

NAXOS

# Jean Philippe RAMEAU

## Platée • Pigmalion • Dardanus Ballet Suites

European Union Baroque Orchestra  
Roy Goodman



## Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) Ballet Suites

Jean-Philippe Rameau was born in Dijon in 1683, a close contemporary of Bach, Handel and Telemann, but unlike them he had a strangely unbalanced career. During the first half of his working life he was famous for his keyboard music and publications on musical theory. Then, at the age of fifty, he launched himself into the world of opera – ‘the age when the ordinary mortal begins to decay’ said one of his early biographers – and over the next thirty years he went on to write nearly thirty theatrical entertainments. By 1749 his works so dominated the Paris Opéra that a ruling was made that the company could stage only two of his operas a year ‘for fear of discouraging other composers’.

The French public were fickle though, and a decade after Rameau’s death in 1764 his operas had virtually disappeared from the stage – ‘people had grown tired of worshipping at the same altar’ admitted one of his followers. Despite the superlative quality of their music and an encouraging increase in the number of recent revivals, his operas have yet to re-enter the regular operatic repertory, but they have found a new lease of life on CD, and their ballet movements have become particularly popular. In Rameau’s time it was customary to collect together the best of the ballet movements into an orchestral suite, introduced by the opera’s overture, and perform them in concert. This disc offers three such suites.

*Platée* was first performed at the palace of Versailles in 1745 to celebrate the marriage of the Dauphin and the Spanish Infanta Maria Teresa. Unusually for Rameau, it was comedy, with a plot which was both simple and instantly appealing. In order to cure the jealousy of his queen, the god Jupiter feigns love for Platée, but Platée, it turns out, is an ugly frog-like nymph who inhabits a swamp and lives under the misapprehension that she is irresistible to men. Everyone has a laugh at her expense. This is crueler than at first appears because the joke was really on the unfortunate Maria Teresa who was apparently not a

notable beauty herself.

Dance was the life-blood of the French court, and it permeated every sphere of musical life. French opera composers became expert at weaving ballet movements into the dramatic fabric of their works. In *Platée* the ballet episodes are frequent and essential to the overall dramatic design. The original dance steps for all Rameau’s ballets are lost, but the music itself is often so vivid that it suggests its own choreography. The *Orage* with its swirling, tempestuous string writing could be nothing else but a storm whipped up by the gods, and in the imaginary theatre of the mind you can easily visualise all the characters running for cover. The *Air pour des fous gais et des fous tristes* (Air for the happy and sad lunatics) is more sophisticated, and the published libretto tells us that the happy characters were dressed as babies and the sad ones clothed as Greek philosophers. Rameau’s music is exceptionally animated, with such abrupt changes of mood and scoring that it must have inspired dancing which bordered on the manic, a far cry from the traditional view of French courtly dances as graceful, refined and perfectly poised. He also takes a new broom to the *Menuets*, imbuing them with a wistful quality, rich in rustic drone-like harmonies, and with a ravishing, gilded melody in *Menuet II*. A final pair of *Rigaudons* restore an air of irrepressible good humour.

During the eighteenth century *Pigmalion* (1748) was one of Rameau’s most popular and frequently played works. At one performance Rameau was recognised and applauded at length by the audience; according to one eye-witness ‘he was transported, he wept for joy, and was enraptured by the public’s reception and swore to devote the rest of his life to them’. *Pigmalion* is not a fully fledged opera but a forty-minute sung-and-danced *Acte de ballet*. It is based on a myth from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in which the sculptor Pygmalion falls in love with the statue he has created. The work opens with one of Rameau’s most brilliant overtures, where the repeated notes of the fast

section evoke the sound of the sculptor's hammer. One of the high points of *Pigmalion* is the scene where the statue comes to life and, in a charming ballet, learns how to dance. Rameau writes a delightful sequence of ten short dances headed *Les différents caractères de la danse*, which covers all the basics of French dance in one easy lesson, from the languorous opening *Air* to the final up-tempo *Tambourin*.

*Dardanus* was Rameau's fifth opera, first performed in 1739 and later revived with a great deal of new music in 1744 and again in 1760. Each time he revised the score Rameau added yet more instrumental music. Indeed, one contemporary claimed that *Dardanus* was 'so laden with music that for three whole hours the orchestral players do not even have time to sneeze'. The ballet music is especially colourful, not only in its rich and varied instrumentation but also in its quirky rhythmic, melodic and harmonic turns of phrase. The *Marche pour les différentes nations*, the *Menuet* and *Tambourins I & II* are all from the second scene of

the *Prologue* in which 'mortals of all states and ages' pay homage to Cupid in dance, each of which is beautifully characterized – musically and metrically. *Tambourin III* must rank as one of the most memorable tunes in the opera with its manic, twittering parts for piccolos. At the opposite end of the scale comes the *Sommeil de Dardanus*, a yawning sleep scene, beloved of French opera, which is slow, delicate and full of hushed strings. Finally, a colourfully orchestrated *Chaconne* with which Rameau brought the opera to a magnificent conclusion.

At the end of this suite we are left in no doubt of Rameau's place as one of the most original dance composers of the last three hundred years. Indeed, in his own time the famous ballet-master Gardel claimed that 'Rameau perceived what the dancers themselves were unaware of; we thus rightly regard him as our first master'.

Simon Heighes

## European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO)

The European Union Baroque Orchestra was established to provide relevant orchestral experience for young players embarking on a professional career. Every year the orchestra invites a hundred talented young baroque musicians from across Europe to audition. The 25 successful candidates, typically from ten or more different countries with an average age of 25 years, spend six months together, training, touring and performing throughout Europe and further afield under the direction of the world's leading baroque specialists including Roy Goodman, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Alfredo Bernardini, Fabio Biondi, Reinhard Goebel, Paul Goodwin, Monica Huggett, Ton Koopman, Andrew Manze and Marc Minkowski. Since its foundation in 1985, the orchestra has given concerts in fifty countries, including many frequently neglected regions; for example, the war-torn cities of Bosnia and Croatia, the townships of Soweto, China, South America, the Gaza Strip and throughout the Middle East. At the end of each year, the students of EUBO move on into the professional world and the whole process, from audition to graduation, begins again. The orchestra has been so successful in its mission that there are now former EUBO students in every major professional baroque ensemble in the world, including, for example, The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Les Musiciens du Louvre, English Concert, Europa Galante, Academy of Ancient Music, La Petite Bande, The King's Consort, Concerto Copenhagen and Les Arts Florissants. EUBO's work is made possible with support from the European Commission, in recognition of the fact that this unique training project can only function at a pan-European level, and from Microsoft Europe, Middle East and Africa, sponsoring the orchestra to assist individual musicians to realise their full potential. This CD is the sixth commercial recording released by the orchestra, and the second for the Naxos label, the first being a recording of Handel's cantata *Apollo e Dafne* [Naxos 8.555712].

## Roy Goodman

Since August 2004 Principal Conductor of Holland Symfonia, Roy Goodman is also Conductor and Artistic Leader of the Bachkoor Holland, and Principal Guest Conductor of the English Chamber Orchestra and of the Norrlands Opera in Sweden. He has worked as guest conductor with ninety orchestras and opera companies worldwide, and is well known for his work as director and founder of the Brandenburg Consort, co-founder with Peter Holman of the Parley of Instruments, Principal Conductor of the Hanover Band, Music Director of the European Union Baroque Orchestra from 1989 to 2004 and Music Director of the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra in Winnipeg from 1999 to 2005. Born in 1951, he was a treble chorister at King's College, Cambridge. In 1970 he was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists in London and he is also a Doctor of Music and Fellow of the Royal College of Music. After early years as a school teacher, he later became Director of Music at the University of Kent and Director of Early Music Studies at the Royal Academy of Music in London. From 1977 Goodman worked throughout Europe as a baroque violinist and concertmaster with leading conductors, turning to an international career as a conductor himself after success in 1989 with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. His recordings thereafter with the Hanover Band include première performances on historic instruments of the complete symphonies of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and Weber, as well as fourteen symphonies by Mendelssohn and sixty symphonies by Haydn. His recorded repertoire now ranges from Monteverdi to Copland, and he has also directed more than forty world premières of contemporary music.

### **Platé** (Tracks 1-7)

Recording Date: 11th December 1999

Recording Venue: Chapel of Hertford College, Oxford  
(by kind permission of the Principal & Fellows)

Director: Roy Goodman • Leader: Nicolas Mazzoleni  
Members of EUBO: Davide Monti, Elena Borderias, Julia Fredersdorff, Oliver Sändig, Lidewij van der Voort (principal second violin), José Manuel Navarro, Martina Warecka, Teresa Piech, Katja Donner (violins), Pablo Gastaminza, Margarida Araujo (violas), Franziska Romaner, Elske Tinbergen (cellos), Renger Woelderink (double bass), Maïke Buhrow, Clémentine Humeau (oboes), Elena Bianchi (bassoon), Kathryn Cok (harpsichord), Andreas Edlund (organ)

### **Pigmalion** (Tracks 8-13)

Recording Date: 26th-27th November 2001

Recording Venue: Eglise Protestante de Bruxelles  
(by kind permission of Pasteur Léon Rocteur)

Director: Roy Goodman • Leader: Nicolas Mazzoleni  
Members of EUBO: Rebecca Leue, Christiane Güller, Lorenz Indermühle, Dorota Hosnowska, Hannah Tibell (principal second violin), Els Sykora, Marleen Zoutman, James O'Toole (violins), Robin Ashwell,

Kate Fawcett (violas), Etienne Mangot, Emily Robinson (cellos), Christiana Staude (double bass), Marion Hofmockel, Marjolein Lever (flutes/picclos), Stefanie Haegel, Hannah McLaughlin (oboes), Alexandre Salles (bassoon), Magali Rougeron (harpsichord), Silvia Marquez Chulilla (organ)

### **Dardanus** (Tracks 14-24)

Recording Date: 14th November 2003

Recording Venue: St Michael's Church, Summertown, Oxford

(by kind permission of the Vicar and Churchwardens)  
Director: Roy Goodman • Leader: Nicolas Mazzoleni  
Members of EUBO: Judith Steenbrink, Lina Tur-Bonet, Valerio Losito, Tuomo Suni, Liz MacCarthy, Lidewij van der Voort (principal second violin), Joanna Huszcza, Kathryn Templeman, Alise Ju\_ka (violins), Louise Hogan, Alfonso Leal del Ojo (violas), Kathrin Sutor, Burkart Zeller (cellos), Christine Sticher (double bass), Graham O'Sullivan, Marjolein Lever (flutes/picclos), Molly Marsh, Pedro Lopes e Castro (oboes), Carles Cristobal (bassoon), Tineke Steenbrink (harpsichord), Eugène Michelangeli (organ)

Although Rameau's operas have yet to re-enter the regular operatic repertory, his ballet music, which is colourful not only in its rich and varied instrumentation but in its quirky rhythmic, melodic and harmonic turns of phrase, has become deservedly popular. The music for *Platée* is so vivid and full of abrupt changes of mood that it suggests its own choreography. *Dardanus* was described at the time as 'so laden with music that for three whole hours the orchestral players do not even have time to sneeze'. *Pigmalion*, one of Rameau's most popular and frequently played works, includes a delightful sequence of ten short dances headed *Les différents caractères de la danse*, which covers all the basics of French dance in one easy lesson.



## Jean-Philippe RAMEAU

(1683-1764)



<b>Platée Suite</b>		<b>22:24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Marche</b>	<b>2:04</b>
<b>1</b>	Ouverture	4:26	<b>12</b>	Pantomime niaise et un peu lente /	3:21
<b>2</b>	Air pantomime	2:54		Deuxième Pantomime très vite	
<b>3</b>	Air de ballet	3:17	<b>13</b>	Air gracieux et gai et contredanse	2:28
<b>4</b>	Orage	1:16			
<b>5</b>	Air pour des fous gais et des fous tristes	3:49		<b>Dardanus Suite</b>	<b>33:33</b>
<b>6</b>	Menuets I & II	4:00	<b>14</b>	Ouverture	4:10
<b>7</b>	Rigaudons I & II	2:42	<b>15</b>	Marche pour les différentes nations	1:18
			<b>16</b>	Menuet	3:04
			<b>17</b>	Tambourins I & II	1:48
	<b>Pigmalion Suite</b>	<b>19:49</b>	<b>18</b>	Rigaudons I & II	3:38
<b>8</b>	Ouverture	4:32	<b>19</b>	Entrée d'Iphise	3:16
<b>9</b>	Les différents caractères de la danse [Gracieusement, Air très lent, Gavotte lent, Menuet, Gavotte gaie, Chaconne vive, Loure très grave, Passepied vif, Rigaudon vif]	3:18	<b>20</b>	Air gay en rondeau	1:29
			<b>21</b>	Menuets I & II	4:06
			<b>22</b>	Tambourins III & IV	2:30
			<b>23</b>	Sommeil de Dardanus	4:23
<b>10</b>	Sarabande pour la Statue / Tambourin (fort et vite)	4:07	<b>24</b>	Chaconne	3:51

**Microsoft**

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Recording details can be found in the booklet.

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