

INTRODUCTION

Michel-Richard de Lalande [De La Lande, Delalande] was born in Paris on 15 December 1657, and died on 18 June 1726, at Versailles. By the end of his life, he was *Chevalier de l'Ordre de St. Michel, Surintendant de la Musique du Roy, Sous-Maître de Musique et Compositeur Ordinaire de la Chapelle, Maître de Musique* and *Compositeur de la Musique de la Chambre*, having served under two sovereigns, Louis XIV and Louis XV (see *A Calendar of Lalande's Career and Compositions* below).

Becoming an *Enfant de Choeur* of St-Germain-l'Auxerrois at the age of 9, at the same time as Marin Marais, Lalande was singled out by the *Maître de Musique*, François Chaperon, as his most gifted pupil. Soon after Chaperon moved to the Sainte-Chapelle in 1679, he encouraged the young Lalande by performing some of his *Leçons de Ténèbres* there. By then, Lalande was organist of both Saint-Jean-en-Grève and at St-Gervais, in the latter case acting as *locum tenens* during the minority of François Couperin. Some of Lalande's *grands motets*, known to have been composed before his appointment to the Chapelle royale, may also have been performed by Chaperon, or perhaps at Saint-Louis-des-Jésuites, where (according to Alexandre Tannevot) Lalande was also organist at this time (perhaps while Marc-Antoine Charpentier was *maître de musique* there). Tannevot also related that Lalande composed music for several tragedies for the Jesuits (now lost), in which 'il s'en acquitta avec succès'.

Lalande's success as a harpsichord teacher to Mlle de Noailles led to a similar appointment to teach Mlle de Nantes and Mlle de Blois, the king's daughters by Mme de Montespan. In 1682-3, he composed four works for stage or outdoor entertainment, notably *Les fontaines de Versailles*. But his first important court post came with his success at the great 1683 *concours* when Lalande was the king's personal choice as one of the four *Sous-maîtres de la Chapelle* in succession to Henry Du Mont and Pierre Robert.

The unexpected death of the Queen, Marie-Thérèse, a few weeks later, and the consequent strengthening of the influence of Mme de Maintenon produced an atmosphere more conducive to a royal interest in sacred, rather than secular music, exactly matching Lalande's own inclinations. By the time he had taken up his appointment on 1 October 1683, he had composed 13 *grands motets*, and in little more than five years, at least another 11, as well as more stage music, notably the *Ballet de la Jeunesse* (1686) (which supplanted Lully's planned première of *Armide* at court), and, in January 1689, *Le Palais de Flore*. Within days of this latter première, he was appointed *Surintendant de la Musique de la Chambre*. By the end of 1689, he had composed another six *grands motets*, and the court copyists François Fossard and André Danican Philidor *l'aîné* had almost completed their magnificent folio 'Recueil qui contient tous les Motets de Mr. de la Lande', made on the king's orders. This was a singular tribute to the 31-year-old composer, when one considers that his two predecessors' motets were not collected and published until their retirement, and no similar collections were made of the works of his three fellow *Sous-maîtres* (Colasse, Minoret and Goupillet). This *Recueil* of 1689-90, today containing 27 motets, is the principal source of our knowledge of Lalande's early sacred style (*F-V*, Ms Mus 8-17) (**VPh**).

Over the next 15 years, Lalande produced a steady stream of new motets and stage works, but had already begun to significantly modify his style in an increasingly Italianate manner, and to revise his earlier works (even the 1689-90 *Recueil* had included one such revision). Ironically, from the moment Lully arrived in France from Italy at the age of 13, he seems to have worked assiduously throughout his career to prove he was more French than the French, while many other French composers, including Lalande, were interesting themselves in the latest ideas from Italy, and how they could best absorb them into the French style. *Les goûts réunis* was a many-faceted phenomenon, but one may note some of the incidents in Lalande's life which demonstrate his interest in and familiarity with Italian style and the way in which this interest was absorbed into his own compositions. In chronological order, these events include:

- (i) the appointment of Henri Du Mont as one of the two *Sous-maîtres de la Chapelle* in 1660; Du Mont had arrived in Paris from Flanders about 1643, already well-versed in the Italian continuo style (Lalande was destined to replace him as one of the *Sous-maîtres* in 1683 and his early *grands motets* show Du Mont's influence),

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- (ii) the arrival at Versailles in 1679 of the first five Italian castrati to sing in the choir of the royal chapel, singers with whom he would shortly be working. The castrati had been brought from Italy by Paolo Lorenzani, who had himself arrived at the French court the previous year,
- (iii) Lalande's cooperation with Lorenzani in providing the music for *Une Sérénade en forme d'Opéra* S131 at Fontainebleau in November 1682,
- (iv) Lalande's participation in the *soirées* dedicated to Italian music *chez* the Abbé Mathieu (who, according to Brossard, left his library of such music to Lalande)
- (v) Lalande's contribution of six of the 12 *ritournelles* to the book of Italian operatic airs collected by Fossard and Philidor, and published in 1695 (these reappeared in a larger manuscript collection for the comte de Toulouse in 1703) (see S174),
- (vi) the appearance in Paris of copies of Corelli's trio sonatas as early as 1695 (see **Pc533 1695**). Lalande was to acknowledge his debt to Corelli by including the 'Christmas' Concerto in the programme of the first *Concert spirituel* in March 1725 (the rest of the programme consisted entirely of Lalande's works).

By the time the comte de Toulouse commissioned his collection from Philidor in 1703 (**TPh**), Lalande had composed a further 34 *grands motets*, as well as several *élévations* (*petits motets*), his *Cantique de Racine* (1695), numerous settings of *Domine, salvum fac regem* (S107-15), and seven major stage works. The earliest volumes of the collection of the comte de Toulouse (**TPh**) appear to be *Les Symphonies de M. De La Lande ... qui se jouent ordinairement au Souper du Roy* (1703) (*F-Pc*, Rés.582) containing 160 movements organized in 10 suites and a *Concert de Trompettes* (later collections of these symphonies included some 300 movements). Of the stage works of this period, the only one to survive in complete form is the pastorale, *L'Amour fléchy par la Constance* (*F-LYm*, Ms 133620), performed first at Fontainebleau in October 1697, and then probably repeated alongside Destouches' *Issé*, for the wedding of the duc de Bourgogne in December at Versailles; Lalande's *grand motet*, *Eruclavit cor meum*, graced the same occasion.

During the remaining years of the reign of Louis XIV, Lalande's production of secular music ceased except for his *Ballet de la Paix* in 1713, and the rate at which he composed new *grands motets* also slowed down. His energies appear to have been mainly directed at extensively revising earlier motets to match the style of those few he newly composed. Outstanding among these revisions must be counted those of *De profundis* (sung at the funeral of Louis XIV), *Miserere mei* (Ps. 50), *Confitebor tibi* (Ps. 110) and *Te Deum laudamus*. But the years 1705-10 also produced eight new *grands motets*, and the seven that have survived show the composer at the height of his powers: *Confitemini*, *Quare fremuerunt*, *Exurgat Deus*, *Cantate Domino* (Ps. 97) (the most performed of all his motets at the *Concert spirituel* 1725-1770), *Dixit Dominus* (2nd setting), *Sacris solemniis* and *Exultate justi*. This last may have been written for the consecration of the present chapel at Versailles, on 5 June 1710 (Louis XIV had required Lalande to perform motets in the new chapel in order to judge its acoustic before he permitted the consecration to go ahead).

In 1711, the smallpox epidemic which resulted in the Dauphin's death moved Lalande to revise his *Dies iræ*, originally written for the Dauphine's funeral in 1690, thereby producing one of his masterpieces in the process. Like their mother, Anne Rebel, Lalande's two daughters were both outstanding singers, but they too were claimed in the same epidemic, soon after the Dauphin. Lalande only composed two more *grands motets*; one, *Exaltabo te, Deus meus*, the next year, included a soprano duet which was undoubtedly a tribute to his daughters, and the other, a new setting, in 1721 (during the Regency), of *Omnes gentes*. The inclusion of trumpets in this work would imply it was for a ceremonial occasion. But he continued the revision process of earlier works, including that of *Veni Creator* in 1722 (probably for the Coronation of Louis XV) and the *Te Deum*, the only one of his motets to survive in his own autograph. This score (*F-Pc*, H400D[3]) is a unique document, showing many revisions, cuts and alternatives, and includes timings at the end of each movement, as well as a total of 'une bonne demi-heure' (S32/iii).

Most of Lalande's shorter sacred works for which he is justly celebrated — the three surviving *Leçons de Ténèbres* (he set all nine), his *Miserere à voix seule*, and *O filii & filiae à voix seule*, (together with a *Regina cœli à voix seule*, now lost) — must have been composed before 1711, since Philidor, in his 1729 *Catalogue* (*F-A*, Ms 1201) tells us they were 'chantez par Mesdemoiselles De la Lande à l'admiration de tout Paris'.

In 1720, Lalande resumed composition of stage music with a series of ballets devised for the young Louis XV: *L'Inconnu*, *Les Folies de Cardenio* (both 1720) and *Les Elémens* (1721), this last with Destouches. The death of Lalande's wife in 1722, and the busy schedule occasioned by the return of the court to Versailles and the coronation of Louis XV were no doubt all factors that led him, early in 1723, to resign from three of his four quarters as *Sous-maître de la Chapelle*; Nicolas Bernier, André Campra and Charles-Hubert Gervais were appointed in his place. In April of the same year, he remarried, his new wife being the viol player, Marie-Louise de Cury, who was ultimately to play such a significant role in the posthumous publication of her late husband's motets.

In the last year of his life, although none of his *grands motets* had been published (no doubt he would never have agreed to such an idea while he was still revising them), he experienced what must have been the great pleasure of having numerous works performed at the *Concert spirituel* which began in March 1725. His death at the age of 68 in June 1726 marked the end of a remarkable career of 43 years at court, during which he acquired even more posts in the musical establishment than had the notorious Lully. But it was also the beginning of a new life for his *grands motets*, flourishing as the staple diet of the *Concert spirituel* for the next 45 years, with 14 of them also remaining in the repertory of the Chapelle royale until the last days of that institution in 1792. A major factor in the diffusion of these works was the posthumous engraved edition (1729-34) (H) which his widow launched immediately after his death. It contained 40 *grands motets* in *partition réduite*, including almost all the works of his maturity together with some of the earlier ones in late revisions, as well as three of the *Leçons de Ténèbres*, and his *Miserere à voix seule*.

If Lalande's stage music was unpretentious and largely conformed to inherited Lullian models, the same cannot be said of his 77 *grands motets* (of which 65 survive in score), which mark the *apogée* of the genre, and served as the yardstick by which all such works composed before or after were measured. They are distinguished by a remarkably subtle response to the texts, and writing for both voices and instruments that always demands sensitivity to phrasing, and often, virtuosity. Among his generation, Lalande was the most skilled of contrapuntists, and he also exploited the extended harmonic palette inherited from Charpentier. Orchestral accompaniments employ the whole gamut of colourful effects common to sacred and secular music of the time, as the dramatic nature of the psalm texts so often demanded, and such accompaniments exhibit a new independence from the straightforward doubling of voices that contented most of Lalande's predecessors and contemporaries. Little wonder that as late as 1754, the Abbé Laugier could write: 'La Lande offers us beauties of composition the result of great contemplation and study. One finds nothing there of the obvious, the facile, the elegant, or the graceful, but in portraying the devout, the tender, the grave, the noble, the majestic, and the terrible, he has eminently succeeded.'

Recognizing the importance of Lalande's library (which included works inherited from the Abbé Mathieu), Sébastien de Brossard, immediately he heard of Lalande's death, approached the royal librarian, the Abbé Bignon, to request that the library acquire Lalande's collection from his estate. Sadly, Bignon replied (27 June 1726, nine days after Lalande's death): 'With respect to the library of the late M. de La Lande, I do not quite see what use we can make of the information you have given me. We have no funds at the library to make acquisitions. You have certainly seen that for yourself. There is no indication that at some time the King would take it into his head to augment the extraordinary expenditure. On the other hand, it would not be right to acquire these curiosities without paying the heirs generously for them.' (*F-Pn*, ms fr 22234, f. 30. [Less than 18 months later, on 20 November 1727, the royal library nevertheless found 300 livres to purchase the manuscripts of the works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier (see Hitchcock 1985).])