadically employed techniques derived from the lute's perceived limitations, an analysis of the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher will show that these pieces marked the beginning of when composers took ownership of these idiosyncrasies and comprehensively transformed them into the harpsichord's own aesthetic language.² This appropriation of lute techniques would become a permanent fixture in the French harpsichord style for the remainder of the seventeenth century and beyond. In addition, the examination of these pieces informs the transcription and performance practices for the harpsichord and lute repertoires of mid-seventeenth-century France; particularly, I present here a transcription of the only piece currently attributed to Blancrocher, a suite movement (and likely a *tombeau*) that has not yet been examined in detail nor transcribed out of its manuscript's tablature.

¹ David Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 19, 47.

² The lute's "perceived limitations" are those idiosyncratic aspects of lute technique that arise out of necessity because of the design of the instrument, such as the re-striking of notes because of the lute's quick sound decay.

2. History of lute transcriptions

Because the evolution of French harpsichord music was at an early, formative stage in the middle of the seventeenth century, its development was prone to substantial influence from external musical aesthetics, particularly those of the French lute. Likewise, this influence may be reciprocal, since by the end of the century, harpsichord music was being transcribed for the lute just as often as lute music was being transcribed for the harpsichord.³ This provides a reason that lutenists and harpsichordists were able to use each other's stylistic elements in their own compositions throughout this time period, since musicians were directly playing lute compositions on the harpsichord and vice versa. The earliest reference to such a transcription is that of the French polymath Marin Mersenne. In his 1638 work *Harmonie universelle*, Mersenne mentions the transcription of lute music into keyboard notation "to transcribe the riches and beauties of the lute onto other instruments."⁴ The lute was an established part of Parisian culture by that point in time, but the harpsichord was a fairly novel instrument. Hardly any sources before 1620 mention harpsichord repertoire, but by 1652, both instruments had become socially prominent in a golden era of overlap. This era was short-lived, however; the lute steadily declined in prominence after the 1650s until references to it (such as those in the *Mercure Galant* and in Parisian archives) dropped drastically around 1680 as the harpsichord took over in social importance.⁵

A variety of reasons have been posited for the decline in the use of the lute around this time period, but chief among them was undoubtedly the difficulty in reading lute tablature, as was

³ In 1675, for example, Huygens speaks of his transposition of a Froberger gigue on the lute. Constantin Huygens, *Musique et musiciens du XVII^e siècle; correspondance et oeuvre musicales*, ed. W.J.A. Jonckbloet and J.P.N. Land (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1882), 69.

⁴ Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie Universelle, Traité des Instrumens a chords, Preface au lecteur*. (Paris: Sebastien Cramoisy, 1636): "pour transposer les beautez & les richesses du Luth sur les autres instrumens." This translation and all others are my own except when noted.

⁵ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 20.

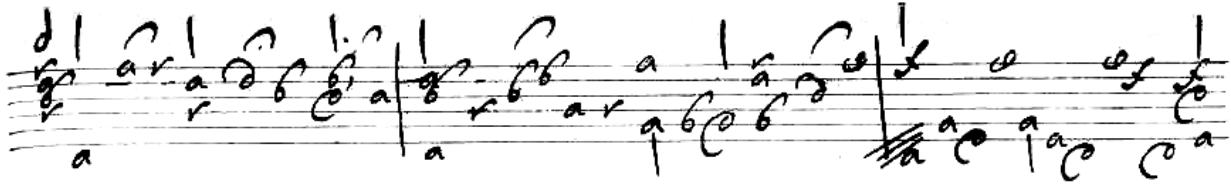


Figure 1. The opening measures of Dufaut's "Tombeau de Mr. Blancrocher," in lute tablature from the Saizenay manuscript.

recognized as early as 1679.⁶ What exactly was this system of notation that drew musicians away from the lute? While no universal codified system of lute tablature existed in the seventeenth century, lute tablature at its core consisted of alphabetical letters placed on a set of six lines, each representing a course on the lute. The opening measures of Dufaut's *tombeau* for Blancrocher (Fig. 1) illustrate a French type of tablature.⁷ The letter "a" indicates playing on an open string, the letter "b" indicates playing on the first fret, the letter "c" (which often resembles "r," as it does in Fig. 1) indicates playing on the second fret, and so on. Changes in the rhythms from one note to the next are indicated above the six lines, though information about how long a note should be sustained is not fundamentally notated (by the nature of the instrument, each note is sustained until its string is re-struck). But in contrast to notes played on an instrument like the organ, notes plucked on the lute do not sustain over their entire theoretical duration, since each note decays rapidly in less than a few seconds. Therefore, lute notation does not need to include sustaining time information that would be necessary for a longer-sustaining instrument like the organ or the violin. While the notation of tablature has been used for the lute since the conception of written notation for the instrument, in seventeenth-century France it had become undermined by the cleaner and more mainstream pitch notation used for other instruments like the keyboard. As time went on, more and more musicians opted not to learn the "ancient" notation for lute in favor of the more

⁶ Perrine, *Livre de Musique pour Lut* (Paris: n.p., n.d., privilege dated 1679).

⁷ Vaudry and Chauvel, *Manuscrit Vaudry de Saizenay: tablature de Luth et de théorbe de divers auteurs*, 189.

modern and accessible pitch notation, and as a result, most either gave up trying to play the lute or tried to make the lute more accessible through transcriptions.⁸

Around 1680, the French theorist and lute teacher le Sieur Perrine published two works centered on the lute, *Livre de musique pour le lut* and *Pieces de luth en musique*. In the process, he transcribed the instrument's tablature into the more mainstream pitch notation. In these books, he says, "one should find no difficulty in playing my transcriptions on both the lute and the keyboard."⁹ Perrine not only shows that the lute and keyboard at this time were closely connected in function and aesthetic outflow, but he also places more value on the music itself than on its instrument of choice. Many of his contemporaries, such as the keyboardist Jean-Henri D'Anglebert, felt differently and instead emphasized the contextual nature of music rather than recognizing its theoretical, universal nature. As a result, D'Anglebert chose to make keyboard arrangements of lute music in a way that recognized the context of the instrument on which it was played, specifically highlighting the harpsichord's sonorities and technical possibilities.

One example that highlights the differences between Perrine's and D'Anglebert's styles of transcription is the piece "La Superbe" by the lutenist Ennemond Gaultier, a work whose multiple differing harpsichord transcriptions allow for easy comparison between writing styles (Fig. 2).¹⁰ The upper excerpt (a) is a literal transcription of "La Superbe," identical in style to how Perrine transcribed pieces for the lute onto the harpsichord (this transcription is by the modern editor Souris). In contrast, the bottom excerpt (b) is a transcription of the same music that made its way into a manuscript of harpsichord pieces copied by D'Anglebert after 1677. In the latter example,

⁸ Matanya Ophee, "The History of Transcriptions of Lute Tablature—1679 to the Present." Paper presented at the conference "Le Luth en l'Occident" (Paris, May 1998).

⁹ Perrine, "Avertissement" in *Pieces de Luth en Musique* (Paris: author, n.d., privilege dated 1680), 4: "on trouvera aucune difficulté à les jouer dans leur dernie^{re} perfection tant sur le Lut que sur le Clavessin."

¹⁰ James R. Anthony, *French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeux to Rameau* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), 291.



Figure 2. Excerpt from “La Superbe,” transcribed by (a) Souris and (b) D’Anglebert.

D’Anglebert thickens the texture because of the ease in playing multiple notes instantaneously on the harpsichord. For example, after the three-note pickup beginning this excerpt, where a literal transcription introduces the tonic with a single note followed by another single note an octave lower, D’Anglebert fills in a triad and expands the range to three octaves, because of the increased capabilities to play such chords on the harpsichord. In addition, D’Anglebert irons out the syncopation and increases the ornamentation, characteristically adhering to his own harpsichord style over the style of lutenists. It should be noted that a competent performer in Perrine’s day would likely not play the music in Fig. 2 as simply as it is literally written, instead adding embellishments, so the contrast is not as extreme as the scores might suggest; however, the transcription by D’Anglebert expands on the lute piece in a way that goes beyond what would typically be accomplished through improvised ornamentation. Thus, this example and countless others point to a complex interplay that existed between the lute and the harpsichord around this time period—many composers like Perrine espoused that music could be played just as easily on the harpsichord as on the lute, while many like D’Anglebert felt that music on the harpsichord should reflect the subtleties of the instrument and should not be composed in the same way as it would on the lute. This contextual understanding that D’Anglebert embodies, the adherence to an

instrument's sonorities, is the same concept that drove the lutenists and keyboardists of the 1650s to think about how the sonorities of the lute could be realized on the harpsichord and vice versa.

Perhaps the most intuitive avenue through which one can explore how lute techniques were brought to the harpsichord repertoire is a systematic study of the harpsichord transcriptions of lute pieces progressing throughout seventeenth-century France, such as those by Perrine or D'Anglebert. However, aside from the infeasibility of analyzing such a large body of works in its entirety, any deductions of influence would be at best ambiguous and at worst incorrect. Because these pieces were originally written for lute, the music itself leaves vestigial traces of lute technique which obfuscate the distinction between aesthetic lute mimicry and original lute creations. Particularly, the lute-like figures analyzed within these types of pieces could just as easily indicate harpsichordists' creative integration of lute sonorities into their own music as they could indicate harpsichordists' direct copying of figures created by lutenists that are tailored to the lute. In contrast, music that would clearly show how harpsichordists wished to mimic the aesthetic qualities of the lute would more likely be found in their own compositions, so that it is clear they are not simply imitating lute music note-by-note. These pieces for the solo harpsichord in mid-seventeenth-century France, written by composers who are familiar with the lute style through acquaintance or experience, are exemplified here by the *tombeaux* associated with Blancrocher. These *tombeaux* evidently represent one of the first substantial examples of harpsichordists employing a comprehensive understanding of lute sonorities in their compositions.

3. Death of Blancrocher

In arguing that the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher were some of the first harpsichord pieces to go beyond a simple mimicry of what composers saw as deficiencies in the lute's idiosyncrasies,

we must explain some of the biographical context surrounding their composers (to show how harpsichordists were acquainted with lutenists and lute styles), then describe their musical form in more detail (to understand how the medium enabled composers to creatively adapt lute sonorities). The only source of writing that describes the events surrounding Blancrocher's death in any detail is from a postscript to Froberger's *tombeau* for Blancrocher, found in Manuscript no. 743 at the Archiv der Minoritenkonvent in Vienna. That piece begins with the French description, "*Tombeau* made in Paris on the death of Mr. Blancheroche, which is [to be] played very slowly with discretion, without regarding any measure."¹¹ The postscript, written in Latin, reads as follows:

Note well. Monsieur Blancheroche, the distinguished Parisian lutenist, Monsieur Froberger's best friend, went for a walk with Monsieur Froberger after having had dinner with Madame de Saint-Thomas in the gardens of the Palais-Royal. He then returned home and went upstairs to do something; he fell down the stairs, so badly that he had to be taken to his bed by his wife, his son and others. Monsieur Froberger, seeing the accident, ran quickly for a doctor. And there also arrive[d] surgeons who made an incision to discharge the stagnant blood from his wounded foot. There also arrive[d] Monsieur Marquis de Termes, to whom Mr. Blancheroche entrusted his children. And soon after, he breathed his last.¹²

The death of Blancrocher occurred around November 1652.¹³ Some works of research claim that Blancrocher fell from a ladder and died in Froberger's arms.¹⁴ However, the Latin word *scalas* used here in its plural form almost always indicates a flight of stairs, as opposed to the singular form *scalam* for "ladder." As Froberger notes in this postscript, Blancrocher did not immediately die after his fall, but in the end, blood-letting was not successful, and he passed away

¹¹ J. J. Froberger, from Archiv der Minoritenkonvent, no. 743 (Vienna: manuscript). "Tombeau fait à Paris sur la mort de Monsieur Blancheroche; lequel se joue fort lentement à la discretion sans observer aucune mesure."

¹² Rudolf Rasch, "Johann Jacob Froberger's travels 1649–1653," in *The Keyboard in Baroque Europe*, ed. Christopher Hogwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 27. Translation adapted from Rudolf Rasch and Hugh Ward-Perkins.

¹³ Rudolf Rasch, "Johann Jacob Froberger's travels 1649–1653," 28.

¹⁴ See, for example, "Johann Jacob Froberger," *All Music Guide to Classical Music: The Definitive Guide to Classical Music*, ed. Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan, Allen Schrott (Ann Arbor: All Media Guide, 2005), 469.

surrounded by those he loved. Blancrocher left behind a wife and children, in addition to a number of both named and unnamed close friends.

The importance of Froberger's postscript in the context of understanding the interplay among mid-seventeenth-century French musicians (and by extension, the interplay between lute and harpsichord repertoire) lies in the interpersonal relationships mentioned. Madame de Saint-Thomas was a noted lutenist and singer, so it is clear that Blancrocher's social circle with Madame de Saint-Thomas, Marquis de Termes, and others was primarily composed of musicians.¹⁵ Most importantly, Froberger came to be close friends with Blancrocher during his time in Paris. As a result, Blancrocher was indeed acquainted with music of the harpsichord through his friendships with noted keyboardists, and those keyboardists likewise were acquainted with music of the lute. David Ledbetter notes that Blancrocher himself possessed a spinet, the most popular keyboard instrument before the harpsichord became prevalent in the decade before Blancrocher's death.¹⁶ If this is not enough, the mere fact that at least four composers of harpsichord and lute music wrote *tombeaux* for Blancrocher gives credence to the supposition that these composers were familiar with each other on both a social and a musical level and therefore could easily have utilized the aesthetics of both the lute and the harpsichord in their music.

4. The form of *tombeaux*

Tombeau, the French word for "tomb," refers to a musical "tombstone," a way of commemorating an individual after his or her death. Most *tombeaux* in the seventeenth century were composed for the lute, and the first example is from 1638 with a *tombeau* for René

¹⁵ The gossipier Tallemant de Réaux notes that Madame de Saint-Thomas was also a courtesan, perhaps the reason why Froberger dissociates himself from the "dinner" Blancrocher attended. Tallemant de Réaux, *Historiettes de Tallemant de Réaux*, ed. A. Adam (Paris: Gallimard, 1961, Collection Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 2:638ff.

¹⁶ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 47.

Mésangeau by fellow lutenist Ennemond Gaultier.¹⁷ With respect to form, the genre of the *tombeau* only adheres to certain general trends. It is typically characterized as a slow, plaintive allemande grave in 4/4, though in some cases, a gigue grave is more suitable to describe its form. In addition, lute *tombeaux* often follow a binary form and include small, imitative figures throughout. The concept and form of the *tombeau* is superficially similar to the earlier *pavan* and the Italian *lamento*, but unlike the latter, *tombeaux* are not primarily concerned with expressive elements of mourning. Rather, *tombeaux* provide a slow, meditative platform upon which composers can depict whatever aspects of the dedicatee they wish. For the harpsichord, only three *tombeaux* survive today—the two for Blancrocher composed by Froberger and Louis Couperin, and one by D'Anglebert dedicated to the harpsichordist Jacques Champion de Chambonnières. These harpsichord *tombeaux* have a much freer form, akin to that of a prelude, than their lute counterparts (for example, Froberger mentions that a performer of his *tombeau* for Blancrocher should not worry about individual measures).¹⁸ Thus, *tombeaux* provide the perfect platform for a composer to express himself and his instrument naturally and in a unique way.

In addition to the reasons explained above, a full analysis of the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher will prove elucidating because they provide a rare opportunity to study a collection of pieces that are known to have been composed at approximately the same point in time. Since dates from this period are often difficult to pinpoint, one may argue that these pieces could have been composed decades apart (as the dates of the compiled manuscripts in which copies have survived might purport). That argument is reinforced when one considers modern *tombeaux*: Australian composer Arthur Benjamin's *Le Tombeau de Ravel* (1949) was written a dozen years after the honored composer's death, and Ravel himself wrote *Le Tombeau de Couperin* from 1914-17, almost two

¹⁷ Ibid., 122.

¹⁸ See footnote 11.

centuries removed from François Couperin's death. However, these modern *tombeaux* tend to focus more on memorializing someone as an important or influential individual, whereas the *tombeaux* of the seventeenth century focus more on the personal aspect of the memorialization. This falls right in line with the idea of a modern English-speaking individualistic culture versus an early French collectivistic culture, and it would especially hold true for the *tombeaux* composed by Blancrocher's close friends. As an example, the lutenist Denis Gaultier wrote a *tombeau* for his friend and fellow lutenist Henri de L'Enclos after his death in 1649. This *tombeau* first appears in Gaultier's *La Rhétorique des dieux*, which is dated no later than 1652.¹⁹ The fact that Gaultier's *tombeau* was published in a large collection only a few years after the death of L'Enclos shows that lutenists of the seventeenth century primarily wrote *tombeaux* while they were still mourning the loss of a notable individual who was close to them. As it turns out, Gaultier's *tombeau* for Blancrocher also first appears in *La Rhétorique des Dieux*, under the title "Andromède."²⁰ Thus, one can safely assume from both a scholarly and an intuitive point of view that the four *tombeaux* written for Blancrocher were all composed in the few months following the lutenist's death.

Because the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher provide a snapshot in history when multiple pieces were composed in Paris simultaneously, they present a unique window into the stylistic aesthetics of and the connection between the lute and the harpsichord at that time and place. These pieces provide the first substantial evidence of French harpsichordists utilizing the sonorous qualities of the lute (as opposed to what their composers viewed as limitations of the instrument) in their compositions, though a proper assessment of this claim necessitates an examination of the harpsichord repertoire prior to 1652.

¹⁹ Denis Gaultier, *La Rhétorique des dieux*, ed. David Buch, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 62 (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1990), 248.

²⁰ Denis Gaultier, *La Rhétorique des dieux*, ed. David Buch, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 62 (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1990), 12.

5. Pre-1650s harpsichord repertoire

Before the publications of Henri Dumont in 1652, only a small number of sources have survived from the so-called “lost” period of French harpsichord repertoire reaching back to the Attaignant prints of the 1530s.²¹ The most substantial French harpsichord piece from the sixteenth century is a pavane by Jacques Cellier, dated 1594.²² This piece is likely a beginner’s piece, designed to accompany a diagram of a spinet, since it consists of a simple texture with unsophisticated left-hand chords and right-hand melodic line. Cellier’s 1594 pavane shows no influence from the lute style, nor does the next substantial French keyboard source chronologically, a collection of works compiled at Aberdeen c. 1620. Pieces from the Aberdeen source such as “La Princesse” (Fig. 3) are amateur compositions for the keyboard, with no subtle attention to the effects that can be brought out with the instrument (let alone with another instrument, concerning influences from the lute).²³

Despite the fact that scant repertoire exists for French harpsichord music before 1652, several examples from the first half of the seventeenth century do showcase a utilization of lute technique. This fact should not be surprising, as keyboard players had likely been playing pieces from the lute repertoire as early as 1638, when Mersenne first made his transcriptions. Monsieur de Chambonnières gained fame as a harpsichordist in Paris by the 1630s, despite the fact that the majority of his surviving works were not published until 1670 and following. Some of his works are found in German sources, many are included in the Bauyn manuscript, and many feature isolated examples of influence from lute technique. For example, in his “Allemande La Dunquerque” (Fig. 4), Chambonnières shows a sensitivity to voice-leading that bespeaks the

²¹ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 219.

²² *Ibid.*, 220.

²³ *GB-A ms.Add.7841. Arc.* (after 1613; Cooper).

Aberdeen f38. La Princesse

Figure 3. "La Princesse" from the Aberdeen manuscript. Taken from Ledbetter, vol. 2, pg. 170.

manner of the lute, whose plucked notes only stop resonating when another note is sounded on the same course (in mm. 10-11 and 14, the tied notes are presented in a manner similar to the style of the lute).²⁴ In addition, Chambonnières employs *style brisé*, the technique in which a series of alternating notes are sounded as if plucked on alternating courses of the lute (this occurs, for example, in mm. 8-9 and in the right hand in m. 3). However, the utilization of lute technique in this piece and in others from this time period before 1652 is not only presented sporadically (i.e. each piece only exhibits a few isolated, non-substantial examples), but it is also only concerned with exploiting what the composer viewed as limitations of the lute. The main reason a lutenist

²⁴ Bauyn, from Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Rés. Vm7 674–675 (Paris: manuscript, ca. 1658-1701), 3.

Allemande La Dunquerque de M^r de Chambonnières

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Allemande La Dunquerque" by Jean-Baptiste Chambonnières. The score is written on ten staves, alternating between treble and bass clefs. The music is in a 3/4 time signature and features a complex melodic line with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a rhythmic accompaniment. Measure numbers 5, 10, 15, and 20 are clearly visible. The manuscript is in French and includes the title "Allemande La Dunquerque de M. de Chambonnières" at the top.

Figure 4. "Allemande La Dunquerque" by Chambonnières.

would use *style brisé* is that the lute cannot easily strike multiple notes at the same time, so by the nature of the instrument, notes are played in an alternating, irregular fashion. A similar line of reasoning may also apply to mm. 11 and 19, in which the left hand plays a broken octave. This was a common style in the lute repertoire around the same time, and certainly Chambonnières' reason for including it was not because his hand could not reach an octave! Thus, while harpsichordists in the time period before 1652 may have included isolated examples of lute technique in their compositions, they were mainly concerned with mimicking idiosyncrasies from the instrument's design instead of seeking to understand how those idiosyncrasies could be adapted to the sonorities of the harpsichord.

6. Lute *tombeaux* for Blancrocher

We now turn our attention to the 1652 *tombeaux* for Blancrocher. With regards to these *tombeaux*, scholars such as Ledbetter, Rutt, and Moroney have made brief mention of the individual pieces and their general qualities.²⁵ However, not much has been done to thoroughly and comprehensively analyze all four of these pieces in light of the lute-harpsichord connection. The editors Souris and Rollin compiled and transcribed the complete known works of François Dufaut for the harpsichord (including his *tombeau* for Blancrocher), with no further comments specifically concerning the *tombeau*.²⁶ Through their transcription, some of the groundwork has been laid for the cohesive study of these pieces. The general scholarly consensus is that the harpsichord *tombeaux* for Blancrocher feature at least some degree of influence from lute

²⁵ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*; Audrey S. Rutt, "A Blend of Traditions: The Lute's Influence on Seventeenth-Century Harpsichord Repertoire," paper presented at the Research and Scholarship Symposium, Cedarville University, Ohio, April 12, 2017; Davitt Moroney, "The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes," *Early Music* 4, no. 2 (1976), 143–51.

²⁶ François Dufaut, *Œuvres de Dufaut*, ed. André Souris and Monique Rollin (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1988).

technique—for example, Alan Curtis mentions that the four-note slurs in the descending scale that concludes Froberger’s *tombeau* for Blancrocher indicate an imitation of the lute’s *baigné* technique, in which a line of notes are played on alternating courses so that they overlap.²⁷ What still remains is a comprehensive look at how those lute styles appear in the pieces, how they relate to the lute *tombeaux*, and how the lute *tombeaux* may have in turn been influenced by harpsichord sonorities.

We will first examine the lute *tombeaux* composed by Denis Gaultier and François Dufaut, as well as Blancrocher’s own lute music, to discuss some of the common French lute techniques of the mid-seventeenth century. In the process, we will identify three types of textures common to the lute genre, four types of figures common to the lute technique, and three additional stylistic elements that are common to both lute and harpsichord repertoire.

Three types of textures that are commonly used in French lute repertoire during this time period are (1) a chordal texture over a static pedal, (2) single-line movement, often punctuated by a diapason pitch, and (3) *style brisé*, in two- or three-part texture.²⁸ Not all French lute pieces from the mid-seventeenth century may include all three of these types of textures; for example, François Dufaut’s *tombeau* for Blancrocher (Fig. 5) features the first and third textures prominently, but has hardly any single-part movement.²⁹

The first of these types of texture, a static harmony with a pedal and chordal texture, is featured at the beginning of Dufaut’s *tombeau*. In mm 1-2, a tonic G minor harmony remains throughout the two bars, first filled in with an extended triad, then elaborated with passing notes and other non-chord tones. Then, the harmony moves to the dominant for the entirety of m. 3, and

²⁷ Louis Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin*, ed. Alan Curtis. *Le Pupitre* no. 18 (Paris: Heugel, 1970), xvii.

²⁸ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 83.

²⁹ François Dufaut, *Œuvres de Dufaut*, ed. André Souris and Monique Rollin (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1988), 25.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Tombeau de Blancrocher" by François Dufaut. The score is arranged in three systems, each containing a piano part (top two staves) and a lute part (bottom two staves). The piano part is written in treble clef with a 3/4 time signature. The lute part is written in a six-line staff with a C-clef (soprano position) and includes a numerical tablature system below the staff. The tablature uses letters 'a', 'b', and 'c' to denote fret positions on the strings. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano). Measure numbers 5, 10, and 15 are clearly marked. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.

Figure 5. "Tombeau de Blancrocher" by François Dufaut. Transcribed and edited by Souris and Rollin.

for much of the rest of the piece (mm. 5-6, mm. 9-13), the harmony remains a static dominant over a D pedal. This type of texture allows for the consistent use of imitative figures, such as the eighth notes in mm. 9 and 10 as well as the figure in beats 3-5 of m. 11 that reappears at the end of m. 12, at the beginning of m. 13, halfway through m. 14, and at the beginning of m. 16.

The second type of texture, single-line movement that is often interrupted by a bass note, occurs more frequently in Denis Gaultier's *tombeau* for Blancrocher (Fig. 6).³⁰ For example, in m. 10, Gaultier writes no notes to be struck at the same time, and all form a single line, with the exception of two of the notes. This line is easily executed on the lute, since it involves small movements alternating between two courses. The first note that is not a part of the line in m. 10 is written as “//a” in the tablature. This note is one of the lowest courses on the lute, one of the courses termed the “diapason.” These courses have a rich, low texture whose strong harmonics create ambiguity between the lower octaves of the individual notes they sound. One of the most recognizable features of lute texture in seventeenth-century France is this diapason displacement, in which a line is punctuated by the lower-pitched note that often occurs on the second eighth note of the measure (as it does in mm. 9, 10, and 11). This feature is idiosyncratic to the design of the lute, since a player would naturally have to interrupt a line in order to move over to the diapason courses and sound a low note.

The second note that is not part of the single line in m. 10 is the penultimate one, which the editor aptly writes in conjunction with a tied note. This note anticipates the following measure by introducing the most basic form of the third type of texture common to lute practice, *style brisé*.

³⁰ Denis Gaultier, *La Rhétorique des dieux*, ed. David Buch, *Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 62 (Madison: A-R Editions, Inc., 1990), 12.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each consisting of a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often with grace notes. The vocal line consists of a single melodic line with lyrics 'a' and 'r' written below the notes. The score includes measure numbers 5, 10, and 15. The first system covers measures 1-4, the second system covers measures 5-9, and the third system covers measures 10-14. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Figure 6. Denis Gaultier's tombeau for Blancrocher, an Allemande-Gigue titled "Andromède." Ed. David Buch.

As previously mentioned, this style consists of two or more parts in which notes are sounded successively rather than simultaneously. Though the term *style brisé* was not used prior to a century ago, its meaning adequately describes perhaps the most idiomatic aspect of the lute style.³¹ Because of the design of the instrument, it is much easier for a lutenist to play notes in an alternating fashion instead of vertically (on top of each other temporally), and so a texture quickly developed in the repertoire in which successive notes from multiple parts are tied over in irregular rhythmic patterns. Salient examples of *style brisé* in Dufaut's *tombeau* occur in mm. 7-8 and in m. 12 of Fig. 5. At these spots, it is easy to recognize in the tablature the full texture; though hardly any notes are sounded simultaneously, a large portion of the courses are being use at various moments, the irregularity of which contributes to the perception of a full, sonorous texture.

7. Transcription and analysis of Blancrocher's "L'Offrande"

To continue our analysis of stylistic elements of lute repertoire in mid-seventeenth-century France, including the enumeration of four lute-specific figures and three additional stylistic elements common to both lute and harpsichord repertoire, we turn to Blancrocher's own music for the lute. Only one piece has been found that may be attributed to him: an Allemande entitled "L'Offrande" mentions the composer "Blan-Rocher" in a manuscript at Oxford, and the same music appears in three other manuscripts in various forms with no mention of a composer.³² No thorough discussion of this piece appears in secondary literature, even though valuable information can be found in it regarding the overlap of the lute and the harpsichord, the editorial practice of transcribing lute tablature into pitch notation, and subsequent performance practice. Ledbetter

³¹ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 53.

³² Oxford, Ms. Mus Sch. G. 618, manuscript, from Oxford Bodleian Library, 34-36; Jean-Etienne Vaudry and Claude Chauvel, *Manuscrit Vaudry de Saizenay: tablature de Luth et de théorbe de divers auteurs*, 1699, Bibliothèque municipale, Besançon, 279,152-3 (Genève: Minkoff Reprint, 1980).

briefly mentions that “L’Offrande” is likely a *tombeau*, evident from a comparison of lute forms and genres; therefore, the piece likely feature many of the same idiomatic qualities seen in the previous two *tombeaux* analyzed, allowing for comparison to see how Blancrocher’s musical style is manifested in other composers’ homages to him.³³

I have created a transcribed edition of the music attributed to Blancrocher from lute tablature into keyboard notation for analysis and performance, as shown in the three pages of Fig. 7. The first step in the transcription process from lute tablature into standard pitch notation is to ensure that the correct tuning system is being used. The standard D minor tuning used for the French lute in the mid-seventeenth century and beyond uses the following pitches for the six highest courses in their open positions: F’-D’-A-F-D-A.³⁴ The remaining diapason courses (for the common 11-course lute, there are five diapasons) descend stepwise from the lower A down a D minor scale (notes sounded on these courses are notated in tablature with the letter “a” below the bottom line preceded by a number of slashes indicating the number of courses below the first diapason, or the number “4” for the lowest course, an open C). A literal transcription of “L’Offrande” using this tuning system would have a noticeably low tessitura that would sound muddy on the harpsichord; therefore, the transcription in Fig. 7 transposes everything up by a perfect fourth, a common practice for this repertoire.

The real difficulty in creating a well-thought transcription involves decisions of note lengths and part-writing. Because lute tablature does not include information concerning the release of notes, the transcriber must make well-informed decisions about how to convey the essence of the music in pitch notation for an instrument in which every note must be released after

³³ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 123.

³⁴ Robin Rolfhamre, “French Baroque Lute Music from 1650–1700,” master’s thesis (Agder University, Kristiansand, Norway, 2010), 68.

L'Offrande, Allemande de Blan-Rocher*

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Harpsichord, Lute, and Hch. (Harpichord). The score is organized into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff for the Harpsichord and a single staff for the Lute. The Lute part includes tablature notation with letters (a, c, e, f) and numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) indicating fret positions. The Harpsichord parts feature standard musical notation with various ornaments and accidentals. The first system covers measures 1-3, the second system covers measures 4-6, and the third system covers measures 7-9. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

* Transcription by Tyler McMaken, taken primarily from Oxford Bodleian Library, Ms. Mus Sch. G. 618, 34-36 and secondarily from Manuscrit Vaudry de Saizenay, Bibliothèque municipale, Besançon, 9.

Figure 7. Complete transcription (3 pages) of Blancrocher's "L'Offrande" from two tablature sources. Ed. Tyler McMaken.

20

Hch.

Lt.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 20, 21, and 22. The Hch. staff features a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature. It contains melodic lines with slurs and accents. The Lt. staff is a single-line bass clef with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature, containing a sequence of notes with slurs and accents. Vertical arrows point from the Lt. staff to the Hch. staff, indicating fingerings or articulation points.

23

Hch.

Lt.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 23, 24, and 25. The Hch. staff continues the melodic development with slurs and accents. The Lt. staff shows a more complex rhythmic and melodic pattern with slurs and accents. Vertical arrows indicate fingerings or articulation points.

26

Hch.

Lt.

Detailed description: This system covers measure 26. The Hch. staff shows a final melodic phrase with a double bar line. The Lt. staff concludes with a few notes and a double bar line. Vertical arrows indicate fingerings or articulation points.

some amount of time. For example, in the second half of m. 6 in Fig. 7, the tablature only suggests a rhythm of a quarter note followed by two eighth notes, but it is clear from the diagonal line that the bass note is to be held over until at least the end of the bar. In addition, a simple quarter-eighth-eighth rhythm in the harpsichord's treble clef would not convey the same sound or musical idea that would be expressed on the lute, since the A and D will continue to resonate into the next measure. Because these notes combine to form a dominant seventh harmony, it is safe to assume they should be tied over in the pitch notation. However, the G in the left hand directly preceding the F-sharp in the same measure is not given a note value longer than an eighth note, despite the fact that it technically could resonate through the end of the bar, because it would only sound blurred on the harpsichord if tied over. Thus, a similar analysis must be performed for the entire transcription in order to understand each suspension and harmonic unit and properly assign note values in the pitch notation.

One final issue to address in the transcription process is the recognition of markings in the lute tablature, which leads directly to the discussion of four of the most common figures used in lute repertoire: the lute's *tremblement*, *arpégé*, *tirer et rabattre*, and 3-note slurs. The first of these, the *tremblement*, occurs when a letter is followed by a comma in tablature, indicating that a note is to be trilled. As is typical of the Baroque style, the trill begins on the note above the note to be trilled and ends more quickly than it began. Specifically, for the lute, the player pulls off the string with a finger of the left hand, once for an eighth note above the letter, twice for a quarter note, and several times for a dotted quarter.³⁵ Broken chords (*arpégé*) can be written in several ways in tablature. In mm. 13 and 26 of Fig. 7 (as well as mm. 9 and 18 of Fig. 6), arpeggiated chords are written out with a definite rhythm. However, a broken chord can also be written with a slash

³⁵ Rolfhamre, "French Baroque Lute Music from 1650–1700," 47.

between letters vertically stacked on top of each other, as is the case in m. 9 of Fig. 7. In addition, even if arpeggiation is not explicitly notated in the tablature, it can be assumed that large chords will be strummed and broken in some fashion.

Designations of fingering leads to a third common figure in French lute technique that is an extension of the concept of broken chords, known as *tirer et rabattre*. In general, a dot next to a letter indicates playing with the index finger, two dots indicate the middle finger, and a line indicates playing with the thumb. These fingerings generally do not impact the direct transcription of the piece, but they do inform how chords should be spread and articulated. A chord with a single dot to the left of each letter indicates a sweeping motion with the fingers from lowest to highest note, as in the ends of mm. 13 and 26 in Fig. 7.³⁶ If two or more chords with fingerings appear adjacent to one another, the technique *tirer et rabattre* may be employed. As the name suggests, this technique involves strumming up (*tirer*, or “pull out”) and then drawing the fingers back down (*rabattre*, or “turn down”) to create a full, sonorous texture.³⁷ Though the technique does not appear in “L’Offrande,” it is common in lute repertoire and involves the pattern of dots placed above and below successive chords.

The fourth figure common in lute repertoire is the 3-note slur, such as the sixteenth-note figure in m. 2 of Fig. 7. The slur indicates that only the first of the three notes is to be plucked; the other two are only produced by shifts in the left hand fret position on the same course.³⁸ This figure can be performed with relative ease and smoothness on the lute and is therefore common in much of the French lute repertoire of the seventeenth century. The lute’s 3-note slur is similar in form to the *tierce coulé* common in harpsichord repertoire from the same periods, but it is distinct in that

³⁶ Rolfhamre, “French Baroque Lute Music from 1650–1700,” 46.

³⁷ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85

the latter figure is primarily used to embellish the interval of a third and has the first note held down for the duration of the figure. Nonetheless, because of the close contact between harpsichordists and lutenists at the early stages of the harpsichord's development in France, the *tierce coulée* may have initially derived from the similar 3-note slur for the lute.

An analysis of the tablature of “L’Offrande” shows that it not only features many of the characteristics of French lute music present in the early-to-mid-seventeenth century, but it also shares many subtle characteristics with harpsichord music of the time, such as the previously mentioned 3-note slur. As can be expected, “L’Offrande” features a large amount of *style brisé*, the “broken style” emphasizing irregular rhythms and a sonorous quality. A particularly salient example of this style in three-part texture occurs in mm. 9-10. In addition, the interruption of a line (or multiple lines in tandem) by a diapason pitch occurs in the first beats of mm. 3 and 7 as well as halfway through m. 8, all of which occur with the displacement of an eighth note. Characteristics shared by lute and harpsichord music, such as the 3-note slur’s connection to the *tierce coulée*, include broken thirds and sixths (see, for example, m. 12 of Fig. 5), the bass line moving by step with the melodic line following in parallel tenths (such as mm. 9 and 18-19 of Fig. 7), and a melodic line that falls by a fourth and then rises by a half step (a figure common in Froberger’s music that also occurs in the first measure of Blancrocher’s “L’Offrande” in Fig. 7). These aspects speak to a “common language shared by both instruments” in mid-seventeenth-century France.³⁹

8. Harpsichord *tombeaux* for Blancrocher

Finally, we turn to the *tombeaux* composed for Blancrocher on the harpsichord. These *tombeaux* for Blancrocher feature sections with stylistic techniques and qualities foundational to

³⁹ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in Seventeenth-Century France*, 139.



Figure 8. Opening measures of Froberger's "Tombeau fait à Paris sur la mort de Monsieur Blancheroche." Ed. Guido Adler.

the lute, many of which are also present in the lute *tombeaux* associated with Blancrocher. Froberger's *tombeau* begins (Fig. 8) with a spread chord (note the octave displacement). The opening chord is followed by a series of three thirty-second notes, which seem to be a direct imitation of the three-note slurs from the lute repertoire (more salient examples are found in the first and last beats of m. 4 as well as throughout the second half of the piece). Directly following these notes, a tied suspension appears in a similar texture to that of the lute, since the over-legato effect of the lute's strings would lead to a texture featuring multiple voices in suspension with each other throughout the lute repertoire. Again, more salient examples occur throughout the rest of Froberger's composition.

In the second measure of Froberger's *tombeau* for Blancrocher, he clearly writes out a *tirer et rabattre*, the strumming effect in which at least two instances of the same chord appear directly next to each other to be spread in opposite directions. Froberger attempts to reproduce this aesthetic effect with a broken C minor chord first descending and then ascending (the notes are written here on top of one another, but in common performance practice the chord could and likely was intended to be spread upward). This effect is more clearly written out in m. 3, in which the rolled



Figure 9. Closing measures of Froberger's "Tombeau fait à Paris sur la mort de Monsieur Blancheroche." Ed. Guido Adler.

chord in the right hand ascends, then descends, then ascends once more. Other examples of *tirer et rabattre* can be found throughout the composition, including mm. 6 and 10.

In the closing measures of Froberger's *tombeau* for Blancrocher (Fig. 9) a few more stylistic elements akin to the lute can be noticed. An imitative, suspended, multi-voice texture is present throughout this excerpt, and of particular note are the octaves in the left hand. These octaves, often interpreted programmatically as the tolling of bells to mark Blancrocher's death, can also be interpreted in light of the lute's influence. As previously mentioned, the lute's lowest courses, the diapasons, are played on open strings, and these notes tend to resonate in an ambiguous way such that the listener cannot tell which low register is sounding, whether it is one or two octaves below the melodic register. Froberger clearly manifests this octave ambiguity in the alternating, held-over notes in the left hand toward the end of his *tombeau*. Lastly, another programmatically noteworthy moment occurs in the final measure, in which a descending scale depicts the famed lutenist's final plummet down a staircase (alternatively, Froberger could be consigning the lutenist to a descent to hell, in contrast to his *tombeau* for Emperor Ferdinand III,

in which an ascending scale denotes that man's saintly rise to heaven). This figure also has significance in regard to the lute-harpsichord connection. A subset of the *style brisé* is an effect known as *style baigné* (also called *campanella*), in which a line of notes (a melody or scale) is played on alternating courses to create as much resonance and over-legato as possible.⁴⁰ A typical *baigné* scale will alternate over three or four strings, and in the case of Froberger, the slurs indicate the use of this four-note texture. In the first measure of the second half of the piece, Froberger uses the same device, except he explicitly includes some of the tied notes that are to be held over to reproduce the lute effect.

Louis Couperin's *tombeau* for Blancrocher features some of the same instances of lute technique utilization that are in Froberger's *tombeau*. Couperin includes three-note slurs in mm. 4, 8, 37, and 44, for example, and throughout, he shows a sensitivity to suspensions in tied notes. In addition, Couperin's *tombeau* features an extended passage of *style brisé* (Fig. 10); irregular rhythms are featured in a broken, alternating pattern especially in mm. 21-22. This pattern is also accompanied with a device common to the lute repertoire known as pitch range expansion, in

Figure 10. Excerpt (mm. 16-23) from Louis Couperin's "Tombeau de Mr. de Blancrocher." Ed. Pierre Guin.

⁴⁰ Couperin, *Pièces de clavecin*, xvii.

Figure 11. Closing measures from Louis Couperin's "Tombeau de Mr. de Blancrocher." Ed. Pierre Gouin.

which notes in the diapason courses descend stepwise as the melody rises. Throughout the passage, Couperin pays special attention to tied notes to mimic the resonant quality of the lute, whereby notes are only damped if another note is played on the same course. Lastly, Couperin's *tombeau* features an identical instance (Fig. 11) of octave ambiguity to that of Froberger, with left-hand alternating octaves symbolizing the tolling of death knells while also recreating the sonorous low notes on the lute. This passage showcases all the aesthetic qualities of the lute Couperin wished to mimic in his free-form composition.

As with Froberger's *tombeau*, countless more examples can be given of how Couperin attempts to utilize lute effects in his *tombeau* for Blancrocher. The conclusion that can be drawn from these works is that they for the first time in the French harpsichord tradition demonstrate a ubiquitous utilization of the aesthetic aspects of the lute, those sonorous qualities that can only be reproduced on the harpsichord with intentionality and care for the beauty of the sounds that can be produced from both instruments.

9. Conclusion

Throughout the course of this essay, we have seen how the style of French lute-playing in the mid-seventeenth century was interconnected to the newly-emerging harpsichord style at that time. Specific techniques for the lute, such as *style brisé*, diapason pitch punctuation, and 3-note slurs, are not solely confined to the lute repertoire in seventeenth-century France; rather, harpsichordists also began using these devices as the instrument gained prominence and as they established social and musical connections with famous lutenists. At first, the use of these lute techniques was rather sporadic, as the harpsichordists likely employed them only as a form of pure mimicry. These early uses of the lute style were not comprehensive and only represented the use of those aspects of the lute that harpsichordists viewed as deficiencies in the idiosyncrasies of the instrument, such as the need to play notes in succession rather than simultaneously. However, with the death of Charles Fleury, Sieur de Blancrocher in November 1652, we have a clear moment in time when we can first definitively conclude that French harpsichordists were beginning to employ the lute's style in a comprehensive and idiomatic way. In the *tombeaux* for Blancrocher, Froberger and Couperin took the styles and techniques that are unique to the lute and that are exemplified by figures and textures in Dufaut's and Gaultier's *tombeaux* and transformed them in a way that not only referenced the lute's style, but also contextualized them to embrace the sonorities of the harpsichord. It was at this point and onward, still relatively early in the development of the instrument, that harpsichordists were first able to understand how the aesthetics of the lute could be infused with the aesthetics of their own instrument in a comprehensive and meaningful way.

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