

A Kalmus Classic Edition

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RAMEAU

THE GRADED RAMEAU

FOR PIANO SOLO

K 02254



By the same author:

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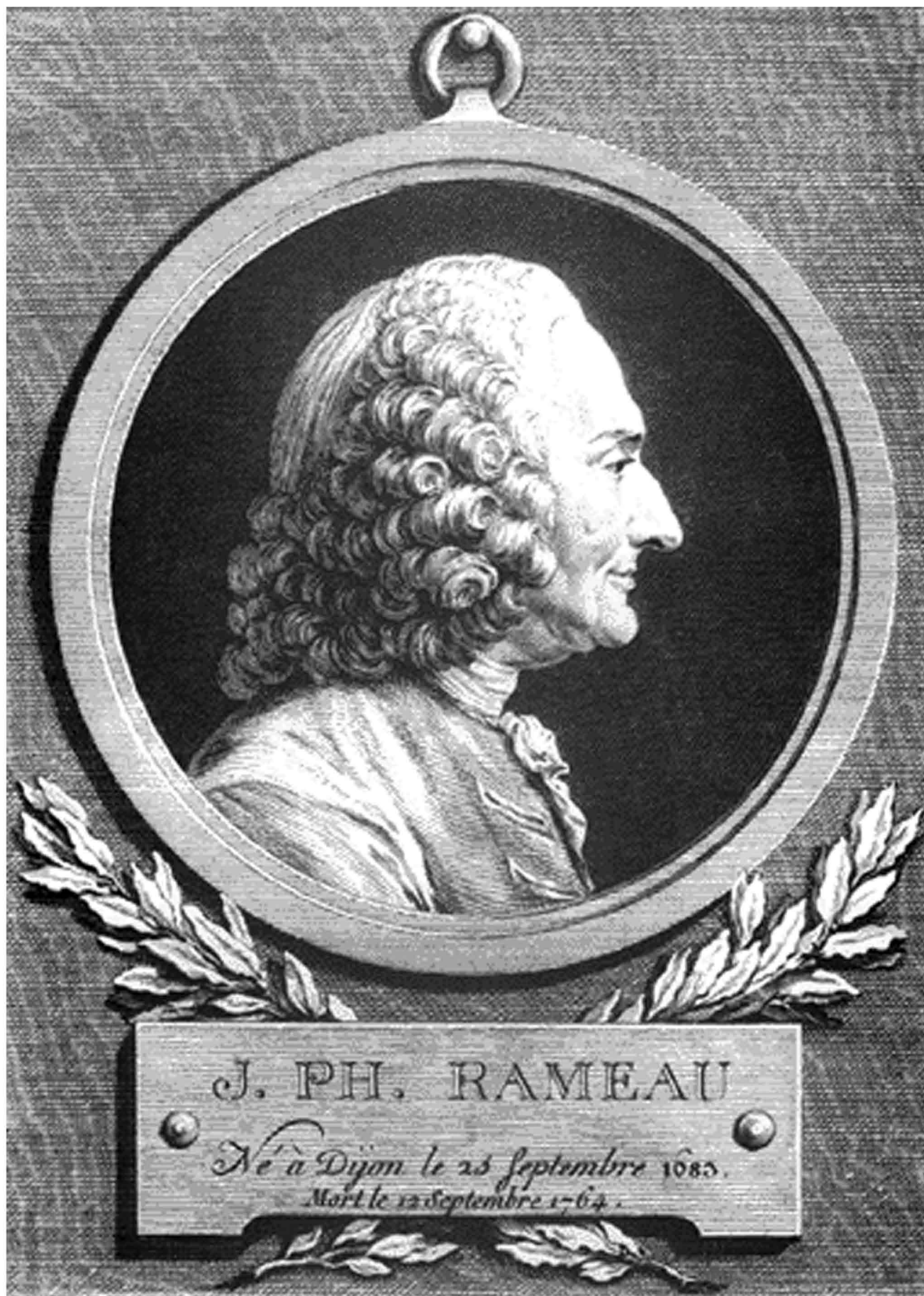
THE GRADED COUPERIN

A collection of 29 pieces for the keyboard

(Franco Colombo Publications)

Cover: Interior scene of a hall
at the Place de Louis le Grand
in Paris, during the reign of
Louis XV.

Courtesy of H. Roger Viollet,
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Engraving in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
(after the bust by Jean-Jacques Caffieri)
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INTRODUCTION

This collection is the third in a series of Baroque masters following the earlier “Graded Scarlatti” and “Graded Couperin.” The editor has chosen on the basis of variety from among the most beautiful works of Rameau, and has graded them according to their musical, as well as technical, difficulty.

This collection is based on the first editions published by Rameau himself. The “Dauphine” is the only existing manuscript; it is now at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

The editor has used only the G (treble) and the F (bass) clefs. The original versions are written in several other clefs as well.

All tempos and dynamic markings that have been added are placed in brackets []. They are only suggestions for interpretation. The original indications by Rameau are very few.

The fingerings have been added. The only original fingering, found in the table of ornaments by Rameau, is the one used by the left hand in “Les Cyclopes.”

All the ornamentation is original, but written in contemporary notation (*see the table*). Their duration depends upon the instrument on which they are played as well as the stylistic sense of the performer.

* * *

Cette collection est la troisième d'une série de maitres Baroques faisant suite à “Scarlatti” et “Couperin” gradués. Nous avons choisi pour leur variété parmi les plus belles pièces de Rameau et les avons gradué d'après leur difficulté musicale tout autant que technique.

Cette collection est basée sur les premières éditions publiées par Rameau lui-même. La “Dauphine” est le seul manuscrit existant; il est à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

Nous utilisons seulement la clef de sol et la clef de fa. L'original est écrit en plusieurs autres clefs.

Tous les mouvements et nuances ajoutés ont été mis entre parenthèses []; Ils ne sont qu'une suggestion d'interprétation. Les indications originales de Rameau sont très peu nombreuses.

Les doigtés ont été ajoutés. Le seul original et que l'on trouve dans la table d'ornements de Rameau est celui utilisé par la main gauche dans les Cyclopes.

Tous les ornements sont originaux mais écrits en signes modernes (voir table). Leur durée dépend de l'instrument sur lequel ils seront joués ainsi que du sens du style de l'exécutant.

PREFACE

The end of the Baroque period is illuminated by a prestigious group of musicians: Francois Couperin, Rameau, Handel, Scarlatti, Bach. The grand master of counterpoint, Bach, projects a greatness and majesty by the use of polyphonic writing.

Rameau, the harmonist, lays the foundations at the beginning of the century of a new style of writing, which he handles superbly, bringing the traditional French spectacle to heights of unity and musical expression. His keyboard works reflect a remarkable sense of the dramatic, (he anticipates by one hundred years the "complete theater" of Wagner) and he creates the science of harmony.

He possesses a penetrating and disciplined mind as well as an exuberant artistic imagination. This almost unique combination carries him to a double achievement: a musical production that places him in the first rank of great creators, and an original and fundamental theoretical work, the science of sounds. It is harmony, such as we know it, whose foundations he recognized, and which he taught and realized in his music. "What did I do during the twenty years in which I was the most unknown of all musicians?" he wrote. "I created the science of harmony, and I learned to compose music the like of which had not yet resounded."

* * *

What manner of man was he — difficult to separate from the musician - as he appears in his life, in his writings, through his music?

Very tall, thin and dry, his features strongly chiseled, his eyes sparkling, an interest always intense and active for everything that concerned music, he shut out all the rest. His voice was hoarse, his manner brusque, he was fiercely independent, had little patience with dullards and bores. Those who did not like him could say that he was "the most impolite and unsociable mortal" of his time. His tall, solitary silhouette, thin and bent, his hat under the arm, pacing the gardens of the Tuileries, was for many years a familiar sight in Paris.

Goethe, eleven years after Rameau's death, tried to reconstruct his portrait from an engraving: "See that pure intelligence, but I would not like to speak of intelligence. See that pure spirit, straightforward, sensitive, without restraint, without labored selfsearching." Goethe speaks of goodness, engaging serenity, an amiable determination, and he paints a portrait that corresponds much closer with what we know of Rameau from friends of his glorious years and from his works.

He was straightforward and honest, too great to be jealous, authoritative, but never fanatic. He was a solitary man, even after his late marriage, as in all his life, totally absorbed in his own power of creation.

He was very reticent about all that did not concern music. His reply to the question of how to compose is direct and modest: "I have followed the theater since I was twelve years

old, I did not work at an opera until I was fifty, I still did not feel myself capable; I tried, I had luck, I persevered."

He never defended his music, but he argued fiercely for his theory, aware of having opened a new realm in the science of sounds, proud of having been recognized by the Academy, while never having been a philosopher (that is, a man of science), and profoundly disappointed when its members, toward the end, through a misunderstanding and a deplorable confusion between esthetics and politics, turned away from his music. D'Alembert admired him and wrote a lucid treatise on his theory, Voltaire was his first librettist, and a faithful admirer of the man and his music. Rousseau, an ambitious but mediocre musician, took issue with him, as finally did Diderot. His last years were embittered by that quarrel. But the public, slowly conquered by his music, remained faithful to him. He never responded to personal attacks. When his work was attacked, he could not remain silent, but his manner of reply attests to a great person. Toward the end of his life he said: "They have never added to nor detracted from my discoveries, and Art has gained nothing from the evil they wished to do me."

* * *

His early life was difficult. He was born in Dijon on September 26, 1683, the son of a simple organist who was his only music teacher. He could read music even before he could read words. He composed music, and even sang, during his classes at the College of the Jesuits. At the age of eighteen he knew Latin and mathematics. If he lacked an easy style in French, he was a master of several instruments. He played violin in a wandering troupe, and soon became a "master of music" or organist in several provincial cities. "Pièces de clavecin" (Harpichord pieces) appeared during a short stay in Paris (1706). When he failed to make a living there, he returned to a solitary life in the provinces, composed, experimented, meditated, and perfected his theory of sound.

He was forty years old when he returned to Paris, shortly preceded by his "Treatise of Harmony Reduced to its Natural Principles" (1722), which brought him reputation as a scholar and opened doors for him. He married at the age of forty-three. He was recognized, he taught, his two other collections of keyboard pieces (1724 — 1728) were published, he made commentaries, he explained his discoveries.

Even in his treatise he speaks of music for the theatre, he aspires to writing an opera, the only form of dramatic expression open to a musician of that period. He was fifty when, in 1733, his first opera was performed and his theatrical career began: twenty-five works within twenty years.

Many services and ceremonies marked his death in 1764 at the age of eighty years, honored as a composer and as the "Newton of Sounds."

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