

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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# Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Montclair was a double bass player in the Paris Opera, and a composer of cantatas, serenades, instrumental concerts, a ballet, *Les Fêtes d'Été*, and a well-received opera, *Jephté*. He part-owned a music shop, and was a well known teacher who taught Couperin's children. He wrote four separate treatises on Music that were published in pairs - one book for adults, the other for children: the *Nouvelle Method* of 1709, the *Leçons de musique divisées en quatre classes en faveur des personnes qui commencent à apprendre et particulièrement des enfants ...* (1709); the *Principes de Musique* of 1739, and the beautifully named *Petite Method pour apprendre la Musique aux Enfants et meme aux Personnes plus avancées en âge* (after 1739).

They are practical works, full of interesting details and music examples, including sections of *Airs de Danse* (dance tunes) which Peacock Press is publishing in a separate volume (Montclair - *Airs de Danse* PAR-103). In the *Petite Method* he writes that: "nothing improves the understanding of the various mouvements and metres than playing *Airs de Danse*".

The *Principes de Musique* contains the section on the *Agréments* - French ornaments - that is reprinted here. It has some of the clearest and most detailed descriptions available. (For instance, see the *Glissé* on page 22 for a forgotten ornament.)

The language of the period is lovely, if sometimes hard to decipher. I would like to thank Gilles Aufray, the playwright, for his work on the text. For instance, couler is "to flow", but in the particular way that a stream of water flows downhill or through a channel. This must help our understanding of the ornament, and, while it might be obvious to a French speaker, it is rarely mentioned in translations into English. The same applies to the *battement* and to much else as well. I must make it clear that any mistakes and misunderstandings are entirely my responsibility. In particular, there is the problem of translating *notes forte* and *notes faibles* (strong and weak notes) when the meaning seems to have shifted from any function in the metre to include main and subsidiary, and even just long and short, notes.

Andrew Robinson 2008

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Edited by Andrew Robinson  
English translation by Gilles Aufray

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Keene & Brackley Spinet on its stand,  
*photo by Malcolm Rose. Used with Permission.*

Spinet *by Stephen Keene* [1682?] on a table, London,  
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The distinctive shape of the newly discovered  
late Florentine harpsichord by Gio. Piero Migliai,  
Florence 1763. *Photo by Peter Thresh*

**Autumn 2009**

# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Dear Readers,

I'd like to see more on pedagogy – how do we teach the next generation?

Also, for future issues I'd like to encourage contributions concerning works for two people to play, either at the same keyboard or at two keyboards.

For our next issue, I can promise you some items about Goldberg, the one who played those famous variations.

Would you like to be an iTunes reviewer? If you're already listening to something you may as well drop us a line.

Have you attended a workshop, course, or conference recently? I'd love your views and so

would other readers before they turn over their hard-earned cash.

There have been a host of competitions as well - new ones cropping up in new areas - would a competitor tell others what they thought of the organization and judging (I'm now bracing myself for an avalanche.)?

These are just a range of ideas all of which are worth exploring, so please be in touch if any of these interest you.

Yours sincerely,  
Micaela Schmitz



photo by Rochel Clements

## LETTERS, NEWS & VIEWS

Dear Editor

Thank you so much for featuring the article in relation to presenting romantic music and in particular Chopin and Liszt in unequal temperaments. For some years at Hammerwood Park near East Grinstead I have been promoting concerts on unequal temperaments. There is good evidence that unequal temperament was used during most of the 19th century with Broadwood's "best temperament" being used well into the 1880s.

It was for me, as it was for your author, the Chopin 2nd sonata which gave me the hunch that unequal temperament was being exploited in the composition and this was proved last year by two performances of the sonata by Adolfo Barabino, one here in unequal temperament and another a fortnight later at Leeds Castle on a modern piano in equal temperament. Putting the two recordings of the concerts side by side I applied tonal equalisation to make the two instruments sound similar. Listeners to the recordings noted how chords related in an almost three dimensional manner.

The importance of temperament cannot be understated. When two notes are played together, a beat is generated which is the difference between the frequencies of the two notes played; if one listens carefully you can hear them when close enough to a piano or harpsichord.

In equal temperament the major third produces a beat note which is a nasty quarter tone sharp and itself beats with the beat generated by the higher minor third. "Rooted chords" are ones in which the beat notes coincide, substantially on the fundamental note. In contrast "unrooted chords" are those in which the triad notes are so far removed from the harmonic sequence that the beat notes resulting are so wide of an expected fundamental that the chord feels as though it has no foundation.

In particular the Funeral March of Chopin is striking as the opening sequence alternates between a rooted chord promoting security and certainty followed by a disconcerting unrooted chord conveying distress. Neil Crossland performed the Schubert Sonata in Bb Major D.960 on the Hammerwood piano and viewers on YouTube have commented how the temperament adds to the mood.

The question of Mozart and temperament is an oddity. In a performance by Jill Crossland of "Ah! Vous dirai-je, Maman" a few years ago, the change between major and minor in the unequal temperament was so shocking that it almost brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience. But when experimenting with the organ, Mozart's Fantasia in F Minor, known to be the key of darkest grief, was so actually out of tune we had to revert to equal.

Finally, the issue remains: "Which temperament?" This is an issue on which one

can split hairs and for many things, almost any of the temperaments are better than equal. However, your author takes a curious choice in the "Lehman-Bach" tuning as it bears no similarity to any of historical precedence. Perhaps it is too simplistic to assume that a good temperament would be purest and best in the "home" or "white" keys and "worst" in the "black" or "remote" and less frequently played keys? However, all the historic temperaments and those which are based upon them largely do just that and some of them are better behaved than others in providing a smooth progression of deviation as one increases the accidentals. The Lehman temperament contrasts, however, in its peak of "colour" around three sharps.

For general purpose use on a piano at Hammerwood we use the "Kellner-Bach" temperament which is effective but mild enough for all except Brahms' Waltz in A Flat. Research by Charles Francis re-analysing Lehman's sources produced a temperament solution not dissimilar to Kellner's, which was a derivative of Kirnberger's.

Whilst the Lehman temperament may provide a mildly pleasing detuning from equal temperament, any association with Bach or musical methodology behind it should be subject to scrutiny. If any player wishes to experiment on instruments permanently tuned to Kellner, Kirnberger and meantone, we welcome all for practice, experimentation and performance.

Yours sincerely,

David Pinnegar BSc ARCS,  
Hammerwood Park 01342 850594

*Dear David,*

Thanks very much for your interest; it's always interesting to hear views on tuning and I'm sure our readers will find this interesting!

*The Editor*

**New Mozart works** – a concerto movement and a prelude have been found.

The prodigy was probably 7 or 8 years old at the time of writing. The works were performed in Salzburg for the first time by Florian Birsak.

**Laura Tivendale**, a student from the Royal Academy of Music, won the Broadwood Harpsichord Competition at Fenton House. The competition is unusual in that players use original instruments to perform.

See <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-fentonhouse/>

There is a new **Musical Instrument Museum** opening in Arizona, with the same name as the Brussels one. [www.themim.org](http://www.themim.org)

**1-10 Feb 2010 The First International Volkonsky Harpsichord Competition, P.I. Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow.**  
[harpsichordcompetition@mosconsrv.ru](mailto:harpsichordcompetition@mosconsrv.ru) or visit [www.mosconsrv.ru/English/page.phtml?2175](http://www.mosconsrv.ru/English/page.phtml?2175)

**26-30 May 2010 AMIS Meeting, Washington , D.C.**

**October 2010 Michaelstein International Symposium on Musical Instruments 7-13 2010 Shanghai**, CIMCIM meeting, and conference of ICOM, CIMCIM, and more.

**The Western Early Keyboard Association (WEKA)** held a most successful two-day conference in Tacoma, Washington, 19-20 September 2009. Christ Church, Episcopal, Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) and the University of Washington Organ Department supported the event. The events began with four-hand early keyboard repertoire performed by Fabio Ciofini from Italy and Jordi Vergés Riart from Spain. Featured instruments were the c. 1685 Italian organ and a recently completed Italian harpsichord by Oregon maker Owen Daly. A highlight of the morning was Fabio Ciofini demonstrating the playing of continuo on both featured instruments with soprano Linda Tsatsanis. In the afternoon Dr. Janet Pollack of Colorado State University discussed Parthenia: "the first music that ever was printed for the virginals." This was followed by a harpsichord and organ builders' symposium, wherein renowned Pacific Northwest builder Martin Pasi detailed the restoration process of the c. 1685 Italian organ. The day concluded with a four-hand concert on John Brombaugh's historically-based tracker action organ at Christ Church, Episcopal. The events of September 20 began with a most interesting tour of Paul Fritts' organ shop, followed by an early piano presentation at PLU with the incredible Tamara Friedman performing on authentic Streicher and Broadwood pianos. The afternoon concluded with a varied programme (Baroque violin, flute, cello; harpsichord, Streicher piano; early guitars, tenor, and the Fritts' Op. 18 organ) PLU faculty and guests recited: "Music in the Age of Thomas Jefferson." Throughout the conference there was time for playing the myriad instruments and socialising. All-in-all, it was a satisfying event. Barbara King, WEKA President