



A laconic Jordi Savall at
the Maison symphonique

Description

A concert under the influence of the Jansenist rigidity of Augustin d'Autrecourt, the Sieur de Sainte-Colombe

By Luc Archambault

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The concert *Fantasies, Battles and Dances – The Golden Age of Consort Music (1500-1750)*, presented on Monday, November 7 at the magnificent **Maison symphonique** in Montreal, was quite a ceremony in the minds of Montreal music lovers. Indeed, the visit of **Jordi Savall** and his ensemble **Hespèrion XXI** graced the audience with his viol quintet accompanied by theorbo and guitar. Like a well-oiled machine, these six musicians performed pieces from the Baroque age, representing a selection of the most beautiful compositions for viol consort, in a journey covering Europe at the time.

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A concert in four sections, each comprising four or five pieces, the first section broke the absolute silence of the Montreal audience with a dark and austere tone, where one could see the influence of the Jansenist rigidity of Augustin d'Autrecourt, Sieur de Sainte-Colombe. Older listeners will remember with delight Savall's contribution to the soundtrack of Corneau's film *Tous les matins du monde* (1991).

For Maestro Savall leads his ensemble at once. All in silence, dressed in black, with about twenty seconds between each section to retune their instruments, the musicians, remarkable for their collective playing, blend into this music rich in harmonies and counterpoint.

However, the conductor's silence was a bit disturbing: no introduction or intervention, except before the fourth

section, to announce an inversion of pieces and to introduce **Mélisandre Corriveau**, a local violinist invited to replace a Hungarian musician detained at the border because of visa problems.



One may be a world-renowned performer, but an adoring public would have welcomed a bit of communication. The maestro would do well to emulate the suave **Mathieu Lussier** of *Pentaèdre* and *Arion Orchestre Baroque*, but he seems to be resting on his reputation, thus neglecting a more coherent selection of the pieces that make up the fabric of the concert.

This lack of cohesion between the different sections is ultimately disturbing. The choice of pieces seems somewhat random, and a more coherent choice could have been made among the entire musical production of this period. When the first section opts for a dark and reflective tone, why not give this tone to the whole concert, and conclude with one, or even several, pieces by J.S. Bach, richer and more austere than those chosen?

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All in all, this concert was a magnificent demonstration of Hespèrion XXI's mastery, of the intensity of its playing, and of the resonance of its reputation with an audience that is not very well informed about the potential of this musical period. The lack of any effort at presentation, or even animation, during this performance is regrettable, for the audience in attendance would undoubtedly have been able to leave the Symphony House with a more enriched general culture if the maestro had really enlivened this concert, and not officiated a Jansenist ceremony.

The concert ***Fantasies, Battles and Dances – The Golden Age of the Viol Consort (1500-1750)*** was performed at the Maison symphonique on November 7, 2022.

Pieces from JS Bach, Brade, Cabanilles, Charpentier, Dowland, du Caurroy, Ferrabosco, Guami, Holborne, Locke, Purcell, Scheidt, Trabaci, Tye et Woodcock.

Hespèrion XXI



Jordi Savall, viola da gamba
Philippe Pierlot, viola da gamba
Mélisande Corriveau, tenor viol
Juan Manuel Quintana, bass viol
Xavier Puertas, violin
Enrike Solinis, theorbo and guitar

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Luc Archambault, writer and journalist, globe-trotter at heart, passionate about movies, music, literature and contemporary dance, came back to Montreal from an extended stay in China to pursue his unrelenting quest for artistic meaning.

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