

Excerpt from: **38 - Passacaille**
(French baroque)

Europe, 17th & 18th c.

* As with a *Chaconne*, the study of both theoretical and musical texts reveals a number of criteria which define a French *Passacaille*: beginning on the downbeat in triple time, four-bar harmonic units which move from tonic to dominant, predominance of the minor keys, tempo more moderate and character less cheerful than a *Chaconne*. We concentrate here on examples of this type, purposefully ignoring the occasional exceptions.

38a - Lully, Armide (1686)

a) $\text{♩} \approx 100$

b)

This basic form may be varied in different ways without changing the harmonies, as shown in the two following examples:

c)

Each four-bar section is played twice, either repeated identically or with two differing cadences, as above.

d)

e)

A descending tetrachord movement in the bass is typical of the *Passacaille*. It may be diatonic or chromatic, and is often harmonised differently each time. Changing to an ascending movement brings interesting contrast:

f)