

# Women Playing the Vielle (French Hurdy-gurdy) in 18th-Century France: Perspectives on Instrument Improvements and Fingering Method\*

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**Abstract:** The vielle à roue (vielle), a stringed instrument that tended to be played by women in 18th-century France, had been played by people of various classes across Europe since the Middle Ages; however, in the 17th century, it was popularly viewed as an instrument played by peasants, beggars, and other socially vulnerable groups. Focusing on two points, that is, improvements to the instrument and the establishment of the fingering method, this study explores how the vielle, an instrument long played in the countryside, came to be played by upper-class women.

First, we explore the actual improvements in the musical instrument in the 18th century. In particular, the expansion of the range led to a significant change in the arrangement of the keyboard, in turn leading to the establishment of the fingering method. This is then discussed based on published methods and shown to approximate the fingering methods of the clavecin, which was popular among the upper class at that time. In summary, we suggest that the improvement of these instruments and establishment of the fingering method may have been related to women's performance.

**Keywords:** hurdy-gurdy, vielle à roue, fingering, musical instrument structure

## Introduction

The vielle à roue (vielle) was a favorite instrument of upper-class women in 18th century France. Since the Middle Ages, this instrument was played by people of all classes throughout Europe, but especially in the 17th century, it became popular as an instrument played by the lower classes, such as peasants and beggars<sup>(1)</sup>. This study examines how the vielle, which had long been

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<sup>1</sup> The vielle, now commonly known as the hurdy-gurdy, is a term that originated in England in the mid-18th century (Max-Wade Matthews (translated by Sadanori Betsumiya), *Sekai no gakki hyakka zukan: gakki no kigen to hatten*, Toyo Shorin, 2002, p. 134. (Original: Max-Wade Matthews, *World Encyclopedia of Musical Instruments*, London: Anness Pub Ltd, 2000). This name is mainly used to refer to models developed in England or as a generic term for instruments with the following characteristics. The strings are played by rubbing a wooden disk called a wheel against a centrally stretched melody string and a drone string, and that pressing the keyboard changes the pitch of the note by bringing a small projection called a tangent into contact with the strings. In this paper, hurdy-gurdy is used as a generic term, and the model developed in France is referred to as the vielle. Due to its long history, the

played by peasants and beggars, spread among women of the upper classes, focusing on two points: improvement of the instrument and establishment of a fingering system.

The image people had of the vielle in the 18th century probably originated from the previous century, as can be seen in the numerous paintings of vielle players before the 17th century, in which they are often depicted as blind men. This is due to the popularity of the subject of blind vielle players in the North and in France<sup>(2)</sup>. The *Mercure de France*, published in the 18th century, also includes a sarcastic statement that the vielle “should be relegated to the taverns of the suburbs and left to blind players”<sup>(3)</sup>, which suggests that it was a well-known fact that the instrument was played by blind players. However, the blind were not the only ones who played the vielle during the 17th century. Immigrants known as Savoyards, who migrated from the suburbs during the winter months when crops did not grow, also played this instrument<sup>(4)</sup>. In the 18th century, the upper class tended to prefer the countryside, and it was against this background that they discovered the rural character of the vielle played by the peasants and adopted it into their own lives<sup>(5)</sup>. However, for the upper class to play the vielle, which had traditionally been the instrument of the peasants, significant improvements were necessary. During the 18th century, in addition to musical functions such as the expansion of the range, other external elements such as the shape and decoration of the instrument were also changed. Furthermore, the increase in the number of keys due to the expanded range also led to the establishment of fingerings, and by the end of the century, five instructional books had been published.

The 18th century intellectual Antoine Terrasson (1705-1782)<sup>(6)</sup>, as well as Green in an earlier study, note that this instrument had an aspect of being played by women. Green argues that the playing posture and movements were appropriate for women of the time, and that it fulfilled the role of accompanist that women were expected to play in chamber music performances, which was why it was preferred<sup>(7)</sup>. However, the appearance of such a performance is greatly influenced

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Hurdy-gurdy has been subject to chronological and regional variations in its structure. In chronological order, they can be divided into three categories: organistrum (10th-14th centuries), symphonia (15th-16th centuries), and vielle and Leier (17th century onward), each of which was treated as a separate instrument. The vielle played by the upper class in the 18th century is officially called vielle carrée or vielle à roue, but is often abbreviated to vielle or viele. The continued use of the name vielle, despite the differences in construction between the pre-17th and post-18th centuries, is thought to be based on the recognition that the two are not separate instruments but are rather improved versions of the same instrument. The popularity of the instrument came to an end with the decline of aristocratic society due to the French Revolution, and from the 19th century onward, it became more of a folk instrument.

<sup>2</sup> Otani Kumi, “Georges de la Tour ni yoru ‘moumoku no vielle hiki’: jizen no kanten kara,” *kashima bijutsu zaidan nenpou*, vol. 24 (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Anon., « Sur les Memoires pour servir à l’Histoire de la Musique, » *Mercure de France*, Paris, Auguste, 1738, p. 1722.

<sup>4</sup> Susann Palmer and Samuel Palmer, *The Hurdy-Gurdy*, Newton Abbot: North Promfret, Vt: David & Charles, 1980, p. 135 and p. 143.

<sup>5</sup> There is no shortage of works depicting such rural scenes. Representative examples include N. Chedévilles *Il pastor fido* (1737), which is also known as a Vivaldi forgery, Naudot’s *6 Fêtes rustiques* Op. 8 (c. 1737), and L. Mozart’s *Die Bauernhochzeit* LMV VIII: 6 (1755).

<sup>6</sup> Antoine Terrasson, « Dissertation historique sur la vielle, » 2nd ed., *Mélanges d’histoire, de littérature, de jurisprudence*, Paris, 1768, p. 250.

<sup>7</sup> Robert A. Green, *The Hurdy-Gurdy in Eighteenth-Century France*, 2nd ed., USA: Indiana University Press, 2016, p. 12. However, Green also noted that the fact that women preferred to play the vielle does not mean that men did not play it at all, which should be interpreted to mean that women tended to play it.

by the structure of the instrument and its playing method. The fact that the instrument was greatly improved and its playing method established in the 18th century cannot be overlooked. Section 1 summarizes the actual situation of instrument improvement in the 18th century based on the structure of the vielle prior to the 17th century. Section 2 focuses on the fingering method established in the 18th century and demonstrates that it is similar to that of the clavier, which was already played by the upper class at that time. Based on the above, section 3 highlights that the improvement of the instrument and the establishment of the fingering method were deeply related to the fact that the instrument tended to be played by women in the upper class.

## 1. Improvement of the instrument

The basic structure of the vielle and how it is played are as follows: the instrument has a central melody string and a drone string, and the keyboard is positioned so that only the melody string can be approached. Pressing the keys changes the length of these strings and determines the pitch of the notes. There is a separate sounding mechanism in which the strings are struck and sounded by rotating a wheel (a wooden disk) located next to the keyboard. When playing, the left hand controls the keyboard and the right hand controls the wheel.



Fig. 1 Tulip-shaped vielle

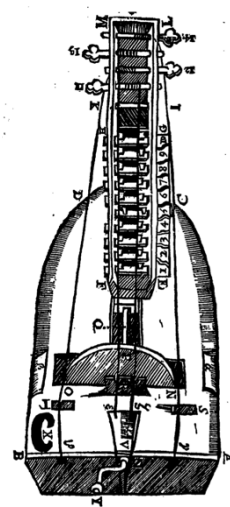


Fig. 2 Trapezoidal-shaped vielle

Since few vielles actually played by blind people or peasants before the 17th century have survived, the structure of musical instruments during the 17th century is organized based on the pictorial works mentioned above and other iconographic materials. First, the shape of the instrument: tulip shape (Fig. 1) with three rounded corners, as in the works of Georges de La Tour (1593–1652)<sup>(8)</sup> and Jacques Callot (1592–1635)<sup>(9)</sup>, and trapezoidal shapes (Fig. 2), such as those in the work of Marin Mersenne (1588–1648)<sup>(10)</sup> and Jacques Bellange (c. 1575–1616)<sup>(11)</sup>. It is common to have two or three melody strings and three drone strings each, and the keyboard is thought to have been arranged in a row of approximately 10 keys<sup>(12)</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Georges de La Tour, *Le Vieilleur au Chapeau*, 1626–1638, Huile sur toile, 162×105 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes. La Tour also painted several other works featuring vielle player, all of which depict the tulip-shaped vielle.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Callot, *Le Joueur de Vielle*, 1622, Eau-forte, 13.97×8.89 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

<sup>10</sup> Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle II*, Paris, 1636–7, p. 212.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Bellange, *Le mendiant à la vielle*, c. 1595–1616, Eau-forte, 29.5×17.5cm, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

<sup>12</sup> In these figures, Mersenne also numbered the keys of the vielle, clearly indicating that there are 10 keys (see Fig. 2).

During the 18th century, these instruments changed drastically. The greatest change was in the shape of the instruments; the vielles produced in the 18th century were all in the shape of lutes or guitars, a far cry from the instruments of the previous century. According to Terrasson, Henri Bâton (c. 1670–c. 1728), an instrument maker active in Versailles<sup>(13)</sup> invented these shapes. In response to the fashion for rural instruments that had continued since the early 17th century and to the declining popularity of the lute and guitar, which had been favored by many aristocrats, he worked on new instruments that reused these. The year 1716 saw the creation of a lute-shaped vielle (Fig. 3), and in 1720, a guitar-shaped vielle (Fig. 4); these new forms attracted much attention from the public<sup>(14)</sup>. Furthermore, these instruments were not only re-shaped but also decorated. The entire instrument was decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays, which were the mainstay of musical instrument decoration at the court at that time, and the peg box (the tip of the instrument) was often decorated with a carved human head.

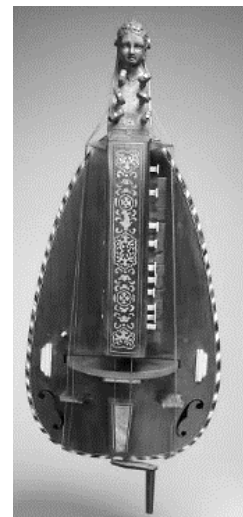


Fig. 3 Lute-shaped vielle



Fig. 4 Guitar-shaped vielle

Improvements were also made to the instrument's structure. One of the most notable was the enlargement of the wheel. Conventional wheels were cut from a single piece of wood and were limited to a diameter of less than 15 cm. This size limitation was intended to prevent distortion due to the effects of temperature and humidity, which made it technically difficult to increase the size of the wheel. In the 18th century, the traditional single-panel wheel was replaced by a multi-layered wheel, in which the effect of temperature and humidity on the wheel as a whole was mitigated by reducing the size of each piece of wood. As a result, wheels larger than the traditional ones emerged, with diameters of 17 cm or more than before<sup>(15)</sup>. The larger wheel also increased the contact surface between the wheel and the strings, allowing for more strings to be installed. Vielles made in the 18th century were strung with two melody strings and four drone strings, which not only allowed multiple drone sounds to be played simultaneously but also amplified the volume of the sound. Considering these acoustic effects, it is no exaggeration to state that the size of the wheel and development of musical instruments are closely related<sup>(16)</sup>.

In addition, a survey of existing vielles produced in the 18th century suggests that there were also significant changes in the range of notes<sup>(17)</sup>. While the keyboards of vielles produced in the previous century generally had about 10 keys arranged in a row, the majority of those produced

<sup>13</sup> Terrasson, op. cit., pp. 249–251.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Arle Lommel and Balázs Nagy, "The Form, history, and Classification of the Tekerőlant (Hungarian Hurdy-Gurdy)," *The Galpin Society Journal*, 2007, p. 183.

<sup>16</sup> Baláz Nazy, *Tekerőlanto- sok könyve*, Budapest: Hagyományok Háza kiadványsorozata, 2006, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> The results of research, are based on the 29 instruments in question, which can be viewed in the digital archives of the Philharmonie de Paris.

in the 18th century had 23 or more arranged in two rows, one for the stem tones and the other for the derived tones<sup>(18)</sup>. In most cases, the keys for the former row are colored black, and those for the latter row are colored white, similar to that of the clavecin keyboard.

## 2. Publication of vielle manuals and establishment of a fingering system

Instrumental improvements have brought about significant changes to the vielle, most notably the increase in the number of keys and changes in the arrangement of the keys as the range of the instrument expanded, which led to the establishment of fingering techniques. This is thought to have contributed to the improvement in the technique of playing the vielle. As François Couperin (1668–1733) and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–88), who are known for their clavecin manuals, asserted, fingering is an essential element in the improvement of keyboard instruments<sup>(19)</sup>. A total of five manuals on fingering were published at the time<sup>(20)</sup>, of which *Principes pour toucher de la vièle*<sup>(21)</sup> by Jean-Baptiste Dupuits (fl. 1741–57) describes it in great detail. This section discusses the similarities between the vielle's fingering and that of clavecin<sup>(22)</sup>. Regarding the latter, refer to the three major claviers books of the 18th century: Couperin's *L'Art de toucher le clavecin*<sup>(23)</sup>, Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*<sup>(24)</sup>, and Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750–1813) *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen*<sup>(25)</sup>. In addition, the fingering numbers of the vielles that appear thereafter are P for the left thumb and 1, 2, 3, and 4 from the index finger to the little finger, in accordance with Dupuits' manual.

Dupuits' fingering of the vielle is generally understood to be intended to achieve smoothness

<sup>18</sup> The first mention of the 18th-century vielle's register can be found in Terrasson's article (see note 6), where it is noted that H. Baton added keys E and F (Terrasson, op. cit., p. 250). The September 1750 issue of *Mercure de France* also notes that the instrument previously had a range of two octaves, and that H. Baton's son Charles Bâton (fl. 1733–54) and the instrument maker François Feury (fl. 1750–60) (Anon., "Trois touches augmentées à la vielle, & une autre changée de place," *Mercure de France*, Paris, Septembre de France, Paris, Septembre 1750, pp. 153–155). From the above description, it is not possible to determine which octaves were added. However, in light of the fact that the majority of existing 18th-century vielles have 23 keys arranged in a chromatic scale and that the common tuning of melody strings was g<sup>1</sup>, we can conclude that keys e<sup>3</sup>, f<sup>3</sup>, and fis<sup>3</sup> were added in the higher registers and a<sup>1</sup> and as<sup>1</sup> in the lower registers. The keys are arranged in two rows, the stem, and the derived tones, with the exception of the highest note, fis<sup>3</sup>, which was sometimes placed in the former because it was difficult to place it in the latter.

<sup>19</sup> François Couperin, *L'Art de toucher le clavecin*, Paris, 1717, p. 10. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, Berlin, 1753, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> (I) Anon., *Pièces choisies pour la vielle à l'usage des commençants avec des instructions pour toucher, & pour entretenir cet instrument*, Paris, 1732 ; nouvelle édition, 1742, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. (II) Jean-Baptiste Dupuits, *Principes pour toucher de la vièle avec six sonates pour cet instrument qui conviennent aux violon, flûte, clavecin, &... Oeuvre I*, Paris, 1741, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. (III) Toussaint Bordet, *Méthode raisonnée pour apprendre la musique... Livre Ier*, Paris, 1755, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. (IV) François Bouïn, *La Vielleuse habie, ou nouvelle méthode courte, très facile et très sure pour apprendre à jouer de la vielle... Oeuvre IIIe*, Paris, 1761, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. (V) Michel Corrette, *La belle vielleuse, méthode pour apprendre facilement, à jouer de la vielle*, Paris, 1783, Bibliothèque municipale de Rouen.

<sup>21</sup> See note 20 (II).

<sup>22</sup> The manual also describes how to operate the wheel, but this will be discussed in a separate article after a specific investigation using L. Mozart's *Die Bauernhochzeit* (1755) as an example, as noted in Note 5.

<sup>23</sup> Couperin, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> Bach, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Gottlob Türk, *Klavierschule oder Anweisung zum Klavierspielen für Lehrer und Lernende, mit kritischen Anmerkungen*, Leipzig und Halle, 1789.

in playing. First, Dupuits instructs us to avoid using the same fingers consecutively (shaded area in Ex. 1)<sup>(26)</sup>, which, according to Türk, should be avoided because it interrupts the flow of music in keyboard playing<sup>(27)</sup>. For the fingering of the clavecin, there are two methods to avoid using fingers in succession: “finger passing” under other fingers and “finger crossing” over other fingers. These two techniques can also be found in Dupuits’ manuals, where they are used to play a series of ascending or descending forms. Ex. 2 illustrates four fingerings (A, B, C, and D) for each ascending and descending form in an octave, but Dupuits states that the ideal fingering is one<sup>(28)</sup>. The repeated fingering of 1 and 2 is presented as a bad example, probably because it breaks up the sound, as described above. If we follow Bach’s manual, the remaining three examples (A, B, and C) could each be the best solution depending on the purpose of the performance<sup>(29)</sup>. Considering that all of the fingerings described in Ex. 2 require breaking up the notes at one point or another, it would be necessary to change the fingering method depending on the piece being performed, even if the same-note pattern is used.

Ex. 1

bon 3 2 1 3 2 4 1 2 3 2 3 1 4  
mauvais 4 3 2 1 1 3 1 2 3 4 4 1 3

Ex. 2

A B C D  
4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 3 2 4 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1  
mauvais  
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 2 3 2 3 2 3 1 2 3 4 2 3 4 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2  
mauvais

This is followed by placing two fingers on one keyboard at the same time or switching fingers on the same keyboard. In playing the vielle, fingering with two fingers on one keyboard is effective because it assists the weak little finger. Owing to the structure of the instrument, the tension of the strings increases with the lower notes of this instrument, so the keys must be pressed with more force<sup>(30)</sup>. The interchanging of fingers on the same keyboard is also understood to have been for smooth playing, as Couperin states, “You will know by practice how beneficial it is to interchange fingers on the same keyboard, and how legato it is in performance”<sup>(31)</sup>. Some

<sup>26</sup> Dupuits, *op. cit.*, p. 2 and Figure premiere.

<sup>27</sup> Türk, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>28</sup> Dupuits, *op. cit.*, p. 2 and Figure 5.

<sup>29</sup> Bach, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Owing to the structure of the instrument, the keys in the lower register near the nut must be pressed with more force than in the other registers because of the higher tension in the lower register. However, since fingering is done with the left hand, keys in the lower register are often pressed with the little or ring finger.

<sup>31</sup> Couperin, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

examples from Dupuits' manual are as follows. Note the shaded section  $f^2 \rightarrow d^2 \rightarrow g^2$  in Ex. 3-1 and the shaded section  $d^2 \rightarrow h^1 \rightarrow d^2$  in Ex. 3-2<sup>(32)</sup>. In both cases, the first note is taken with finger 1, and the first and second notes are in a three-degree relationship ( $f^2$  and  $d^2$ ,  $d^2$  and  $h^1$ ). However, the interval between the second and third notes, is 4 degrees ( $d^2$  and  $g^2$ ) in Ex. 3-1 and 3 degrees ( $h^1$  and  $d^2$ ) in Ex. 3-2. In other words, when the interval between three consecutive notes is 3 and 4 degrees, as in Ex. 3-1 ( $f^2 \rightarrow d^2 \rightarrow g^2$ ), if the order of the fingers to be used is to be observed, the second note must be pressed with fingers 3 and 4 before the third note is played, or these must be switched while the second note is played.

Such fingering in which one keyboard is approached by multiple fingers is also confirmed in the same-note strokes. In the same-note barreling of the clavecin, two or four fingers are alternated when the barreled note is two or four notes, and three fingers are alternated when the barreled note is three notes<sup>(33)</sup>. This same technique can also be seen in *vielle*, where two alternating fingers are used for two notes (Ex. 4)<sup>(34)</sup>, and all fingers are pressed on the keyboard with the same finger for three or four notes (Ex. 5)<sup>(35)</sup>. The number of fingers used in the same-note strokes differs slightly between *vielle* and *clavecin*; however, if the purpose of *vielle*'s same-note strokes is the same as that of *clavecin*'s, the difference between the two can be attributed to their respective pronunciation principles. In *clavecin*, both pitch determination and pronunciation functions are performed by the keyboard, while these functions are separated in *vielle*. The keyboard is used to determine the pitch of the note, while the sound is produced by the stringing of the crank. In other words, the keyboard is not used to play the same-note in succession, rather, the crank is used to play the same-note in succession, so the action of pressing the keyboard again one-by-one is not important for the same-note in succession in *vielle*.

As previously described, although there are functional differences between the fingerings of *vielle* and *clavecin*, they are almost identical in terms of fingerings. Although they use different numbers of fingers in same-note strokes, there is no significant difference in their fundamental fingerings, such as alternating fingerings. The fact that the fingerings of *vielle* and *clavecin* are similar suggests that if one can play the *clavecin*, one can also play the *vielle* relatively easily. In other words, for those who could already play the *clavecin*, the *vielle* could be played without having to learn a new fingering.

Ex. 3-1: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes with fingerings 2 4 3 2 1 3 1 4 3 2 1 2. A shaded section highlights the first three notes with fingerings 1, 3, 4.

Ex. 3-2: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes with fingerings 2 3 2 1 3 1 2. A shaded section highlights the first three notes with fingerings 1, 3, 1.

Ex. 4: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes with fingerings 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 1 2 1 2 1. A shaded section highlights the first three notes with fingerings 2, 3, 2. Below the staff, the word "mauvais" is written with fingerings 4 3 2 2 3.

Ex. 5: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes with fingerings 2 1 3 2 4 1. A shaded section highlights the first three notes with fingerings 2, 3, 4.

<sup>32</sup> The clefs in the examples used herein are notated in small violin (French violin) clefs with the G clef on the first line of the staff, following Dupuy's notation.

<sup>33</sup> Türk, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–111.

<sup>34</sup> Dupuits, *op. cit.*, p. 2 and Figure 6.

<sup>35</sup> Dupuits, *op. cit.*, p. 2 and Figure 7.

### 3. Vielle played by women in 18th century France

As confirmed thus far, the vielle was significantly improved in 18th-century France, and the fingering system was established, achieving a dramatic evolution far beyond anything seen in the previous century. As previously mentioned, this instrument had been played mainly by the lower classes until the previous century, so for the upper classes to play the music they enjoyed, it was necessary for them to drastically remodel the instrument and establish a method of playing it.

It is worth mentioning that the vielle would have been favored by women, even among the upper class. Terrasson notes that the instrument tended to be played by women, even among the upper class<sup>(36)</sup>. Green (2016) highlights that women were expected to have beautiful posture and movements when playing the instrument, and based on the fact that women were expected to be accompanied when playing chamber music, that the vielle was an instrument that could achieve this<sup>(37)</sup>. In addition to the vielle, other instruments that were considered appropriate for women at the time were the clavecin and bass viol, for the same reasons<sup>(38)</sup>. However, in light of what we have already discussed, the reason the vielle was favored by women was not only due to the factors Green highlights, but also to the improvement of the instrument and the establishment of a fingering system.

As discussed in section 1, the shape of the vielle changed significantly during the 18th century, with lute- and guitar-shaped instruments being produced. According to previous research, lutes and guitars were prevalent as instruments suitable for women even before the vielle caught the attention of the upper class<sup>(39)</sup>. The carving of human heads on the pegboxes of stringed instruments was an ornament intended to please upper-class women<sup>(40)</sup>. In addition, it is important to note that the decorations near the keys are black. The stem keys are decorated in black, the derivative keys in white, and the entire key box that contains these keys is usually painted black. This color scheme can also be seen on the clavecin, an instrument favored by women in the same period. It has been posited that the black keys of the clavecin were intended to enhance the whiteness of women's hands, suggesting that women had to keep their hands beautiful when playing<sup>(41)</sup>. Considering the above, the color scheme of the vielle's keyboard was probably one of the devices used to highlight women's hands while playing. Taken together, the shape of the instrument, which had long attracted women's attention, was applied to the body of the vielle, and the decorations on the pegbox and near the keyboard were intended to attract women to play.

As discussed in section 2, the fingering of the clavecin and vielle is operationally similar, despite the functional differences. The clavecin was the preferred instrument of the upper class even before the vielle was incorporated into upper class society. Dupuis, who wrote *Principes*

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<sup>36</sup> See note 6.

<sup>37</sup> See note 7.

<sup>38</sup> Green, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Green, *op. cit.*, p. 12. and Freia Hoffmann (trans. by Yoko Sakai and Yuko Tamagawa), *gakki toshintai: shiminsyskai ni okeru josei no ongaku, shunjusya*, 2004, p. 178 (original: *Instrument und Körper*, Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Terrasson, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>41</sup> Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, p. 40.



*pour toucher de la vièle*, not only taught the vielle, but also the clavecin<sup>(42)</sup>. This suggests that Dupuits may have devised a fingering system for vielle based on his own knowledge of clavecin performance. The fact that the vielle was an instrument that could be played simply by applying the same fingering technique as the clavecin would have made it easy for the upper class to play and been familiar to them. Considering that women tended to play the clavecin, the vielle, which could be played by applying the same fingering, could have become a more accessible instrument for them. In other words, the establishment of the fingering system was intended to bring the instrument into the lives of the upper classes while simultaneously inviting women to play it.

## Conclusion

This study focused on the fact that the vielle, which had been played by the lower classes until the 17th century, was played by the upper classes, especially women, in 18th century France. First, improvements made to the instrument in the 18th century made its external elements, such as shape and ornamentation, more desirable to women. Furthermore, the complexity of the keyboard arrangement due to the expansion of the register led to the establishment of a fingering system, which was similar to that of the clavecin, was an instrument already popular among the upper classes at the time. It is thought that the vielle was introduced into upper-class society as an easy instrument that could be played in a more familiar way. Considering the fact that women in particular preferred to play the clavecin, it can be concluded that the vielle tended to be more accessible to them. This study can be positioned as a concrete reinforcement of the theory that the vielle tended to be played by women, which has been argued in previous studies.

The vielle evolved by absorbing the characteristics of various instruments that were already popular among the upper class. It took the shape of lutes and guitars, the ornamentation of the bass viol and other stringed instruments, and the fingering of the clavecin as references. In 1752, after repeated improvements, the vielle achieved a range equivalent to that of the flute and a mechanism that enabled it to express itself as richly as the violin<sup>(43)</sup>. The results of these instrumental improvements are thought to have contributed significantly to the formation of the vielle repertoire. The music of the vielle played in the countryside in the 17th century was unscored, but as the upper classes began to play this instrument in the 18th century, it was transformed into music that could be written down in music scores. Many chamber works composed in the 18th century were designed to be played on a variety of instruments, and the title page of the score usually lists the instruments on which the work could be played. The vielle gradually appeared on the title pages of such scores<sup>(44)</sup>. From the above, it is clear that improvements to the vielle were essential for the upper class to enjoy their own music. Thus, in improving instruments and devising fingerings to incorporate them into the lives of the upper

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<sup>42</sup> David Fuller “Dupuits (des Bricettes), Jean-Baptiste,” in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., eds. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, London: Macmillan, 2001, vol. 7: p. 733.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., « Vièle nouvelle, » *Mercure de France*, Paris, Juin 1752, p. 161.

<sup>44</sup> Green organized the works published in France in the 18th century that were playable on the vielle (Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–88). Of these, 186 works available in the digital archives of the British Museum, the British Library, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France were surveyed.

class, the reference to instruments favored by women in particular may have been a factor in the vielle becoming a favorite among them.

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### Figure Sources

All examples were prepared by the author based on Dupuits' manual (Jean-Baptist Dupuits, *Principes pour toucher de la vièle avec six sonates pour cet instrument qui conviennent aux violon, flûte, clavecin, &...*) (Oeuvre Ir, Paris, 1741, p. 2). Other sources for illustrations are listed below.

Fig. 1. Georges de La Tour, *Le Vieilleur au Chapeau*, 1626–1638, Huile sur toile, 162×105 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes. [https://museedartsdenantes.nantesmetropole.fr/resultats-navigart.html?displayArtwork=https%3a%2f%2fwww.navigart.fr%2fmuseedartsdenantes%2fartworks%3ffilters%3dauthors%253ALA%2520TOUR%2520Georges%2520de%25E2%2586%25B9LA%2520TOUR%2520Georges%2520de%26page%3d1%26layout%3dgrid%26sort%3dby\\_author](https://museedartsdenantes.nantesmetropole.fr/resultats-navigart.html?displayArtwork=https%3a%2f%2fwww.navigart.fr%2fmuseedartsdenantes%2fartworks%3ffilters%3dauthors%253ALA%2520TOUR%2520Georges%2520de%25E2%2586%25B9LA%2520TOUR%2520Georges%2520de%26page%3d1%26layout%3dgrid%26sort%3dby_author) (Final accessed March 27, 2023)

Fig. 2. Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle II*, Paris, 1636–7, p. 212.

Fig. 3. Jean Nicolas Lambert, *Hurdy-gurdy* [sic], mid- to late 18th century, size unknown, Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. <https://museums.fivecolleges.edu/detail.php?museum=all&t=objects&type=all&f=&s=hurdy+gurdy&record=0> (Final accessed March 27, 2023)

Fig. 4. Jean Nicolas Lambert, *Vielle à roue*, Milieu 18e, Longueur totale 59.2 cm, Philharmonie de Paris. [https://collectionsdumusee.philharmoniedeparis.fr/search.aspx?SC=MUSEE&QUERY=jean+nicolas+lambert+#/Detail/\(query:\(Id:'1\\_OFFSET\\_0',Index:2,NBResults:2,PageRange:3,SearchQuery:\(CloudTerms:!\),FacetFilter:'%7B%22\\_107%22:%22Jean-Nicolas%20Lambert%22%7D',ForceSearch:!t,Page:0,PageRange:3,QueryString:'vielle%20à%20roue',ResultSize:50,ScenarioCode:MUSEE,ScenarioDisplayMode:display-mosaic,SearchLabel:',SearchTerms:'vielle%20à%20roue',SortField:!,n,SortOrder:0,TemplateParams:\(Scenario:',Scope:MUSEE,Size:ln,Source:',Support:'\)\)\)\)](https://collectionsdumusee.philharmoniedeparis.fr/search.aspx?SC=MUSEE&QUERY=jean+nicolas+lambert+#/Detail/(query:(Id:'1_OFFSET_0',Index:2,NBResults:2,PageRange:3,SearchQuery:(CloudTerms:!),FacetFilter:'%7B%22_107%22:%22Jean-Nicolas%20Lambert%22%7D',ForceSearch:!t,Page:0,PageRange:3,QueryString:'vielle%20à%20roue',ResultSize:50,ScenarioCode:MUSEE,ScenarioDisplayMode:display-mosaic,SearchLabel:',SearchTerms:'vielle%20à%20roue',SortField:!,n,SortOrder:0,TemplateParams:(Scenario:',Scope:MUSEE,Size:ln,Source:',Support:'))))) (Final accessed March 27, 2023)