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

HAMMERCLOVIER
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
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Band 2: J. BULL
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Sarabande
Band 4: FR. COUPERIN
Deux Portraits de Jeune Filles

SIDE II

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Aria Con Alcune Variazoni
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 clavicords. The more recent fortepianos also have many advantages." This is how Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1784), in his book, "Versuch über 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 clavicord 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 write 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 clavicord, 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 clavicord and the hammerclavier (as well as the piano) belong to the first category; the harpsichord belongs to the second.
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 Cabezon (1510-1569), and the English composer, John Bull (1563-1620), show Cabezon's grand style in contrast to Bull's virtuoso playfulness. A. Poglietti's (1667) "Variations Sopra l'etra della Maestra Vostra" were composed as a wedding present for the Austrian Kaiser Leopold I and Eleonora Magdalena Teresa. 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 mutter mein Gemute" demonstrate the wide dynamic range of the instrument. In the rhythmic, improvisational "Study in Blues," Vaclav Neidybel, 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 Peppig's "Serenade" was written specifically for the hammerclavier by the modern German composer.

Prof. Franzpeter Goebels
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