

Harpsichord & fortepiano

Vol. 12, No. 1 Autumn, 2007

© Peacock Press.

Licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

You are free to share and adapt the content for non-commercial purposes, provided you give appropriate credit to Peacock Press and indicate if changes were made. Commercial use, redistribution for profit, or uses beyond this license require prior written permission from Peacock Press.

Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

LETTERS, NEWS & VIEWS

Dear Editor,

Couperin's Ordres Again.

I've already tried Jane Clark's patience pretty severely, to judge from her response to my letter (Vol. 11, No 2) about her article in Vol. 10, No 2, so I promise this is the last you will hear from me on the subject.

No, I hadn't read her and Derek Connolly's book, which her original article was too modest to mention, and I'm very glad I now have, as it is highly enlightening about the society and culture in which Couperin lived and worked and as many of the explanations it provides for his titles are well-evidenced and persuasive. So, to take just two examples, the enigma of that highly perplexing piece, "Les Chinois", is resolved and we can now understand how "La Fine Madelon" relates to "La Douce Jeanneton". However, as in her article, there are also more than a few propositions which appear to be advanced as hard fact but seem to rely on little more than surmise or on a single passage in the contemporary literature (the authors' knowledge of which is awesomely comprehensive: more so than Couperin's own, conceivably?) where a word or a name is used or deployed in a special sense or context.

More often than not, this does not matter two hoots for purposes of interpretation. One would play "La Majestueuse" the same way whether one thought it was just "the majestic piece" or rather, as asserted in the book, a portrait of Louis XIV. And I at least have always felt that a rapid tempo makes good sense of *La Sophie*, regardless of whether it has anything to do with whirling dervishes. But I would want to see a much more solid basis for Jane Clark's suggestions that (for example) "La Laborieuse" is about one "La Laboureur", "La Harpée" is about quarrelling or stealing and is "a bombastic piece", and that "Les Papillons" is about diamond-headed pins, before abandoning the interpretations which seem to me to follow naturally from a naively literal reading of the titles and other evidence within the score.

However, the main point of the article was, I recognise, more to do with the organisation of the pieces into their *ordres* and what this might imply for their interpretation than with the titles themselves. But I wonder whether this is not even more dangerously subjective territory, save where a very direct relationship between a series of pieces is implied by the titles themselves. If one

starts with a strong belief in Couperin's "overall sense of architecture", it becomes rather easy to persuade oneself that there is an organisational rationale to the presence and positioning of more or less every piece within every *ordre*, and that the more elusive or initially counter-intuitive that positioning principle may be the stronger the testimony it provides for the subtlety of Couperin's architectural genius. A natural sceptic however might take the view that there is nothing more going on here than an extension of the traditional juxtaposition of several contrasting dance movements to form a suite. For myself, I fancy that I detect more of a sense of unity in some of the *ordres* (such as No 8) than in others (such as No 2). But all any of us have to go on is, first, Couperin's complete silence on this topic in the *Art* and his prefaces (for whatever that is worth) and, second, the personal hotlines that we all tend to believe we have to our favourite and conveniently dead composers.

Finally, I did not intend, as Jane Clark supposes, to suggest that Couperin always achieved clarity in his instructions (of what performance practice manual of his day could that be said?); only (and I think she agrees) that there were a lot of them and that he was vexed when people ignored them.

Yours faithfully

Dear Mr. Faulkner,

If you read page 9 of our book you will see that it says: 'The ideas put forward here are not suggested as definitive answers to the problem of solving the meaning of the titles', but you cannot write a book which repeats this at every turn. You just hope the reader will use his or her common sense.

I have explained my point of view as clearly as I can both in the book and in the article, and what it is based on, and anyone is at liberty to disagree, some have and I have learnt from them, but their points are based on knowledge of the cultural background and of every piece, just as mine is. I feel it is time for Mr. Faulkner to pursue his own "personal hotline" and to write his own article, explaining his point of view and what it is based on. I would look forward to reading it!

Yours sincerely,

Jane Clark

Urbino Musica Antica was held 19-28 July 2007. For information visit www.fimaonline.org/sito/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=14&Itemid=27

In early May 2007, Pavel Siwczak won the 8th **Broadwood Competition** held at the National Trust's Fenton House, London, using historic instruments from the historic Benton Fletcher Collection of Instruments. In the competition, he played the 1664 Hatley virginals, the 1600 Vincentius virginals and the 1761 Shudi harpsichord. His prize includes performances at historic homes in the U.K.

From 19-24 August 2007 **CIMCIM Annual Meeting** was held at University of Vienna, Austria, joining with the General Conference of ICOM. [www.cimcim.icom.museum
rudolf.hopfner@khm.at](mailto:rudolf.hopfner@khm.at)

The First Global **Scarlatti Marathon** was organised by FIMTE on Friday 1 December 2006 to celebrate Scarlatti's musical legacy and share it with as broad a public as possible. 220 performers aged from 12 to 71 from 14 institutions, 11 cities and 7 countries played 556 Scarlatti sonatas in a single day on an array of different keyboards: harpsichords, clavichords, pianofortes, organs and modern pianos, as well as chamber ensembles and dancing. There are tracks to listen to at <http://www.scarlattimarathon.org/pag%20introduccion%20ingles.htm>

The 8th Annual International Festival of Spanish Keyboard Music **FIMTE 2007** took place 11-14 October 2007 in Almeria-Andalousia, with Concerts, Courses, exhibitions and the 8th International Symposium on Spanish Keyboard Music "Diego Fernández". This year the central theme for discussion was "Domenico Scarlatti in Spain: the Portuguese Connection" <http://www.fimte.org/fimteeng.htm>

The **Seventh Aliénor International Harpsichord Composition Competition**, Salem College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA—6-8 March 2008. The pieces in either the solo or duo categories, are due postmarked by 1 November 2007. http://www.harpsichord-now.org/call_for_scores.html

NetworkedPlanet, a leading vendor of information management tools and products, has announced an order for its TMCore

information management solution from the Royal Academy of Music, London to power its new online multi-dimensional music index - the RAMline. The platform will provide an intelligent navigation system for what has the potential to become the largest and most comprehensive online music resource on the internet, linking profiles, discographies, performances and musical compositions of any artist or genre. The TMCore topic map engine will make it easy for users - initially academics and Academy students and in the future, music enthusiasts worldwide - to locate and browse over 100,000 individual in-house and external resources, such as sound clips, images, websites, and details of live performances. When completed, the "RAMline" project will provide a knowledge portal on any artist or work in musical history, from Beethoven and The Beatles to the sounds of tomorrow.

Martha Folts, www.marthafolts.com, is working on a self-publishing project of Scarlatti's *Essercizi*, two thirds of which she plays on a copy of the 1785 José Calisto harpsichord made by Robert Hicks.

Suzanne Skyrme, University of South Dakota, is currently involved in a project to catalogue and identify 19th-century keyboard manuscripts in the monastery of San Pedro de las Dueñas outside of León. As a recent recipient of a Governor's 2010 Seed Grant, she is currently compiling and editing a collection of 18th-century Spanish keyboard music to be published in the next two years.

Most recently, **Peter Watchorn** has begun an ambitious project of recording all of Bach's harpsichord works, some of which will utilise the pedal harpsichord.