

The Story of THE KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS, played by Franzpeter Goebels/Folkways Records FM 3326/Vol. 1



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v.1

MUSIC LP

SIDE I

CLAVICHORD

Band 1: J. FROBERGER: Lamentatio
Band 2: P. E. BACH: Fantasie
Band 3: J. S. BACH: Aria
Band 4: P. BENARY: Three Miniatures

SIDE II

HAMMERCLAVIER

Band 1: J. C. BACH: Variations G Major
Band 2: W. A. MOZART: Variations "Ah, je vous dirais Maman"
Band 3: W. A. MOZART: Fantasie D Minor
Band 4: E. PEPPING: Serenade

COVER PICTURE FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHANNES VERMEER

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THE STORY of THE KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

Volume I and Volume II
Played by Franzpeter Goebels

Vol. 1

SIDE I

CLAVICHORD

- Band 1: J. FROBERGER
Lamentatio
Band 2: P. E. BACH
Fantasie
Band 3: J. S. BACH
Aria
Band 4: P. BENARY
Three Miniatures

SIDE II

HAMMERCLAVIER

- Band 1: J. C. BACH
Variations G Major
Band 2: W. A. MOZART
Variations "Ah, je vous dirais
Maman"
Band 3: W. A. MOZART
Fantasie D Minor
Band 4: E. PEPPING
Serenade

Vol. 2 - HARPSICHORD

SIDE I

- Band 1: A. CABEZON
Pavana Italiana
Band 2: J. BULL
Spanish Pavan
Band 3: J. CHAMBONNIERES
Sarabande
Band 4: FR. COUPERIN
Deux Portraits de Jeune Filles

SIDE II

- Band 1: A. POGLIETTI
Aria Con Alcune Variazioni
Band 2: J. PACHELBEL
Choralvariationen "Werde Munter"
Band 3: V. NELHYBEL
Study In Blues

"There are, among the many kinds of clavier, mainly two, namely, harpsichords and clavichords. The more recent fortepianos also have many advantages." This is how Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1784), in his book, "Versuch uber die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen" (1754) mentions the keyboard instruments available in his time. All three instruments were used, but with varying popularity.

In the course of the 19th century the clavichord and harpsichord became obsolete. Thus, Czerny wrote all his studies for the piano only. According to the conception of progress of this period the new piano, which in 1850 took definitive form with respect to sound and technique, was a superior instrument and made the older instruments superfluous.

About the end of the 19th century a renaissance of interest in old instruments began in France and spread to Germany. Musicians used reconstructions of old instruments in "historic concerts." This interest stemmed from the period's typically romantic desire to escape into the past and prompted a Parisian music critic in 1888 to comment, concerning the concert in which a Professor Diemer played on a Pleyel harpsichord, that the only thing missing was that the performer be dressed in the costume of the period in order to create the complete illusion of the good old times.

Today's conception is somewhat different. We do not consider the mechanically perfected modern piano as the best instrument and reject the other instruments. Each instrument represents for us a certain specific sound sphere. This does not exclude a preference for one or the other.

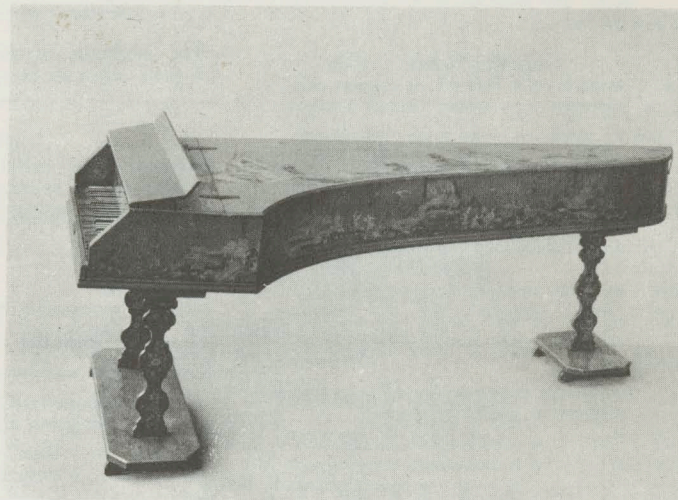
For each of the old instruments there is a music literature which was written specifically for it. Thus, the "Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue" or the "Goldberg Variations" by Bach were exactly tailored for the harpsichord, but this does not exclude these compositions from being played on the piano impressively. On the other hand, nobody would be impressed by Schumann or Chopin played on the harpsichord.

In the 20th century there has been a revival of interest in writing music specifically for the old instruments. In 1915 Ferruccio Busoni wrote his "Sonatina for Harpsichord." Since then a considerable contemporary literature has been written for the various old instruments. These works are not merely imitations of old compositions, but exploit the possibilities of the instruments in a modern idiom. In this album, which demonstrates the clavichord, harpsichord and hammerclavier, I included at the end of each section a composition written for the instrument by a contemporary composer.

Keyboard stringed instruments can be divided into two categories according to whether the strings are struck or plucked. The clavichord and the hammerclavier (as well as the piano) belong to the first category; the harpsichord belongs to the second.



Grand clavichord made by Francesco Neri of Rimini (Italy) in the seventeenth century. City Museum, Prague.



Eighteenth century harpsichord. National Museum, Prague.



The eighteenth century Czech piano on which Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart played in January 1787 in the Ladies' College in Prague. National Museum, Prague.

CLAVICHORD

The clavichord, known since the 15th century, reached its golden era in the middle of the 18th century, at which time it began to be supplanted by the hammerclavier.

The range of the clavichord was about four octaves. The striking mechanism was a brass tangent mounted at the end of each key lever. When a key was depressed, the tangent struck the wire string, setting the string in vibration. The tangent remained in contact with the string as long as the key was depressed. This continued contact gave the player control over the dynamic value and the quality of the sound. No other stringed keyboard instrument had this degree of control. The thin strings of the clavichord produced a delicate sound, somewhat lacking in brilliance but possessing an expressive power unmatched by any keyboard instrument of its time.

The clavichord, with its expressiveness, is the right choice for the composition by Jakob Froberger (1616-67), "Lamentation on the Death of Ferdinand IV," as, according to the composer's indications, the "Lamentation" should be played with much expression and "discretion" (rubato). The delicate proportions and the inner excitement of the "Sonata in d minor" and the "Fantasy in c minor" by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach were best realized on the clavichord. The "Fantasy," because of its "romantic" character was very popular in the 19th century and very often performed as background music for recitations of excerpts from Hamlet. The clavichord was highly esteemed by Johann Sebastian Bach for music making at home. He also considered the instrument very useful for ear training and the development of subtle finger technique. The aphoristic "Miniatures" by the contemporary Swiss composer, Peter Benary, illustrate a modern approach to the instrument.

HARPSICHORD

(German: Flügel; Italian: cembalo or clavicembalo;
French: clavecin)

The origins of the harpsichord go back to the beginning of the 15th century. The instrument reached a high level of mechanical perfection in the middle of the 18th century and by the beginning of the 19th century was supplanted by the piano.

The harpsichord was wing-shaped like the modern grand piano. Its range was about five octaves. The strings of the harpsichord were set in vibration by plectra made from quills or hard leather. The plectra were set in two pieces of wood, called jacks, attached to the ends of the key levers. The depressed key forced the jack upward, causing the plectrum to pluck the string. Harpsichords were built in one, two or sometimes three keyboards (manuals), each of them producing a different tone color. Mechanical devices, called couplers, made it possible to sound simultaneously corresponding notes on a different manual or in a different octave. Dynamics and tone color could be controlled by the player only by changing manuals or by the use of the couplers. Since the manuals and couplers were pre-set, expressive nuance was limited in scope.

The harpsichord tone, in comparison with the delicate tone of the clavichord, was precise, brilliant and strong.

Among the compositions for harpsichord included on this record two "Pavanes" on the same theme, by the Spanish composer, Antonio Cabezón (1510-1566), and the English composer, John Bull (1563-1628), show Cabezón's grand style in contrast to Bull's virtuoso playfulness. A. Poglietti's (1667) "Variations Sopra l'eta della Maestra Vostra" were composed as a wedding present for the Austrian Kaiser Leopold I and Eleonore Magdalena Teresia. In the variations, with titles like Hungarian Violins, Bavarian Shawms, Jugglers, Saber Dance, etc., Poglietti explores the variety of tone colors of the harpsichord. Pachelbel's "Variations" on the song "Werde munter mein Gemute" demonstrate the wide dynamic range of the instrument. In the rhythmic, improvisational "Study in Blues," Václav Nelhybel, a contemporary composer, uses the harpsichord in a fresh and unorthodox manner.

HAMMERCLAVIER (Mozart piano)

Today, the clavichord and especially the harpsichord are often heard in concerts and recordings. The hammerclavier, which is the forerunner of the modern piano, is hardly ever used. The instrument heard in this recording is an exact copy of the hammerclavier in the Salzburg Mozarteum.

The striking mechanism of the hammerclavier was almost identical with that of the modern piano. A small hammer was attached to the end of each key lever. When a key was depressed, the hammer struck the string, setting it in vibration. The hammer then fell back into its original position. The force with which the key was struck by the player determined the dynamic value of the sound. While the striking mechanism of the hammerclavier, as described above, is basically the same as that of the modern piano, there are substantial differences in the materials used in the construction of the instruments as well as in the size of the components, which give each instrument its distinctive sound. Thus, the hammerclavier hammer was covered with goat skin in contrast to the felt-covered hammer of the piano; it was also smaller. The frame of the hammerclavier was always of wood. In comparison with the piano, the hammerclavier strings were thinner, the upper register strings being comparable to the E string of the violin. The hammerclavier used one or two strings for each tone while the piano uses one to three strings. Two levers operated by the knees perform functions on the hammerclavier similar to the functions of the piano pedals. The sound of the hammerclavier was smaller, and its range of expression more limited, than that of the piano.

The "Variations" by Johann Christian Bach and the "Fantasie in d minor" and "Variations" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart are representative compositions of the era of the hammerclavier's greatest popularity. Ernst Pepping's "Serenade" was written specifically for the hammerclavier by the modern German composer.

Prof. Franzpeter Goebels

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