

# The New Zealand Herald

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The Aradia Baroque Orchestra

### Baroque sun shines on winter musicfest

10.07.2000 By TARA WERNER

Imagine two dancers, dressed in splendid costumes, gliding gracefully in highly disciplined fashion to the music of Jean-Baptiste Lully.

The warm and colourful world of the Sun King Louis XIV and his lavish French court may seem curious from an Auckland perspective in winter, but the International Chamber Music Festival intends to change all that.

The week-long musicfest starting on Saturday night culminates in a concert featuring the Aradia Baroque Orchestra and baroque dancers. Canadian baroque dance specialists Edgar Tumak and Marie-Nathalie Lacoursiere perform during the finale of the festival, a gala Banquet Concert in the Town Hall focusing on music from the royal courts.

It is an unusual and rare opportunity to see ballet through the eyes of 17th-century French nobility, accompanied by authentic instruments of that time.

Louis XIV loved dance and was very good at it, appearing at his first court ballet in 1651, when he was 12. By 1653 he was dancing in his favourite role, that of the Sun in Le Ballet de la Nuit at the Louvre.

Tumak, an acknowledged specialist, is enthusiastic when describing the forms of dance existing at the time. Most of the notation is written for one or two people, he says, and of short duration.

"Dance was always an important aspect at court, and was very formal. The nobility would take years to learn

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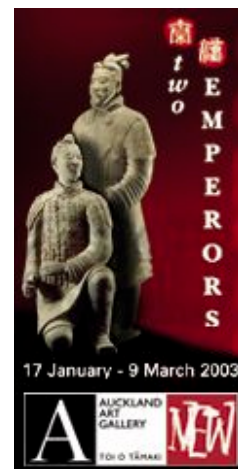
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"The atmosphere wasn't anything like the ballroom style in the 19th century. Instead, couples would take turns to dance in front of the King while the rest of the court watched - very critically.

"Noble dance could be quite haughty and the appearance of effortless was greatly valued." The King and his nobles would participate in the more extrovert court theatre, dressed in outrageous costumes. Tumak presents Louis XIV's character Apollo (the sun god) at a masterclass in the Music Theatre on July 24.

Apollo provides a direct link with the Toronto-based Aradia Baroque Orchestra, which is the centrepiece of the Festival.

In Greek legend Aradia was Apollo's twin sister and the daughter of Leto and Zeus.

Music director Kevin Mallon is very keen about the collaboration between baroque dancers and musicians. "We have chosen Aradia as our namesake because her talents extend beyond the obvious - a composer, a dancer and an enchantress. She inspires all aspects of creativity."

The orchestra is highly regarded for its innovative partnerships with groups as varied as Indonesian Gamelan and Isodora Duncan Dancers. But Mallon and his musicians are also known for their careful emphasis on period style, all playing baroque instruments or replicas. The group's four concerts concentrate on 17th and 18th-century fare from Italy, Germany, England and France.

Mallon will also play Mozart on a baroque instrument, but in classical style. And he will provide an intriguing sound-world quite different from today. One of the excerpts from Ballet Music for the Sun King features the now defunct trompette marine (or trumchett), a weird 17th-century instrument with one string that sounded like a loud buzzing trumpet. The extract will be performed on its modern counterpoint - the kazoo.

**\* International Chamber Music Festival, Concert Chamber and Town Hall, Sat July 16 to Saturday July 22.**

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