

Writing this story, I was inspired by the boy Paul who actually exists and lives with his family not far from Lyon. He's the son of friends, and throughout his childhood he has been really passionate about playing the mandolin. However, most of all I was thinking about my own nephews and nieces. I have 11 of them at the moment, some of which already play musical instruments. I hope that with Teleman(n)dolin I could maybe open a window for them into this world of Baroque music, which I am so privileged to live and work in.

Part one: Paul and his dream

Once upon a time, more than 200 years ago, there was a boy named Paul. Paul's family lived in the beautiful town of Mâcon on the Saône river and had a long tradition and fame as fishermen. Paul himself was too young for fishing, but he loved to join his older brothers, enjoying the smell of the fresh catfish every evening on the way home, often chased by the village cats. However, more than anything, he adored the precious moments where he could play in the sand, building castles and dreaming of knights and princes, while listening to the fishermen playing the mandolin. These moments belonged only to him.

One day, while Paul was enjoying the sun on his soft skin, his father asked him, "Son, did you ever think about what you would like to be when you grow up?"

"Oh yes dad! I would like to play the mandolin", said Paul.

"Play the mandolin?! Son, I mean, what would you like to do as a profession? You know, nobody plays the mandolin for his living, it is just a pastime of course!"

"But daddy", said Paul, "I am sure, if I could play the mandolin, I would be so happy that I would never want to stop. I am sure this could also be a wonderful profession daddy, I really do believe that!"

"Well son", said the father, "in that case I suggest we better find you a decent teacher!

The best would probably be to visit Versailles, all the greatest musicians are there, perhaps we can find one who would teach you to play the mandolin."

Paul didn't believe his ears, first he sat still, then it came almost uncontrolled out of his lips:

"Reeeally???"

"Of course" said Paul's father, "if that's what you really want."

Paul: "...really REALLY want! Thanks dad!"

"Now go to sleep", said Paul's father, "the sun is almost gone already, and tomorrow by sunrise, we'll start our journey. It might take some days until we reach Versailles, therefore you should get some sleep!"

"I love you dad, good night!"

"Good night."

That night, as much as Paul tried, he couldn't not fall asleep. He had always heard of Versailles, the palace, the gardens, the king and the royal family, and of course of all the great musicians... Rebel, the violinist, the flutist Philidor, Couperin and his harpsichord, Marais who plays the viol, but... he had never heard about a mandolinist! Would they be able to find one? Could his dream really be so near?

Part two: The journey

A couple of days passed on the road, yet Versailles didn't seem to come closer. The way wasn't very comfortable and the sky got full of dark clouds. Paul's back was hurting, besides, he missed his mother and his brothers. But always when he was just about to burst into tears, a voice within him

appeared: "Never give up on your dreams!". Paul looked at his father, and it seemed almost as if they both could hear it, crystal clear, that same inner voice. They hugged, and kept following the road.

And so, after not less than a week, an amazing view appeared that was by far more impressive than what they could have ever imagined. The grand canal, the trees rowed in the most impressive order and the great golden gates gave the image of a place beyond reality!

Paul couldn't believe his eyes, he was so excited that even after such a hard journey, he had to spend his first night in Versailles with both eyes wide open. Tomorrow would be the big day, he would enter the magical city and find his mandolin teacher! He surely will! It must be!

Part three: In the palace

The morning came and to the palace they went. "Where shall we start, who should we ask...?", wondered Paul. "Can I help you, gentlemen?", asked an old man who seemed to be working at the palace.

"Yes sir, eh... it's my son, you see... he would like to learn to play the mandolin, perhaps you can tell us, who could be the right man to approach?"

"Alors... la mandoline... I don't know... but I am sure François Couperin would know, they call him "Le Grand", being considered the best musician in the king's service. If you want to find him, go up the round staircase above the royal chapel and you'll find his room just on the right – good luck!"

"Merci!" called Paul and his dad at once. The old man nodded kindly and disappeared in the morning mist in front of the castle.

After just a few moments, Paul couldn't believe it, they were actually entering the most amazing room that he had ever seen, with the most beautiful harpsichord that Paul could have dreamt of. Yet, the most imposing presence in these unbelievable surroundings belonged undoubtedly to the man playing that harpsichord so masterly! The two apologized for the interruption, and told the master their whole story from the beginning.

"Mandoline? No no no" said Couperin, "I could teach you the clavecin, it's the culmination of all instruments... show me your hands... well... what about the legs... hmm... not bad... maybe some organ lessons?"

Paul was overwhelmed by this whole examination and didn't understand why Couperin spoke so fast, he just shook his head, trying to understand what this weird fellow with the harsh accent meant to say.

"No?" said Couperin. "Ahh... Gentlemen, I have no time, good luck to you, au revoir!"

"He wasn't very pleasant dad!" said Paul when the door closed behind them.

"Don't worry, son, we've made it all this way, I am sure we'll find just the right master for you. I heard about Antoine Forqueray, he is said to have recently written a piece for the harpsichord called *La Mandoline*, he certainly must have some more sentiments for the mandolin!"

And so they went through the Palace of Versailles from one master to another...

Forqueray sent them politely to Robert de Visée: "He is the best guitarist in France, and your mandolin maybe isn't all that far from his guitar, he might be willing to give you some guidance."

"I have no time at all", said Visée. "The king needs me at his breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, weekends and ceremonies..." And then came Marin Marais, who said: "Pardon? An Italian

instrument?! I play the French viol! A viol of 7 strings! Mandolin has neither my interest nor my time!", before he shut the door.

"How impolite!" said Paul, "and how arrogant", added his father...

Part four: The last chance?

On the way out of the palace, they came across the same old man who they had met before. He approached them carefully and asked quietly, "And? Did you find what your heart desired?"

"Sadly not", sighed Paul, "but I guess my father was right in the first place. Life will just go on the way it used to be, I will learn fishing and will forget about this magical palace."

"Ahh... no... You know what... There is a visiting musician from Germany in Versailles these days, they say he plays all the instruments en ce monde...! His name is Georg Philipp Telemann and I have seen him walking in the royal flower garden next to the canal, perhaps you should address to him!"

The old man had a sweet smile that somehow made Paul and his father feel so confident again. They had almost lost their hope to find the right person for Paul, but should they not try for a last time???"

"Oh, we owe you so much", said Paul's father, you are very kind, may I ask you for your name, old man?

"My name is Marc-Antoine Charpentier. But that is of absolutely no importance, come with me and I shall show you where to find Monsieur Telemann!"

We don't know exactly what happened next, but the legend says, Paul actually travelled to Germany along with Telemann and became one of the master's most excellent students! Some even do believe that Paul adapted much of Telemann's music for the mandolin, just for his personal pleasure, and that this notebook must have got lost somewhere over the centuries...

*Don't you wish you knew how it would sound like?
Well, fortunately, now you can!!*

I hope you have enjoyed the story about Paul and the mandolin, now you are ready to listen to the CD.

*Good night!!
Alon Sariel*