

# Tafelmusik

## A CHAT WITH AMANDINE BEYER



### **Where were you born?**

I was born in Gardanne, between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille. When I first started making music at the age of four, I played the recorder. It is a good instrument to introduce children to music. I learned music through a very interactive approach called Dalcroze Eurhythmics, which connects music, movement, mind, and body. When I went to the Conservatory, somebody commented that I had a good ear and suggested I try the violin. I was just seven, and I continued playing both the recorder and the violin until I was about twenty. Then I had to give something up, as it was too much. I picked the violin, though I was not really convinced at first: the violin is a difficult instrument to master, especially compared to the recorder! I was not quite prepared to work so hard ... I still love the recorder: the sound, the wood ... Anyway, I was lucky enough to have a wonderful violin teacher, an Italian woman named Aurélia Spadaro. She made me fall in love with the violin.

### **You studied modern violin at the Paris Conservatory and wrote your master's thesis on Karlheinz Stockhausen. How did you come to the baroque violin?**

I was studying musicology at the University in Aix-en-Provence, and there was a teacher of baroque and medieval music I wanted to work with, but he left. Luckily, the new teacher — who happened to be a twentieth-century specialist — was terrific. He took me under his wing. I had so much fun there! Stockhausen is a fascinating, quirky composer. Switching to baroque violin just happened *par hazard* [by chance] ... or perhaps it was just my destiny. When I moved to Basel, I was a bit lost: there were no positions available in any ensemble, I was too young to teach, and I just didn't know which route to take. But I continued making music, mostly with my teacher's grandson who was a fabulous musician and a great friend. He was

into baroque music and introduced me to Chiara Banchini, who "converted" me to baroque music.

### **How did you first hear about Tafelmusik?**

I was performing music by Telemann who wrote the famous collection, *Tafelmusik*. That's when I came across recordings by the Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and thought "what a fantastic name, this is just brilliant!" Right away, I had a good feeling about the ensemble. I just loved the name! I listened to many of their recordings but never heard them live. And then I met Julia Wedman at the Boston Early Music Festival. She suggested that I contact Jeanne Lamon and voilà! My first-ever appearance with Tafelmusik will also mark my Canadian debut. I am so looking forward to this.

### **You like to experiment with sonorities, explore new repertory, or rediscover some of the "classics." Will this be reflected in the *French Connection* programme?**

It certainly will be a journey of discovery for all of us. As a French-born musician, I don't find this programme particularly exotic, but I really tried to make it interesting for the orchestra and the public — and for myself too! Tafelmusik is well acquainted with French repertoire, so there is already common ground, but I want to give them a "French accent." I want to communicate my love of this repertoire so that we can produce together a genuine French colour and create a distinctive, unique atmosphere. The programme includes some rarely heard works like *L'Europe galante* by Campra. I love this composer (of course, he is from Aix-en-Provence!). *Les Éléments* by Rebel is well known, but the violin concerto by Leclair, which is a wonderful piece, is rarely performed. In fact, I have never heard the concerto in concert. The suite from Rameau's opera *Zaïs* is another great gem to be discovered. Of course, Rameau is always great! And we will have great fun playing Corrette's *Concerto comique*. His writing is always clever. In this work, he borrowed different themes from different composers — it's like a pot-pourri. It will be quite entertaining.

### **What fascinates you the most about baroque music — and what distinguishes French baroque music from the rest?**

I love the lightness of baroque music. Somehow, it just suits my personality. French baroque music, in particular, is very lively. The pieces tend to be short, yet convey a myriad of different emotions. French baroque music is subtle and sensitive, theatrical, and has a malleable quality that is irresistible. Moreover, it's often tongue-in-cheek.

### **How do you relax?**

I read constantly — I like to read novels. I love to swim in the sea, and now that I live in Spain near the ocean, I am lucky to be able to do so often. I go to the gym to work out: playing the violin can take a toll on the body, so I need to keep in shape. I do a lot of stretching, I practice Tai Chi (great for slow movement and breathing), Tae Kwon Do, yoga ... and I have a fabulous massage therapist!

### **Who would you invite to your dream dinner party?**

Oh, I picture a celebratory dinner after a performance. Everyone in the orchestra would be

invited. Of course, I would want to have the composers around the table too, so if we played Campra, Rameau, and Rebel, they would all be there. I would also love to invite some of my best friends, including harpsichordist Pierre Hantai, fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout, and so on. This would make me very happy! There would be lots of food served buffet style. I would prepare very Provençal fare — light and delicious foods like tapenade, aioli, and soupe au pistou ... Yes, there would be lots of garlic!

*French violinist **Amandine Beyer** studied violin in her native Aix-en-Provence and Paris, completing a Master's Degree on the works of Karlheinz Stockhausen. Interest in the baroque violin took her to Basel, where she studied with Chiara Banchini. She now enjoys a busy career, concertizing around the world, working regularly with Les Cornets Noirs; with keyboard players Pierre Hantai, Kristian Bezuidenhout, and Laurence Beyer; and with her own ensemble, Gli Incogniti, whose recordings of Vivaldi Four Seasons and Corelli Concerti grossi have received critical acclaim. Her solo recording of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas has received numerous awards.*

*Amandine Beyer teaches in the Escola Superior de Música, Artes e Espectáculo in Porto (Portugal), and at her alma mater, the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.*