



## Aya Hamada: La Dynastie Couperin



Submitted by **ErikRydingBlogger** on Tue, 04/17/2018 - 3:10pm

Sunday, April 15, 2018, L'Église Française du Saint Esprit

I first heard the harpsichordist Aya Hamada in Montreal, when she played a recital of works by Jacques Duphy at the 2015 conference of the Historical Keyboard Society of North America. It was a scintillating performance, and the Duphy CD that followed (Live Notes WWCC-7784) was a delicious selection of the composer's rococo delights. So I was happy to learn that she was playing a solo recital in New York City, where she is the organist at L'Église Française du Saint Esprit, the interior of which I'd seen on YouTube videos, though I'd had never before visited the church or even noticed it. In fact, the edifice itself bears no resemblance to a church but looks more like an East Side townhouse. Nevertheless, inside you'll find a charming little chapel with plaques and service books in French.

The afternoon's concert was titled "La Dynastie Couperin," with three generations of notable Couperins represented: Louis (ca. 1626–1661), François "Le Grand" (1668–1733), and Armand-Louis (1727–1789). In celebration of the 350th anniversary of François Couperin's birth this year, the Great One received the most attention, with an almost complete *ordre* (the 18th), a sizable set of variations from another (the 13th), and a selection of some of his greatest hits, including the irresistible "Les Barricades Mistérieuses."

Appropriately, the concert opened with one of Louis Couperin's mercurial unmeasured preludes, followed by his great Passacaille in C Major. Then came the bonbons by François, which included "Les Sylvains," a rondeau particularly dear to lutenists like me because it also exists in a contemporary transcription for theorbo by Robert de Visée.

Ending the first half was Couperin's main contribution to the Folia literature: a set of variations on the Folia theme, but with a twist. Each variation has a title describing a masked reveler with a different cloak, or domino, and the different characters are reflected in the ever-mutating moods of the variations. So we have, for example, "Modesty in the Pink Cloak" in one variation, "Coquetry in a Variety of Cloaks" in another. And, to make this programmatic sequence all the more vivid, the actor Philip Orawski gave dramatic readings of the titles *en français*.

The second half of the program consisted of three of Armand-Louis Couperin's best-known pieces, followed by the better part of the 18th *ordre* of François, concluding with "Le Tic-Toc-Choc" of the smile-inducing theme of which is complemented by the nimble dance of hands on the two manuals. Throughout, Aya Hamada played with grace, mastery, and *le bon goût*.

The instrument was built in 1965 by Willard Martin (who was in attendance), apparently from a Hubbard French double-manual kit. It sounded remarkably good.

Audio and video equipment was present, so we may hope for a video reprise down the line.



### Tags:

[Couperin \(/?q=tags/couperin\)](#) | [Aya Hamada \(/?q=tags/aya-hamada\)](#) | [Philip Orawski \(/?q=tags/philip-orawski\)](#) | [Harpsichord \(/?q=tags/harpsichord\)](#) | [Capriccio Baroque \(/?q=tags/capriccio\)](#)