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## The fashion for Flemish harpsichords in France: a new appreciation

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KIELINSTRUMENTE AUS DER WERKSTATT RUCKERS  
zu Konzeption, Bauweise und Ravalement sowie  
Restaurierung und Konservierung

Bericht über die Internationale Konferenz  
vom 13. bis 15. September 1996 im Händel-Haus Halle

Halle an der Saale 1998

Florence Gétreau, Paris

## THE FASHION FOR FLEMISH HARPSICHORDS IN FRANCE : A NEW APPRECIATION

The long-standing fashion in Paris for instruments made in Antwerp is already well known through many texts and archival documents. This fashion is studied more and more now in its various other aspects because of the examination of a large numbers of instruments. However, I would like to present some new documents on this subject.

### I. FLEMISH INSTRUMENTS IN THE HANDS OF FRENCH MUSICIANS

First of all, my purpose is to propose a short supplement to the Appendix C published in the book of Frank Hubbard,<sup>1</sup> because some inventories and auction catalogues came to light in recent years or have been overlooked by recent publications, even some devoted to Ruckers (Table 1).

I will begin with documents related to one of the first great Parisian harpsichordists, Mlle Marie Françoise Certain (Paris, c. 1655 - Paris, 11 febr. 1711). The daughter of a "Conseiller du Roi, commissaire ordinaire des guerres", she was a friend of Lully and was greatly esteemed by him. Titon du Tillet in his *Parnasse françois* (1732) reports that:

*"Ce célèbre Musicien lui faisoit jouer sur le Clavecin toutes les Symphonies de ses Operas, & elle les executoit dans la plus grande perfection, de même que toutes les Pièces de Louis Couperin, de Chambonniere & de Marchand. Elle accompagnait aussi très-bien du Clavecin. Comme elle donnoit de très-beaux Concerts chez elle, les plus habiles Compositeurs y faisoient apporter leur Musique, qu'on executoit toujours avec beaucoup de succès."*<sup>2</sup>

Even more interesting is the fact that Titon du Tillet later mentions a poet, Lainez, who celebrated her with verses upon the "Harmony of an excellent Harpsichord by André

Rukers: *Je suis la fille du Genie,  
Qui sous le beau nom d'harmonie,  
Réunis dans mes sons tous les charmes du Chant;  
Et respectant les loix du Dieu qui m'a formée,  
Je reste dans RUKERS captive & renfermée,  
Et j'attens pour sortir la CERTIN, ou MARCHAND."*

<sup>1</sup> Hubbard, Frank: *Three Centuries of Harpsichord making*. - Cambridge MA : Harvard University Press, 1972, pp. 313 - 319.

<sup>2</sup> Titon du Tillet, Evrard: *Le Parnasse françois dédié au roi*. - Paris : J. B. Coignard fils, 1732, p. 637: "This famous musician asked her to play on the harpsichord all his Symphonies and Operas [...]. Because she gave at home very good concerts, the most skilled composers used to come with their music, always executed here with great success."

This praise is very revealing of the talented harpsichordist and also of the quite unreasonable craze of Parisians for the famous Flemish makers. Michel Le Moël published even more interesting documents concerning this lady musician.<sup>3</sup> In the Archives nationales, he found the official seal<sup>4</sup> after her death, and the inventory<sup>5</sup> of her possessions. The first document is directly relevant to our subject: it explains that Marie-Anne Coignard, a friend of Mlle Certain, protested because she reclaimed to the lawyers that a harpsichord with two keyboards by Joannes Ruckers was her own property:

*"...un clavessin à deux claviers de Jean Ruquerre qu'elle a acheté il y a treize ans [en 1698] à Bruxelles, dans sa boîte de bois dont le dessus peint par Rubens représente des personnages mêlés de paysages, lequel elle a presté à son retour de Bruxelles il y a douze ans et demy à la dite defunte qui a fait dorer le dehors de la boeste du dit clavessin et peindre sur iceluy des mignatures, mesme fait faire le pied doré d'iceluy ; lequel clavessin de la dite defunte a toujours promis de rendre à la dite damoiselle comparante, ce qui est de la connaissance de tous ses amys..."*

When the inventory was written, some days later, this precious instrument, redecorated for Mlle Certain, is mentioned in a more common way :

*"Un clavessin à deux claviers de Ruquier [sic] posé sur son pied de bois doré sculpté, le corps d'iceluy aussi de bois doré et peint en mignature, le couvercle d'iceluy peint en dedans, prisé la somme de douze cent livres."*

This price is very important in comparison with another harpsichord, by Dumont, estimated at only 200 livres. All the other instruments of the musician (two bass viols, one dessus, a "basse de violon" made in Cremona, a guitar, a theorbo from Bologna, a recorder by Rippert) were estimated at a total of 400 livres.

Mlle Certain lived on the rue du Hasard, a newly built district in Paris, where other musicians lived, for instance the Boesset family on rue de Richelieu, Lully on rue Sainte Anne, and Madame de La Guerre on rue Villedo. I would specifically like to consider the last Lady.

Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (Paris, c. 1665 - Paris, 1729), was even more famous than her brilliant neighbour, but, in addition to an uncommon talent as a virtuoso on the harpsichord, she was a first rank composer. Her career is well

<sup>3</sup> Le Moël, Michel: *Chez l'illustre Certain*. - In: Recherches sur la musique française. - II. #1961/62, pp. 71 - 79.

<sup>4</sup> Archives nationales: Y 11640 (scellé du 2 février 1711).

<sup>5</sup> Archives nationales: Minutier central : LXV, 173, 13 mars 1711.

known today, due to the recent publication by Catherine Cessac.<sup>6</sup> She includes the inventory of Elisabeth de La Guerre's estate in which we find a *Grand clavecin flumant à deux claviers*.<sup>7</sup>



2. Copy, sculpt.

fig. 1 and 2: Titon du Tillet, *Le Paroisse français*, 1732, Madame Jacquet de La Guerre.

There are several portraits of this musician. Two, quite unattractive, were reproduced by Titon du Tillet after medals, one being a bust (Figure 1 and 2). But another one, painted in a masterful manner by François de Troy (1645 - 1654) (Figure 3), was recently identified in an American gallery by Dominique Brème, an art historian specializing in French portraits of the Grand siècle. I think that this lavish painting, executed when the composer was at the peak of her career (around 1695, some years after publishing her tragedy *Céphale et Procris*), and also in the prime of her life (she is about 35 years old), was probably exhibited in the Salon du Louvre in summer 1704. Twelve paintings by François de Troy were presented. The printed livret has a probable misprint. We read:

*"Douze tableaux par M. de Troy. Au troisième rang, M. Mouton ; ... Douze tableaux de Mademoiselle Chéron a present Mad. Le Hay. Au troisième rang, Madame de la Guette [to be read Madame de La Guerre]. Deux jeunes filles qui accordent un clavecin."*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cessac, Catherine. *Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre : une femme compositeur sous le règne de Louis XIV.* - Arles : Actes Sud, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Cessac, Catherine. op. cit. in note 6, p. 177. Inventory preserved in the Archives nationales, Minutier central des notaires, XXXV, 565, 11 juillet 1729.

<sup>8</sup> *Livret du Salon de peintures.* - Paris, 1704, pp. 15, 19 - 20.



Fig. 3 François de Troy (1645-1654), *Madame Jacquet de La Guerre*, c. 1695, oil on canvas, London, private coll.

Titon du Tillet offers us again more appropriate words to appreciate the real skill of the musician:

*“Mademoiselle Jacquet dès sa plus tendre jeunesse fit connoître des talens & des dispositions extraordinaires pour la Musique & pour l’Art de toucher le Clavecin. A peine avoit-elle quinze ans, qu’elle parut à la Cour. Le Roi eut beaucoup de plaisir à l’entendre jouer du Clavecin ; ... tous les grands Musiciens & les bons Connoisseurs ai’oient avec empressement l’entendre toucher le Clavecin: ...*

*Madame de la Guerre avoit un très-beau genie pour la composition, & a excellé dans la Musique vocale, de même que dans l’instrumentale.”<sup>9</sup>*

In the painting she wears precisely the attributes of composition. One can also notice, on the right of the painting, the discreet but unambiguous representation of her precious Flemish harpsichord. The cheek shows a decoration in “grisaille”, with putti, worthy of François Duquesnoy, the Flemish painter (? - 1643). Madame Jacquet de La Guerre bequeathed all her portraits to her nephews.<sup>10</sup>

At the time of her death, a great patron also contributed to the dissemination of the taste for sumptuous Flemish harpsichords. This was Pierre Crozat (Toulouse, 1665 - Paris, 1740). A rich financier, passionately fond of paintings and drawings, protector of Antoine Watteau, he is less known as a remarkable patron of musicians. Once a month, he welcomed artists and famous people, like the Regent, Law (as reported by the pastellist Rosalba Carriera in her diary), and some of the best known professional performers. Pierre Crozat’s music library<sup>11</sup> shows a special taste for Italian music and for modern pieces like sonates and cantates.<sup>12</sup>

Several drawings by Watteau evoke these musical evenings in the residences of Crozat. One, for instance, shows Mademoiselle d’Argenon (a singer, who lived in the Hôtel Crozat with her father) the castrato Antonio Paccini, and the Regent’s violinist, Giovanni Antonio Guido (Paris, Musée du Louvre). Another shows

<sup>9</sup> Titon du Tillet. op. cit. in note 2, pp. 635 - 636.

<sup>10</sup> Wallon, Simone: *Les testaments d’Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre*. - In: *Revue de musicologie*. - XL., 1957, pp. 206 - 214.

<sup>11</sup> Gètreau, Florence: *Watteau et la musique*. - In exhibition catalogue: *Watteau*. - Paris : Grand Palais, 1984/85, p. 532; Washington : National Gallery, 1984, p. 530; Berlin : Schloß Charlottenburg, 1985, p. 536. The Inventory is preserved in the Archives nationales : Minutier Central. XXX, 278, 30 mai 1740.

<sup>12</sup> Apart from religious music, we find in his library ductti da camera and cantate by Bononcini, Stradella, Bassani, Felzina, Gabrielli et Zuccari, sonatas by Baldy, Vivaldi et Somis, concerti by Albinoni, Corelli, Alberti, Sacco, Valentini and Locatelli, and selected pieces by Scarlatti. Only works by Lully (his operas), by Marin Marais (his *Pièces de viole* and his *Pièces en trio*) and by Mondonville (*Sonates*) were exceptions.

Jean-Fery Rebel playing the harpsichord (Dijon, Musée Magnin). Of lower quality but of more interest for our purpose, two small paintings by Nicolas Lancret, painted between 1720 and 1724, show the same concerts. One represents the music room, rue de Richelieu (Munich, Alte Pinakotek), the other one the house in Enghien, outside Paris (Texas, privat coll.). In his Parisian hotel, Crozat placed a Joannes Couchet Harpsichord “dans sa boiste peinte façon de marbre et sur son pied de bois sculpté doré prisé la somme de Cent Cinquante livres”, and in the countryside, an anonymous harpsichord, painted black with a gilded stand. It seems that Lancret inverted the harpsichords in both paintings (Figure 4).

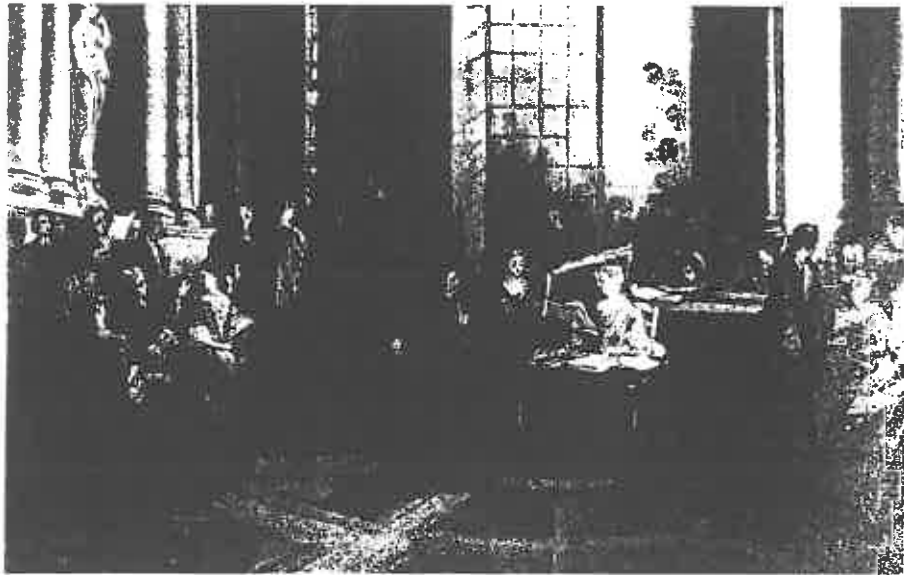


Fig. 4 Nicolas Lancret, *Concert in the house of Pierre Crozat*, c. 1720-24, oil on canvas, USA, private coll.

After these professional musicians and this patron, I will consider a great amateur, a collector of rareties but also a music lover and performer, the famous Joseph Bonnier de La Mosson (1702-1744). Being the son of a Trésorier des états du Languedoc, dragon et maréchal de logis des Camps et armés du Roi, a rich heir when he was only 24 years old in 1726, he first collected a cabinet of physics, mechanical objects, natural history, etc. He was in love with la Petitpas, a singer in the Opera. He took great care in the exhibition of his collection (we preserve some



delightful drawings showing the display), and was quite extravagant.<sup>13</sup> One year before his death, Jean-Marc Nattier painted a portrait showing him as a collector. It is exhibited in the National Gallery in Washington. After his death, the famous Gersaint was in charge of auction of art objects.<sup>14</sup> There was another catalogue for the library. Among the 1624 volumes were 250 volumes of music<sup>15</sup>, showing him as an opera lover but also as an instrumentalist,<sup>16</sup> playing the violin<sup>17</sup> and flute.<sup>18</sup> For the harpsichord, we find also the *Pièces de clavecin en sonate, avec accompagnement de violon*, by Mondonville (1734), and *Sonates pour le clavecin* by J. G. Lustig, published in 1742. Some very precious instruments provide evidence about his music making: 2 organs, 2 violins made by Amati, another by Joseph Guarnerius<sup>19</sup> and 2 harpsichords:

'N° 602 : Un excellent & beau Clavecin à deux claviers, du fameux ouvrier hans Rukiers, Flamand, augmenté d'un ravalement par le sieur Goujon, monté sur un pied neuf orné d'une frize & enrichi d'agraffes sculptées, très bien verni & peint en grotesques.

N° 603 : Un autre Clavecin à deux claviers, aussi bon que le précédent, & exécuté par le même Hans Rukiers, portant son ravalement fait par le sieur Goujon, monté sur un fort beau pied doré, & ayant sa caisse peinte en dehors en Mosaïque, & au dedans en differens sujets & attributs."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bourdier, Frank: *L'extravagant cabinet de Bonnier*. In: *Connaissance des Arts*. Août, 1959, pp. 52 - 59.

<sup>14</sup> Gersaint, E. F.: *Catalogue raisonné d'une collection considérable de diverses curiosités en tous Genres, contenues dans les Cabinets de feu Monsieur Bonnier de La Mosson, Bailly & Capitaine des chasses de La Varenne des Thuilleries & ancien Colonel du Régiment Dauphin*. - Paris : chez Jacques Barrois et Pierre-Guillaume Simon, 1744.

<sup>15</sup> *Catalogue des livres de M. Bonnier de La Mosson. Trésorier des Etats de Languedoc ; Dont la Vente commencera Lundi 26 avril 1745, & continuera les jours suivans [...] en sa Maison rue Saint Dominique, Fxfg Saint Germain*. - A Paris : chez Jacques Barrois, 1745, pp. 55 - 79, n° 705 à 950.

<sup>16</sup> Apart from Lully, we find works by Desmaret, Collasse, Destouches, Campra, Marais, Mouret, Rebel, Rameau et Lacoste. About ten motets and as many books of cantatas and cantatilles confirm his taste for French repertoire. Among lyric music, we note Bononcini once, and Handel twice. Among cantatas, Bononcini once more, and Mauro d'Alay, for a book of *Cantate a voce sola & suonate à violino solo col basso*, published in London in 1728.

<sup>17</sup> French composers are a majority. Among them are listed Aubert, Leclair, Mondonville, Guignon, Rebel, Francoeur, Anet, Guillemain, Viber, Duval, Bouvard, Dormel. But Italian composers interested him also: Vivaldi, Giannetti, Geminiani, Albinoni among others.

<sup>18</sup> Those by Mahaut or Boismortier (for two recorders), and sonatas by Quantz published by Boivin in 1729. He played also sonatas by Handel for flute and violin, published in 1731 and 1732, and also the *Nouveaux quatuors* by Telemann (1738).

<sup>19</sup> Gersaint, E. F.: op. cit. in note 14, n° 600 à 604.

<sup>20</sup> Gersaint, E. F.: op. cit. in note 14, n° 602 à 603.

The Goujon Harpsichord in the Musée de la Musique in Paris probably gives us an approximate idea of these instruments.

By systematically checking travel guides mentioning collections, and public auction catalogues, one could find many more citations like a “*clavecin de Ruckers à ravallement, peint par Gravelot, Du Tour, Crépin, &c. doré & verni par Martin, avec son pied sculpté et doré*”, exhibited in the collection of M. Blondel de Gagny, Place Vendôme.<sup>21</sup>

In the same way, the *Catalogue de tableaux de différents Maîtres... de Dessins & Estampes en feuilles, & Montées sous verre avec leurs bordures dorées. Du Cabinet de M \*\*\**<sup>22</sup> describes a “*Clavessin, de Ruquer, à ravallement en très bon état, bien drapé & remplumé; le corps du clavessin & le pied peints en noir avec filets d’or*”, while the Marquis de Pange’s auction catalogue, in March 1781, mentions “*3 clavecins, dont un dans sa boîte fond noir avec filets d’or, portant sur la table le nom d’André Ruckers. 84 livres, 1312 livres, 147 livres*”,<sup>23</sup> confirming, if necessary, the Parisian taste for Flemish harpsichords.

## II. RUCKERS INSTRUMENTS SOLD IN PARIS SALES DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

As a second point, I would like to reconsider Appendix 15 of Grant O’Brien’s book.<sup>24</sup> This list is an extract translated from Eugène de Bricqueville’s booklet devoted to musical instrument sales and auctions in Paris in the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> It was produced from the *Annonces, affiches et avis divers* a periodical of practical information published twice a week. But Bricqueville’s work needs a critical analysis because it is neither exhaustive nor systematic. One must return to the sources. Bricqueville seems to have checked the years 1752-1782, even though this journal was published between 1751 and 1797. The last 15 years were not explored. And, if you look carefully through his work, 8 more years were neglected: 1751,

<sup>21</sup> Hébert: *Dictionnaire Pittoresque et historique, ou Description d’architecture, peinture, gravure, histoire naturelle, Antiquités, & date des Etablissements & Monuments de Paris ... Utile aux Artistes, Amateurs des Beaux-Arts & Etrangers*. - Paris : Claude Herissant, 1766, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> Anonymous auction catalogue. - Paris, p. 16, n° 120. Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF] 8° V 36 (1520): *Dont la vente se fera rue St Louis, au coin de la rue St François, au Marais, maison de M. Picot, Marchand de vin, Jeudi, 19 Décembre 1771 & jours suivants*.

<sup>23</sup> Public auction catalogue. - Paris, 5 mars 1781, N° 115. The other instruments listed are: “N° 116 : un Forté-piano fait à Londres par J. Zumpe et organisé à Paris par M. Cliquot. 610 livres ; N° 117 : trois harpes dont une très petite. 422 livres”. [Paris, Bibliothèque Doucet. Institut d’Art].

<sup>24</sup> O’Brien, Grant: *Ruckers : a Harpsichord and Virginal Building Tradition*. - Appendix 15: *Ruckers instruments sold in Paris sales during the eighteenth century*. - Cambridge : University Press, 1990, pp. 302 - 304.

<sup>25</sup> Bricqueville, Eugène de: *Les ventes d’instruments de musique au XVIIIe siècle*. - Paris : Fischbacher, 1908.

1764, 1771, 1774, 1775, 1780, 1781. Bricqueville seems to have ignored the fact that the copy preserved in the library at Versailles is incomplete. But he was probably also discouraged by the amount of work, some years having so many announcements that there are 2 volumes per year (for instance in 1760, 1766, 1776, 1778), or even 3 volumes (1777). In 1783, announcements were published each day (no longer just twice a week), resulting in 4 volumes per year (1783-1789) and then 6 volumes per year. We can easily understand why Bricqueville left some years aside and then gave up his work with the year 1782.

He was also not exhaustive in transcribing the announcements. The provenance of the instruments is never quite noted by him, although it contributes many elements to the history of collections and musical life. Worse is the fact that he did not check all the occurrences of musical instruments. Indeed, these announcements deal either with “Meubles et effets” (Furniture and personal possessions, for example clothes) coming from dead people, or with goods presented individually, like paintings, stamps, horses, cabriolets, tulips, birds, small theaters etc. Bricqueville took probably in account only the harpsichords presented under this last heading. If we consider now manner of presentation in Bricqueville’s publication, we notice that he divided the different instruments by type, precluding a perception of musical ensemble. His methodology for transcription is also approximate: some dates are lacking, resulting in questions of interpretation. It seems that Bricqueville did not write systematically the full date on his individual cards, and then mixed them up. We find, for instance, items from the year 1780 among 1756 and 1767; the year 1775 in the middle of 1766 and 1767.

In 1986, Hélène Charnassé, in systematically publishing 4 years of this periodical, pointed some of these defects.<sup>26</sup> I decided myself to continue this work, checking 14 more years. I will here present only provisional conclusions, but even at this point, in comparing Bricqueville and Charnassé, plus my own results, it is clear the Parisian sales of Flemish harpsichords were 6 times more developed than we had known (Table 2). When this titanic work is completed (28 years more must be checked, that is at first 110 issues per year, and later on 4 times or 6 times more), we can probably expect to have in hand a list of 500 or 600 references concerning Flemish instruments circulating in Paris in the second half of the 18th century.

<sup>26</sup> Charnassé, Hélène: *Le commerce des instruments au XVIIIe siècle d’après les Annonces, affiches, et avis divers (I. 1751-1754)*. - In: *Instruments et musique instrumentale : textes réunis et présentés par Hélène Charnassé avec la collaboration de Laurence Hellcu*. - Paris : Editions du CNRS, 1986, pp. 161 - 223.

The count of the instruments is sometimes not very precise because some announcements were reprinted twice. Also sets of instruments can hardly give an accurate number (for instance, for the workshop of Galland, sold in 1760, or the one of Gaffino in 1787). For all these reasons, we must be careful in deducing general statistics.

If we consider how many Flemish makers are listed in the total (Table 3), adding up the work of Bricqueville, Charnassé and myself, we find that among 224 Flemish harpsichords checked so far, 23 are from “Flandres”, 137 bear the name Ruckers without first name, 1 is said to be by Hans Ruckers, 21 by Joannes Ruckers, 42 by Andreas Ruckers, and 9 by Joannes Couchet.

The date of the instrument is mentioned only 11 times (Table 4). Usually, the compass of the instrument is important for the advertisers. When an instrument has not undergone *ravalement*, people try to hide the diminished in value with a formula like on 16 September 1772: “*Bon clavecin de Ruckers, sans ravalement, propre pour une jeune personne*”. In addition to an announcement dated 10 September 1772, already published by Grant O’Brien after Bricqueville: “*Clavecin de Jean Couchet, d’Anvers, ayant 5 tons de plus que les claviers à grand ravalement*”, we can point to another advertisement for a “*Clavecin de Ruckers, à grand ravalement & jeu de buffle double, élevé au dessus de 5 octaves*” (on 1 December 1787).

Having a *ravalement* done by a famous master was also a good selling point. Among these 224 Flemish harpsichords announcements, 26 give this detail (Table 5). The Blanchet dynasty is far ahead, with 17 occurrences, Taskin coming in much behind. A Flemish soundboard was also a thing of value. We have 3 quotations: on 22 October 1759, a “*Clavecin avec une table ancienne de Flandre, à grand ravalement par le Sr. Lempereur*” (reprinted on February 1760); on 18 September 1760, a “*Clavecin à grand ravalement, d’un bon auteur, à bon compte. La table est de Flandres*”; on 4 May 1761, a “*Clavecin à grand ravalement, dont la table est de Ruckers*”.

Also, twice we find a Flemish claviorganum, although no example is extant. On 21 October 1756, somebody proposes an “*Excellent clavecin de Jean Ruckers, organisé*”, and on 18 March 1776, a “*Très bon clavecin organisé & à grand ravalement d’André Ruckers: on peut toucher l’orgue seul & le clavecin sans l’accompagnement*”.

The decoration of instruments was also a good selling point. 26 names of painters or decorators are quoted, even if it is very difficult to determine their degree of authenticity (special orders, workshop replica, motives borrowed from famous compositions) (Table 6). Rubens is mentioned six times, the subject of some

decorations being even mentioned, like for this: “*Grand clavecin d’André Ruckers, renfermant une épinette pour jouer à 2 sur le même instrument, la caisse et les pieds dorés, le couvercle représentant l’histoire de Samson, peinte par Rubens. Rue poupée n° 15. 4 juin.1787*”. Behind him come Watteau (4 times), Boule (5), and Martin (6). Van der Meulen, Patel, Audran, Coypel, Oudry are mentioned only once.

The stated prices do not allow conclusions about the progressive fall in value of harpsichords beginning in the 1780s, although we can already notice this trend (Table 7). The best amounts are always for signed and decorated harpsichords, like an Andreas Ruckers, with chinoiserie and bacchanales by Coypel, offered for 3000 livres on 29 December 1760, or an Joannes Ruckers, with grand ravalement by Blanchet, painted and varnished by Martin, proposed for 1800 livres on 5 December 1763. The well known Ruckers 1612, “*painted by Van der Meulen*”, reached the highest price asked for a harpsichord, 5200 livres on 23 January 1777; another one by Andreas Ruckers, the decoration being not mentioned, is offered for 4000 livres on 1 January 1778; and an Andreas Ruckers 1606, “*with a good spinet of the same author, attached; paintings by Watteau and magnificent gildings*” was offered for 2000 livres. A mistake of Bricqueville’s, giving rise to Grant O’Brien’s astonishment,<sup>27</sup> should also be corrected: the Andreas Ruckers sold on 12 November 1778 was listed at the price of 1000 livres, not, as Bricqueville has it, 1000 louis, an unrealistic amount 20 times higher. While, as Grant O’Brien notes, a modern harpsichord was sold for 300 to 400 livres, a Ruckers or a Couchet was between 600 and 1000 livres, sometimes even 2000 to 5000 livres.

We have already complained about Bricqueville’s omission of the names of advertisers. Here it is interesting to note that the famous painter Charles Natoire (1700-1777), when nominated Directeur de l’Académie de France in Rome, sent an announcement to sell his collection, including a Ruckers harpsichord (23 August 1751). The auction after the death of Le Riche de La Pouplinière (1693-1762), patron of Rameau, lists also a Ruckers harpsichord (7 July and 22 August 1763). Similarly, the famous mechanic Jacques Vaucanson (1709-1782) offered his Ruckers harpsichord for an amount of 30 louis on 24 June 1776. Even if the great majority of announcements are Parisian, some owners living in Province felt it necessary to reach Parisian amateurs with their offers when they had important instruments. The Andreas Ruckers, decorated with chinoiserie and bacchanales by Coypel, came from Madame Perain de Buy in Metz (29 December 1760);

<sup>27</sup> O’Brien, op. cit. in note 24, p. 204 and p. 303, note 11.

another very good Ruckers, with keyboards by Blanchet, was available in Rouen (7 December 1761); and the musical collection of the manor of La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, located in the middle of the Brie, includes music books, a cello, a violin and a Ruckers harpsichord (21 February and 11 March 1765).

### III. FLEMISH INSTRUMENTS ET THE CONSERVATOIRE IN PARIS, 1793 - 1822 : HERITAGE, CONSERVATION AND PEDAGOGY

I would like to conclude this communication with the paradoxical situation of the Conservatoire since 1793. Shortly after its founding, Bartolomeo Bruni, a violin player and composer, was charged by the Commission Temporaire des Arts, from which many French museums originated, to make for the Nation an inventory of the musical instruments, "*anciens, étrangers, ou les plus rares par leur perfection entre les instruments connus et modernes*".<sup>28</sup> Even before starting his work, some musicians belonging to the Garde Nationale, got worried that, in spite of the Commission, some precious instruments might be sold at very low prices instead of being preserved for teaching activities in the Conservatoire:

*"une grande quantité de très bons instruments est vendue à très vil prix dans les ventes faites par les Commissaires aux ventes des domaines nationaux [...]"*

*Lorsque l'Institut sera organisé, il faudra, à grands frais, les fournir d'instruments qui sont donnés en ce moment pour rien dans les ventes des domaines nationaux. On a demandé au Comité d'Instruction publique [...] de faire déposer en un lieu désigné par lui, tous les instruments provenant des domaines nationaux et de telle nature qu'ils puissent être. Le but de cette demande a été d'empêcher que les instruments de grand prix ne fussent vendus pour rien, ce qui est arrivé plusieurs fois ; des clavecins de Ruckers, dont les peintures étaient de Rubens, étaient exposés à être vendus avec de vieilles tapisseries, de vieux meubles [...]. Le but de cette réunion d'instruments était de pouvoir faire un choix pour le service de l'Institut National de musique, et, du reste, en faire une vente ainsi qu'il est dit ci-dessus."<sup>29</sup>*

Bartolomeo Bruni visited the residences of emigrated and condemned nobles from April 1794 to August 1796, when he transferred to the Conservatoire 316 instruments from the 404 in his inventory<sup>30</sup> (Table 8). Among 66 harpsichords, 11 are

<sup>28</sup> Pierre, Constant: *Le Conservatoire national de Musique et de Déclamation*. - Paris, 1900, p. 73.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre, op. cit. in note 28, p. 94: "*Notes relatives aux instruments des émigrés*".

<sup>30</sup> List established between September 1795 and August 1796, comprising 404 instruments, preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la musique. This copy was published by Weckerlin in 1889; another list, comprising 367 instruments, but more detailed, preserved in the Archives nationales (F<sup>17</sup> 1034) was published by Gallay during the same year (cf. reprint by Minkoff in 1984).

Flemish, 2 by Ruckers, 2 by Hans Ruckers, 3 by Andreas Ruckers, 3 by Joannes, 1 by Dulcken. As mentioned in the list (Table 8), some were not moved to the Conservatoire, because among 90 restitutions or reattributions, 3 concern Flemish instruments. Thus, the Conservatoire received 9 Flemish instruments among a total of 47 harpsichords:

- 1 Ruckers
- 1 Hans Ruckers, 1606
- 3 Joannes Ruckers
- 3 Andreas Ruckers, not dated, 1612 and 1638
- 1 Dulcken

Sarrette, the first Director of the Conservatoire, was alone, after B. Bruni's resignation, in supporting the project of a Cabinet d'instruments, inside the library, even if the musicians teaching there were only concerned with getting instruments to use in their classes.<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, financial difficulties in maintaining the building of the Conservatoire forced Sarrette to negotiate selling the first part of the heritage, considered to be unusable by musicians. In November 1797, an announcement was published in the *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*.

*"Ministère de l'intérieur. Au nom et au profit de la République, vente en numéraire et au comptant, Maison du Conservatoire de Musique rue Bergère le 16, 10 heures du matin, grande quantité d'instruments restant du choix qui a été fait par le Conservatoire tels que clavecins à ravalement et sans ravalement de J. RUCKERS, H. HMELS [reed Hemsch], PASCAL TASQUIN [Taskin], BLANCHET et autres bons auteurs. Pianos [etc...]."*<sup>32</sup>

This auction brought 2.500 francs,<sup>33</sup> a ridiculous amount to be allotted to repairing of the roof and building of the Conservatoire, first estimated at 504.000 francs.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, about one hundred eighteenth-century instruments of various

<sup>31</sup> Archives nationales, F<sup>17</sup> 1068, 7 and 8. See for instance Blanchet's accounts concerning 5 harpsichords, 4 forte piano, 1 claviorganum, between April and August 1796 (accounts payed on April 29th 1797). Two documents attest also that violins were used extensively in the different classes of the Conservatoire: "Noms des Professeurs se servant de violons dans les classes du Conservatoire de Musique", 26 brumaire an VI (November the 16th 1797), and "Reçus des Instruments délivrés aux Professeurs du Conservatoire de Musique à compter du 26 brumaire an sixième", Bibliothèque nationale de France [BnF] Mus., n.c.

<sup>32</sup> *Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, 14 brumaire an VII, p. 855. The announcement is reprinted one week later, p. 976, the auction being held on the 22th of brumaire. It says: "On pourra voir lesdits objets le matin avant la vente".

<sup>33</sup> Archives nationales, F<sup>17</sup> 1068, 8. - September the 7th 1797.

<sup>34</sup> Prod'homme, J. G. et de Crauzat, E.: *Les Menus Plaisirs du Roi. L'École Royale et le Conservatoire de Musique*. - Paris : Librairie Delagrave, 1929, p. 107.

sorts were dispersed forever. Among them were 13 harpsichords, 7 by the Ruckers dynasty. Only one Ruckers instrument remained in this music school, number 346 in B. Bruni's list, described as "*mauvais clavecin de Ruckers, fond noir, à bande dorée, ayant tous ses pieds cassés*".

Instruments from emigrated and condemned nobles, dispersed during the auction on November 12, 1797

N° inv. B. Bruni	Provenance	Identification
26	Pignatelli	Andreas Ruckers
55	Croix-d'Avray	Andreas Ruckers, 1638
71	Lauragais	Andreas Ruckers, 1616
77	Gilbert de Voisins	Joannes Ruckers
78	Noailles-Mouchy	Hans Ruckers, 1606
115	Menus Plaisirs	Joannes Ruckers
130	Xavier	Joannes Ruckers

The public auction held in November 1797 indicates the end of the brilliant and long sway of Flemish harpsichords in Parisian music life. After this date, a few Parisian harpsichords were still used by old professors (the last prize for a harpsichord was awarded in 1798). Up to 1816, 6 were placed in the library (a Taskin 1774, "*très beau quant aux peintures et ornements*"), 5 were considered "*vieux et bons à réformer*" and 9 were stored in the *Depôt des vieux instruments*. Just after being listed in an inventory, in May 1816, "*les Débris et caisses de 22 vieux clavecins ont servi à chauffer les classes dans les premiers jours de l'Exercice de l'Ecole Royale, d'après l'autorisation de M. L'intendant général*".

The last Ruckers still in the Conservatoire was probably part of this destruction, unless it was in the last group of instruments sold in 1822. In fact, when Cherubini became Director, he ordered the emptying of the storage room of old instruments to create his office. This last public auction consisted of one hundred instruments, including 12 harpsichords, mainly remaining from the nobility and being symbolic of 18th-century music. With them, a page of Parisian musical life was turned.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Note preserved in the Archives nationales, O<sup>3</sup> 291.



TABLE 1: Supplement to Appendix C in Frank Hubbard, *Three Centuries ... Instruments in the hands of French Musicians*

DATE	INSTRUMENTS	OWNER
March 13, 1711	<i>"Un clavecin à deux claviers de Ruquier [sic] posé sur son pied de bois doré sculpté, le corps d'iceluy aussi de bois doré et peint en mignature, le couvercle d'iceluy peint en dedans, prisé la somme de douze cent livres"</i>	Mlle Certain
Archives nationales : Minutier central. LXV, 173, 13 mars 1711 : inventaire après décès de Mademoiselle Certain.		
July 11, 1729	<i>"Grand clavecin flamant à deux claviers"</i>	E. Jacquet de La Guerre
Archives nationales : Minutier central. XXXV, 565, 11 juillet 1729 : inventaire après décès d'Elisabeth Jacquet.		
June 8, 1740	<i>"Clavecin marqué C par Jouanne Couchet et dans sa boete peinte façon de marbre et sur son pied de bois sculpté doré"</i>	Pierre Crozat
Archives nationales : Minutier Central. XXX, 278, 30 mai 1740 : inventaire après décès de Pierre Crozat.		
March 8, 1745	<i>"N° 602 : Un excellent &amp; beau Clavecin à deux claviers, du fameux Ouvrier Hans Ruckiers, Flamand, augmenté d'un ravalement par le sieur Goujon, monté sur un pied neuf orné d'une frize &amp; enrichi d'agraffes sculptées, très bien verni &amp; peint en grotesques. N° 603 : Un autre Clavecin à deux claviers, aussi bon que le précédent, &amp; exécuté par le même Hans Ruckiers, portant son ravalement fait par le sieur Goujon, monté sur un fort beau pied doré, &amp; ayant sa caisse peinte en dehors en Mosaïque, &amp; au dedans en differens sujets &amp; attributs"</i>	J. Bonnier de La Mosson
E. F. Gersaint: <i>Catalogue raisonné d'une collection considérable de diverses curiosités en tous Genres, contenues dans les Cabinets de feu Monsieur Bonnier de La Mosson, Bailly &amp; Capitaine des chasses de La Varenne des Thuilleries &amp; ancien Colonel du Régiment Dauphin.</i> - Paris, 1744.		

DATE	INSTRUMENTS	OWNER
1766	<i>"clavecin de Ruckers à ravallement, peint par Gravelot, Du Tour, Crépin, &amp;c. doré &amp; verni par Martin, avec son pied sculpté et doré"</i>	Blondel de Gagny
	<i>Dictionnaire Pittoresque et historique, ou Description d'architecture, peinture, gravure, histoire naturelle, Antiquités, &amp; date des Etablissemens &amp; Monuments de Paris ... Utile aux Artistes, Amateurs des Beaux-Arts &amp; Etrangers. - Paris: Claude Herissant, p. 57, Cabinet de M. Blondel de Gagny, l'Place Vendôme à Paris.</i>	
December 19, 1771	<i>"un Clavessin, de Ruquer, à ravallement en très bon état, bien drapé &amp; remplumé; le corps du clavessin &amp; le pied peints en noir avec filets d'or"</i>	Un amateur
	<i>Paris, Vente Anonyme: Catalogue de tableaux de différents Maîtres... de Dessins &amp; Estampes en feuilles, &amp; Montées sous verre avec leurs bordures dorées. Du Cabinet de M. ***. Dont la vente se fera rue St Louis, au coin de la rue St François, au Marais, maison de M. Picot, Marchand de vin, Jeudi, 19 Décembre 1771 &amp; jours suivants. - BnF 8° V 36 (1520), p. 16, n° 120.</i>	

TABLE 2: Annonces, affiches, et avis divers  
Amount of Flemish harpsichord sales among all harpsichord sales

YEAR	BRICQUEVILLE	CHARNASSÉ	GÉTREAU
1751	not checked	6 among 11	
1752	2 among 4	12 among 22	
1753	4 among 6	10 among 33	
1754	3 among 10	8 among 36	
1755	4 among 8	15 among 47	
1756	2 among 8		15 among 36
1757	1 among 6		10 among 34
1758	not checked		
1759	3 among 10		
1760	2 among 6		7 among 39 (+ Galland)
1761	1 among 5		8 among 31
1762	1 among 5		8 among 34
1763	2 among 7		15 among 47
1764	not checked		6 among 35
1765	1 among 9		13 among 47
1766	1 among 1		
1767	2 among 3		
1768	3 among 10		
1769	1 among 5		
1770	0 among 2		
1771	not checked		
1772	1 among 2		
1773	2 among 6		
1774	0 among 2		
1775	not checked		
1776	1 among 2		15 among 46
1777	2 among 4		January-August: 1 / 17
1778	5 among 5		22 among 81
1779	2 among 4		
1780	2 among 2		
1781	not checked		
1782	4 among 17		
(...)	not checked		
1787	not checked		36 among 139
(...)	not checked		
1791	not checked		7 among 50
(...)	not checked		
1797	not checked		

Total : 224. B. : 51 / 147 (30 years). C. : 51 / 129 (4 years). G. : 133 / 596 (13 years).

TABLE 3: Annonces, affiches et avis divers  
 Number of instruments by Flemish makers, after Bricqueville, Charnassé, and Gétreau

YEAR Total numb.	De Flandres	RUCKERS	H R.	J. R.	A. R.	J. C.
1751 : 6	1	4				1
1752 : 12	5	7				
1753 : 10	1	6		1	2	
1754 : 8	1	5			1	1
1755 : 4		3				1
1756 : 15	2	4		9		
1757 : 10	1	9				
1758 : 3		3				
1759 : 6	2	1		1	3	
1760 : 7		4			2	1
1761 : 8		5			2	1
1762 : 8	1	3		1	3	
1763 : 16	4	7		2	3	
1764 : 6		3			3	
1765 : 13	1	7		1	4	
1766 : 1		1			1	
1767 : 2					1	
1768 : 3		3				
1769 : 1		1				
1771 : 1					1	
1772 : 1						1
1773 : 2		2				
(...)						
1776 : 15	2	7	1		4	1
1777 : 2		2				
1778 : 21	2	9		2	7	1
1779 : 2		2				
1780 : 2		2				
(...)						
1782 : 4		3				1
1787 : 37		29		4	4	
(...)						
1791 : 6		5			1	
(...)						
<b>Total: 224</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>

TABLE 4: Annonces, affiches et avis divers

Dated Flemish instruments				
YEAR	H.R.	JR	AR	JC
1755	1588			
1759			1601/1626	
1765			1608	
(...)				
1776	1586			
(...)				
1778		1631		1606/1630/1643
(...)				
1787		1632		
(...)				
1791			1662 (sic !)	
(...)				

Total: among 224 Flemish harpsichords 11 are dated.

TABLE 5: Annonces, affiches et avis divers

Ravalement (kb) or rebuilding with an old soundboard (sb) by Parisian masters.

1755	Blanchet le père (1) (kb)
1756	Blanchet le père (1) (kb) ; Blanchet (2) (kb)
1759	Lempereur (1) (sb)
1760	Lempereur (same announcement than in 1759) ; Bellot père (kb)
1761	Blanchet (1) (kb)
1763	Blanchet (1)
1764	Blanchet (1)
1765	Blanchet (1) (kb) ; B. Stelhin (1)
1773	Blanchet (1) (kb)
1776	B. Stelhin (1)
1777	P. Taskin (1)
1778	Blanchet (2) (kb) ; Goermans (1) ; P. Taskin (1)
1782	Blanchet (1) (kb) ; P. Taskin (1)
1787	Blanchet (3) (kb) ;
1791	Blanchet (2) (kb) ; Taskin (1) (buffle)

Total: among 224 Flemish harpsichords 26 ravalements are signed: Blanchet (17); Taskin (4); Stelhin (2); Bellot père (1); Lempereur (1); Goermans (1).

TABLE 7: Annonces, affiches et avis divers  
Stated pricesTABLE 6  
see next page⇒

1751	Dec. 13. Couchet, sans ravalement, doré et peint. <b>600 livres.</b>
1754	Oct. 3. A. Ruckers. 2 claviers et grand ravalement. Peint. 50 louis = <b>1.000 livres</b>
1755	Feb. 24. Couchet. 25 louis = <b>500 livres.</b>
1756	Oct. 14. I. Ruckers, à ravalement 25 louis = <b>500 livres.</b>
1759	Aug. 27. Petit modèle. H. Ruckers, 1620. 2 claviers. <b>150 livres.</b> Dec. 31. Ruckers verni par Martin. <b>300 livres.</b>
1760	Mar. 13. Ruckers. <b>800 livres.</b> Dec. 29. A. Ruckers. Chinoiseries. Bacchanales de Coypel. <b>3.000 livres.</b>
1761	Mar. 4. Ruckers. <b>400 livres.</b> May 4. Grand ravalement Table de Ruckers. <b>400 livres.</b>
1762	Jul. 15. Ruckers, fond noir à filet doré, pieds dorés. <b>350 livres.</b>
1763	Apr. 14. A. Ruckers. <b>1.500 livres.</b> Dec. 5. J. Ruckers. Grd rav. par Blanchet. Peint & verni par Martin. <b>1.800 liv.</b>
1764	Jan. 30. Ruckers. <b>1.000 livres.</b>
1765	May 23. A. Ruckers. Grand ravalement clav. Blanchet. Très belles peintures, pied sculpté et doré. <b>2.400 livres.</b>
1768	Apr. 27. Ruckers. 30 louis = <b>600 livres.</b> May 2. Ruckers. <b>1.000 livres.</b> Mar. 10. Ruckers. <b>400 livres.</b>
1769	n.d. Ruckers. <b>600 livres.</b>
1771	Jul. 25. Double virginal A. Ruckers. <b>300 livres.</b>
1772	Sep. 10. J. Couchet. <b>1.000 livres.</b> Il en a coûté 3000.
1776	Jun. 24. Ruckers. 30 louis = <b>600 livres.</b> Apr. 11. Flamand. 15 louis = <b>300 livres.</b>
1777	Jan. 23. Ruckers 1612. Peint par Van der Meulen. 260 louis = <b>5.200 livres.</b>
1778	Jan. 1st. A. Ruckers. 1630. Grand ravalement. <b>4.000 livres.</b> Jan. 1st. Ruckers. 25 louis = <b>500 livres.</b> Jan. 19. Ruckers. Grand ravalement Claviers de Blanchet. <b>1.200 livres.</b> Feb. 5. Jean Couchet. Grand ravalement. <b>600 livres.</b> Nov. 12. A. Ruckers <b>1.000 livres.</b> il en a coûté 4000 livres il y a 2 ans. Dec. 20. A. Ruckers 1606. Clavecin avec épinette. Peintures de Watteau. Superbes dorures. Pied doré. 100 louis = <b>2.000 livres.</b> Il en a coûté 4000.
1780	n.d. Ruckers. 25 louis = <b>500 livres.</b> Oct. 19. Ruckers. <b>600 livres.</b>
1782	Jun. 14. Ruckers. Grd. rav. Claviers de Blanchet. Nouvellt peint. <b>1.500 livres.</b> Nov. 19. Ruckers. 50 louis = <b>1.000 livres.</b>
1787	Feb. 20. A. Ruckers. <b>600 livres.</b> Sep. 16. Ruckers. <b>120 livres.</b> Dec. 1st. Ruckers. Grand. ravalement. <b>600 livres.</b>

TABLE 6: Annonces, affiches et avis divers  
 Decoration with a master's name specified

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1752	Rubens (1) ; peintures des Gobelins (1)
1753	Genre de Watteau (1) ; Boule le père (1)
1755	Oudry (1) ; Martin (1)
1756	Watteau (1) ; Martin (1) ; Rubens (1) ; élève de Rubens (1)
1759	Boule (1) ; Patel (1) ; Martin (1)
1760	Martin (2) ; Coypel (1)
1763	Martin (1)
1764	Boule (2)
1767	Watteau (1)
1776	Boule (1)
1777	Van der Meulen (1)
1778	Watteau (1)
1779	Audran (1)
1787	Rubens (3)

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Total : among 224 instruments, 27 workshops or masters are cited

TABLE 8: Commission Temporaire des Arts Section de Musique  
 Etat général des Inventaires d'Instruments de Musique mis en Réserve pour La  
 nation. Par Bruni (Paris, Archives nationales F<sup>17</sup> 1034 and Bibliothèque nationale  
 de France [BnF], Musique).

Following the inventory numbers provided by Bruni:

- 1.- 26. Maison *Pignatelli*, rue des Piques. Clavecin doré, avec des arabesques; par Andreas Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 2.- 55. Maison *Cröy d'Avroy*: un clavecin, fond noir, à bandes dorées, fait par Andreas Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae, année 1638. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 3.- 71. Maison *Lauragais*, rue de Lille: un clavecin, fond noir, à bandes dorées d'Andreas Ruckers me fecit Anverpiae année 1616. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 4.- 77. Maison *Gilbert de Vaisin*, rue d'Enfer: un clavecin, fond noir, à fleurs dorées, par Joannes Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 5.- 78. Maison *Noailles-Mauchy*, rue de l'Université: un clavecin de Hans Ruckers, fond noir à fleurs dorées, et ses pieds sculptés, année 1606. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.

- 6.- 115. Maison des *Menus Plaisirs*: un clavecin fond jaune, sans pieds et à figures, de Joannes Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae, n° 1. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 7.- 122. Maison *Bacquencourt*, rue Bergère: un clavecin, peint et doré, de Hans Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae, mis en Ravalement par Pascal Tasquin, à Paris en 1771. Sans estimation. Rendu aux héritiers Bacquencourt.
- 8.- 130. Maison *Xavier*: un clavecin, fond noir, à bandes dorées, par Joannes Ruckers me fecit Antverpiae, avec Etui. Sans estimation. Au Conservatoire.
- 9.- 175. Maison *Disney Fichte*, anglais: un clavecin très beau, de Joannes Ruckers, me fecit Antverpiae, année 1637. Sans estimation. Rendu au C. Massen fondé de pouvoir de Disney Fichte.
- 10.- 306. Maison *Ménagé de Prérigny*, rue des Jeuneurs: un clavecin de Ruckers, fond merd'oye à filets dorés. 600 livres. Rendu au C. Duchesne chargé de pouvoir, le 1er fructidor an 3.
- 11.- 346. Maison de la Ci-devant *Conception*, rue Honoré à Durfort: un mauvais clavecin de Ruckers, fond noir, à bande dorée, ayant tous ses pieds cassés ayant appartenu à l'émigré Durfort. 200 livres. Au Conservatoire.