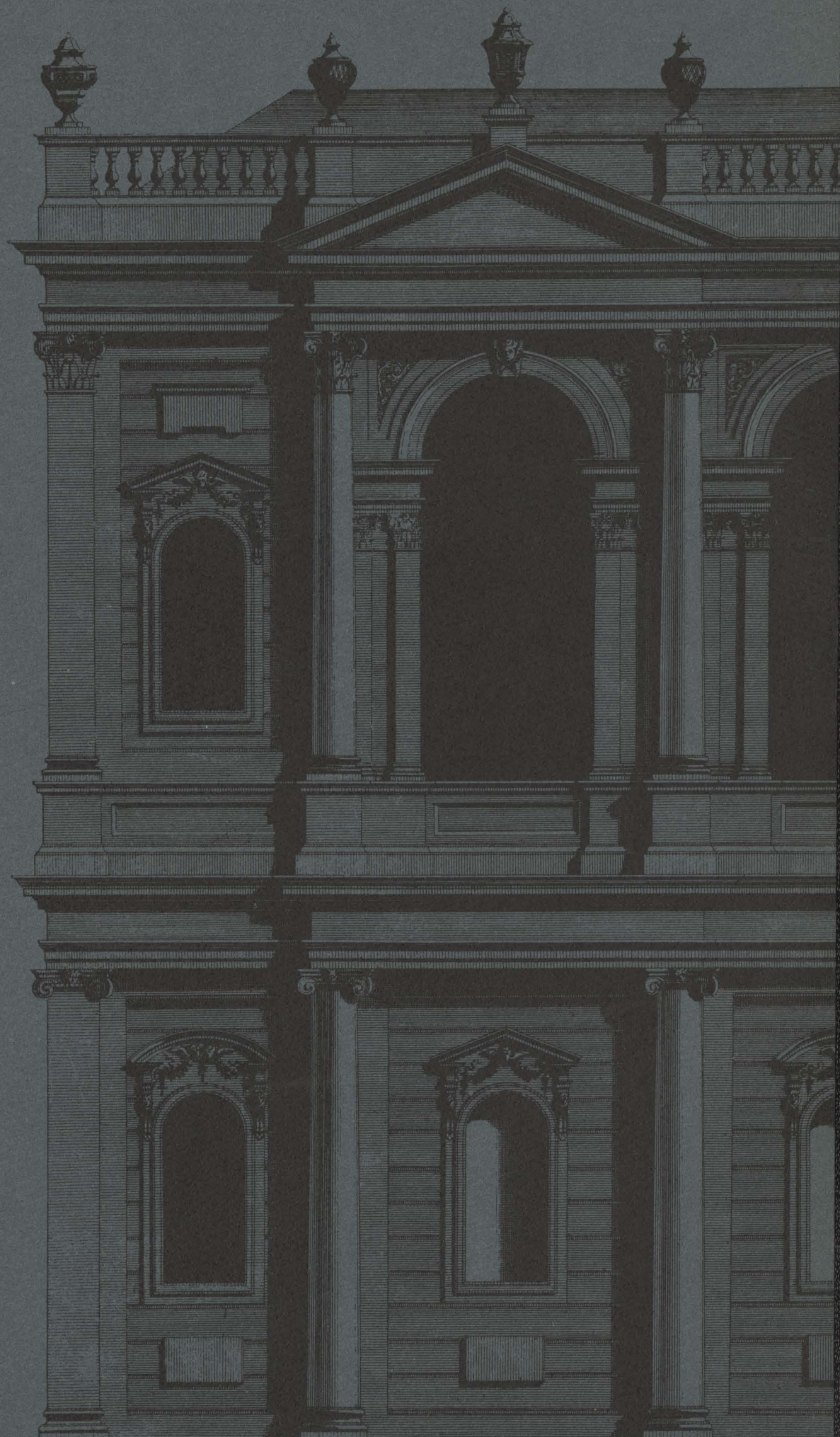


Music for the Virginal played by Stewart Robb / Folkways Records FM 3321

PRELUDE: Anonymous
HORNEPYPE: Aston
PASSAMETZO D'ANGLETERRE: Ammerbach
PASSAMETZO: Ammerbach
BASSE DANCE: Atteignant
GAILLARDE: Atteignant
TWO PAVANAS: Milan
LE FORZE D'HERCOLE: Bendusi
DESIDERATA: Bendusi
PAVANA ST, THOMAS WAKE: Bull
COURANTE. JEWEL: Bull
THE LORD OF SALISBURY, HIS PAVAN: Gibbons
GROUND: Purcell
BASSA IMPERIALE: Anonymous
SALTARELLO: Anonymous
LA FRESCOBALDA: Frescobaldi
CORRENTE: Frescobaldi
LARGO AND GAVOTTA: Zipoli
IL CUCULO: Pasquini
PRELUDE: Fischer
LUTE PRELUDE: Bach
ALLEMANDE: Bach



DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FM 3321

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MUSIC PLAYED ON THE VIRGINAL

by Stewart Robb



Stewart Robb at the virginal. This type harpsichord is particularly suitable for keyboard music of the Elizabethan period.

About the Performer

Stewart Robb, harpsichordist, studied with Fernando Valenti, and subsequently has been heard many times on the radio and in concert performances. He holds an L. A. B. (performer's degree) in piano from the Associated Board (London Royal Academy of Music and London Royal College of Music).

Mr. Robb's libretto translations have won him praise from leading musical personalities, including Lawrence Tibbett, Henry Weber, and Frederick Jagel. His recently published translation of the entire Ring of the Nibelung (Dutton) has been acclaimed by Dr. Sigmund Spaeth; Toscanini's assistant, Dr. Walter Du Cloux; and the editors of The Library Journal, and is being used as a text in University classes. In November, 1962, his translation of Parsifal will appear in an anthology of Opera Librettos published by Doubleday.

SIDE ONE

Prelude	Anonymous
Hornepype	Aston
Passametzto d'Angleterre	Ammerbach
Passametzto	Ammerbach
Basse Dance	Atteignant
Gaillarde	Atteignant
Two Pavanas	Milan
Le Forze d'Hercole	Bendusi
Desiderata	Bendusi
Pavana St. Thomas	
Wake	Bull
Courante. Jewel	Bull
The Lord of Salisbury his Pavin	Gibbons

The harpsichord of the Elizabethans and Jacobean was known as the virginal. According to Max Kenyon, "The term Virginal was applied to all instruments of the plucked string type during the 16th and early 17th centuries, whatever their shape. These had a usual compass of four octaves, A above the staff being the extreme treble note in the English instrument."

The virginal used in this recording was built by Milton Koos, of New York City, a man who has applied his knowledge of acoustical engineering to the building of clavichords and harpsichords, with the result that his instruments have a particularly beautiful quality, apparent to almost any ear. This virginal has one registration change, the harp stop. But such is the quality of its tone that one need only play the music written for such an instrument to realize that these composers knew how to build-in the color and variety needed to make music interesting.

Milton Koos has commented: "The Virginal is generally thought of as an oblong shape harpsichord, whose strings are almost parallel to the keyboard. The unique feature of this instrument is that both bridges at each end of the string are mounted on the soundboard. This means that the sound is produced from both the left and right hand sides of the Virginal, producing a true stereo effect, with a fullness and richness not obtained by a single small soundboard.

"Some of the Flemish Virginals were built to pluck the string near to center, which produces a mellow tone. The English style Virginals are plucked near the left-hand bridge, which produces a brilliant tone. The Virginal used in this recording combines some of the features of both the English and Flemish style Virginals."

"With the use of a panoramic harmonic analyser, audio sweep signal generator, plus other associated electronic equipment I was able to plot frequency response curves of the soundboards to determine the difference between good and bad harpsichords. I found several important differences between the soundboards of good and bad instruments. The frequency response of a well-designed harpsichord is quite flat, that is, the volume of sound output from the soundboard is about the same for all frequencies from about 200 cycles to about 3000 cycles, very

much the same as the characteristics of a high-quality mid-range loudspeaker. The frequencies above 3000 cycles are radiated directly from the bridge itself, for the most part. The result of a harpsichord with a good flat frequency response is clarity plus contrast in tonal colour when changing registrations.

"The frequency response of a badly designed harpsichord soundboard is not flat but has pronounced dips and peaks in its response. This effect is similar to a badly designed cheap loudspeaker. The result, when registration is changed is a loss of clarity, unpleasant tone, lack of contrast."

The name virginal does not come, as some think, from the virgin Queen Elizabeth, as the instrument was so known before her reign. Nor was it so-called because it was an instrument suitable for young ladies to play on. Apparently it derived its name from the fact that it was used to accompany hymns to the Virgin Mary.

The first number played on the virginal on side one of this record is a Praeludium by an anonymous English composer. Short, meditative, full-chorded, it suggests a later age, though it is found in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, sometimes called Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book.

The next piece played, Hughe Aston's Hornpipe, dating around 1500, is chronologically the earliest on this record. Tuneful and lively, it shows that a true harpsichord style existed at this early period. The original manuscript is in the British Museum.

The Hornpipe is followed by two Passametzos by Elias Nicolas Ammerbach (1530-1597), organist at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. The Passametzto, or more familiarly, Passamezzo, is a formal dance, Italian in origin, a variant of the Pavane. The Ammerbach compositions are from his Orgel oder Instrument Tabulatur (1583).

The Basse dance and Gaillarde are from Philippe Atteignant's Quatorze Gaillardes (1530). The former was one of the most popular of late Renaissance dances. There are two explanations of the origin of its name; one being that it was so called because of its typical, low, gliding steps which contrast with the lively leap of the galliard; the other, because of the marked melodic theme in the bass. Philippe Atteignant, Parisian music printer in the early part of the 16th century, was the first in his land to use movable type. The keyboard pieces under his name appear to be transcriptions rather than original compositions.

Two short pavanas, written originally for lute and transcribed for keyboard in Musik aus Fruher Zeit fur Klavier (Schott) follow the Atteignant pieces. Don Luis Milan (ca. 1500 to 1550) was court lutenist to the Prince of Valencia. The pavanas are heard on the harp stop of the virginal.

Le Forze d'Hercole (The might of Hercules) and Desiderata (The Desired One) are two songs transcribed for keyboard by Francesco Bendusi, the latter being from his Opera nova de balli, 1553.

Dr. John Bull (1563-1628), here represented by two fine virginal compositions, was a virtuoso on the keyboards of both virginal and organ. He has been called, not unjustly, the Franz Liszt of his days. A painting in the music school of the University of Oxford is framed by these words:

The Bull by force
In field doth Raigne
But Bull by Skill
Good will doth Gayne.

He was famous for his music lectures at Gresham College and was awarded a gold medal by King James I. He was organist at the Chapel Royal, and later gained fame in Flanders, where he ended his days.

The Pavana St. Thomas Wake is a theme with variations. It adds to the likelihood that the appropriately named John Bull wrote God Save the King, a tune that has also been claimed by the French. The second Bull piece, Courante Jewel, is played in the superior version found in Parthenia.

The last virginal piece played on side one is The Lord of Salisbury his Pavin, by Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625). He too was organist at the Chapel Royal, and later, at Westminster Abbey. His compositions, besides those for virginal, include some sweetly sad madrigals and lofty church music.

SIDE TWO

Ground	Purcell
Bassa Imperiale	Anonymous
Saltarello	Anonymous
La Frescobalda	Frescobaldi
Corrente	Frescobaldi
Largo and Gavotta	Zipoli
Il Cuculo	Pasquini
Prelude	Fischer
Lute Prelude	Bach
Allemande	Bach

Henry Purcell (1658-1695), pupil of John Blow, wrote, among diversified compositions in various forms, a collection of suites for harpsichord, as well as other miscellaneous compositions for this instrument. His Ground in D Minor is one of the latter.

The Bassa Imperiale and Saltarello del Bassa Imperiale are of unknown authorship. They are taken from the Klavierbuch der Regina Clara im Hoff (about 1620).

La Frescobalda, a set of variations, and Corrente, are by Girolamo Frescobaldi, who was born in 1583, the same year as Orlando Gibbons. Frescobaldi was celebrated as organist of St. Peter's, and is noted above all as "the asserter of the final fugue form."

Domenico Zipoli was born in Prato, 1688 and died in Cordoba, Argentine, in 1726. He is noted for two oratorios: St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Catharine, Virgin and Martyr. The Largo and Gavotta are from his only published work, Sonate d'intavolatura per organo e cembalo. The second part of this work was published in England by Walsh, under the title, Six Suites of Italian Lessons for the Harpsichord.

Bernardo Pasquini, born in Florence, 1631, died in Rome, 1710, was organist, harpsichordist and com-

poser. In Rome he was organist at the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. His Toccata for harpsichord on the Cuckoo is less celebrated than Le Coucou of Claude Daquin, but equally ingratiating.

The Prelude for harpsichord by J.K.F. Fisher (1650-1746) is undoubtedly one of the shortest keyboard preludes in existence, vying with certain of those of Chopin and Scriabine.

The Prelude in C Minor, known as "The Lute Prelude," was written by John Sebastian Bach originally for lute and later transcribed by him for keyboard. It is here played with the harp stop registration. The Allemande is from the Partita in D.

REVIEWERS' COMMENTS ON STEWART ROBB'S FIRST RECORD,

"MUSIC FOR THE HARPSICHORD AND VIRGINAL"

"Highly recommended"

Cue Magazine

"A beautiful performance"

Clavier Magazine

"Performed very capably"

Musical Quarterly

"Pre-Bach items treated as music, not history"

Swank Magazine

"I do want to point out a recent, most unusual record on Folkways (of all things). Some Elizabethan things are done on a real two bridge virginal, an instrument seldom recorded and generally overlooked by those interested in harpsichords, clavichords, etc... Even more enjoyable, however, is the other side of the record, a work by Buxtehude. It is pretty close to being the most beautiful recorded harpsichord sound I've ever heard. It must be a beautiful instrument, although the engineering must be good too. It is well played."

H. J. Miller, Jr.

President, The Early Music Society
St. Louis, Mo.

"This delightful album"

St. Petersburg Times, Fla.

"Rather odd that Folkways should come out with something like this, the best harpsichord recording in many a day... The principal item is Buxtehude's 'La Capricciosa' Theme and Variations, as superb a piece of keyboard writing as anything from the Baroque era. In terms of melodic beauty, harmonic inventiveness, interest, and variety, one must go to Bach's Goldberg Variations to find its peer; no wonder that its discovery just a few years ago raised Buxtehude several notches in the esteem of the world's musicologists."

San Francisco Sunday Chronicle

"Stewart Robb is an accomplished performer, and the set may be safely recommended to those interested in this type of music - and among those interested must be numbered... William A. Olsen.

The New Records

"Robb, a capable performer who understands Baroque keyboard style, champions the virtually unknown Buxtehude work in fine fashion. These variations turn out to be not at all insignificant or academic but worthy predecessors of Bach's Goldberg Variations."

Downbeat

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