

Christophe Rousset records the first book of toccatas by Girolamo Frescobaldi, the first great composer for the harpsichord



Friday 29 March
Aparté AP202

Girolamo Frescobaldi
*Toccate e partite
d'intavolatura di cimbalo,
libro primo*

Christophe Rousset
harpsichord

In a new recording released by **Aparté** on **29 March**, harpsichordist **Christophe Rousset** turns towards the first published music of the early seventeenth century composer **Girolamo Frescobaldi**. A keen musical archaeologist, Rousset unearths the treasures of the early harpsichord repertoire under a composer renowned as the first great composer for the instrument.

Born in Ferrara, **Girolamo Frescobaldi** (1583-1643) learnt his trade under Luzzasco Luzzaschi. His renowned skill at the keyboard earned him several prestigious posts, including organist at St Peter's Basilica, Rome, a position he held for most of his working life, and at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

With several volumes of his music published, the composer exerted considerable influence on the next generation, including Johann Jakob Froberger, Michelangelo Rossi, and Bernardo Storace; J. S. Bach himself possessed a copy of Frescobaldi's *Fiori musicali*.



"The astounding inventiveness of Frescobaldi's declamation, the variety of his affects, the erudition of his counterpoint, and the vast scale of his forms prove the exceptional nature of his compositions. "Composing well" for the harpsichord consists above all of a complete understanding of the instrument's limitations and shortcomings in order to go beyond them and use them to one's advantage."

- Christophe Rousset

Frescobaldi's first book of ***Toccate e partite d'intavolatura di cimbalo*** (first printed in 1615 and later revised in 1736) illustrates the composer's desire to make his instrument sing: his writing achieves this through its free improvisation, virtuosity, and rhythmic variation. Frescobaldi's greatest innovation is introducing frequent metre changes or free writing around a supple beat. The composer even included a detailed preface to advise performers of his fresh approach.



On this recording, Christophe Rousset plays an anonymous late sixteenth-century instrument, recently restored following being reconfigured by Rinaldo de Bertonis in 1736. The unusually worn keys show how intensely the instrument had originally been played. The harpsichords available to Frescobaldi had a reduced compass of four octaves and did not allow for register changes.

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Full Track Listings

Girolamo Frescobaldi *Toccate e partite d'intavolatura di cimbalo, libro primo*

1. *Toccata prima*
2. *Cento partite sopra passacagli*
3. *Toccata nona*
4. *Partite sopra l'aria della Romanesca*
5. *Toccata ottava*
6. *Partite sopra l'aria di Monica*
7. *Toccata decima*
8. *Balletto terzo, corrente e passacagli*
9. *Toccata terza*
10. *Partite sopra l'aria di Follia*
11. *Toccata sesta*
12. *Quattro correnti*
13. *Toccata settima*
14. *Balletto e ciaccona*

Christophe Rousset Harpichordist, Conductor, Musicologist



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The founder of the ensemble Les Talens Lyriques and internationally recognised harpsichordist Christophe Rousset is a musician and conductor inspired by a passion for opera and the rediscovery of the European musical heritage.

His studies (harpsichord) with Huguette Dreyfus at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, then with Bob van Asperen at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague (winning

the coveted First Prize in the Seventh Bruges International Harpsichord Competition at the age of twenty-two), followed by the creation of his own ensemble, Les Talens Lyriques, in 1991, have enabled Christophe Rousset to obtain a perfect grasp of the richness and diversity of the Baroque, Classical and pre-Romantic repertoires.

Christophe Rousset is now invited to appear with Les Talens Lyriques all over Europe (Opéra National de Paris, Opéra Comique, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Philharmonie de Paris, Opéra Royal de Versailles, Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Lausanne Opéra, Teatro Real Madrid, Vienna Staatsoper and Theater an der Wien, Théâtre Royal de La Monnaie and Bozar in Brussels, London's Wigmore Hall and Barbican Centre, and so on), as well as on tour in other parts of the world (Mexico, New Zealand, Canada, United States, etc.).

At the same time he continues to pursue an active career as a harpsichordist and chamber musician, playing and recording on some of the world's finest period instruments. His recordings of the harpsichord works of Louis and François Couperin, Rameau, D'Anglebert, Royer, Duphy, Forqueray, Balbastre and Scarlatti, and those devoted to J. S. Bach (Partitas, Goldberg Variations, Harpsichord Concertos, English Suites, French Suites, *Klavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann*, Well-Tempered Clavier) are regarded as references.

Teaching is of paramount importance to Christophe Rousset, who organises and gives many master-classes and academies (Paris Conservatoire CNSM, Ambronay, Fondation Royaumont, Operastudio Vlaanderen-Ghent, OFJ Baroque, Junge Deutsche Philharmonie-Berlin, Accademia Chigiana-Siena, Amici della Musica in Florence, Britten-Pears Orchestra at Snape Maltings) and, together with members of Les Talens Lyriques, plays an active part in introducing young secondary school students in Paris and the Île-de-France to music.

Christophe Rousset also appears regularly as a guest conductor: Liceu Barcelona, San Carlo Naples, La Scala Milan, Opéra Royal de Wallonie, London's Royal Opera House, Orquesta Nacional de España, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orchestre du Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, etc.

He is active too in the field of research and writing, through critical editions, the publication of monographs devoted to Jean-Philippe Rameau and François Couperin (Actes Sud, 2007 and 2016, respectively).

2017 saw the publication of a series of interviews by Camille de Rijck in which Christophe Rousset shares his thoughts on music: *L'impression que l'instrument chante*, Éditions de la Cité de la Musique - Philharmonie de Paris (La rue musicale - Entretiens).

Christophe Rousset is a Knight of the French Legion of Honour, a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters, and a Knight of the National Order of Merit.

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