

The Ord-Tempered Harpsichord

MARK SWINTON

Longman & Broderip Harpsichord, 1785

Music by

Farnaby | Tisdall

Handel | Scarlatti

Cimarosa | Stanley



The Music

George Frederic Handel was undoubtedly a colossus of the Baroque era. His vast contributions to all manner of musical genres are generously rewarding, with a brilliance and richness of invention to satisfy serious music scholars, yet with an accessibility that has afforded familiarity even amongst non-classical and non-Western listeners. Handel's prowess as a keyboard player is well evidenced by his numerous harpsichord suites and organ concertos. On this recording, Kenneth Mobbs plays a short and beautiful excerpt from the **Suite in C major (HWV 443)**, a **Sarabande** with its characteristic emphasis on the second beat of the bar and its lyrical melody. Handel is also said to have composed a number of Voluntaries; the three on this recording are taken from a set of twelve published by the firm of James Longman and Francis Broderip, based at 26 Cheapside - one of London's most fashionable shopping districts in the 18th century. It is a fitting coincidence that Longman & Broderip were the original sellers of Culliford's harpsichords, including the one owned and restored by Alexander Mackenzie of Ord which was used for this recording. Although the term "voluntary" may refer to a free style keyboard piece (and in church contexts refers to any work played as part of divine service), a "voluntary" in 18th century English music was specifically a piece in two or more sections, alternating between slow and fast tempi and intended either for Full Organ (using the chorus of pipework on the primary manual) or for one or more solo registers over an accompaniment, which owing to the splitting of stops between treble and bass registers could be played on a single manual. 18th century Voluntaries were published as being suitable for the harpsichord as well as for the organ, a ploy almost certainly intended to boost sales. Although the effect of organ stops called for in many of the pieces (Diapasons, Trumpets, Flutes etc.) is not totally reproduced by the harpsichord, it is nonetheless possible to create similar variety by contrasting unison and octave couplings of strings, as well as by deploying harp and lute effects. Some of this music may have been misattributed to Handel. For centuries it was a common practice of music sellers to use famous composers as marketing gimmicks, with or without permission; Handel was definitely a musical celebrity in 18th century England, hence Longman and Broderip (being canny salesmen) may not have been crediting authorship when ascribing these pieces to "the celebrated Mr Handel!" However, the fragmented nature of the echo writing in the *allegro* of **No.4**, with abrupt shifts of tonality, and the similarity of the *allegro* in **No.8** to the second of 'six little fugues' in volume 48 of Friedrich Chrysander's (admittedly contentious) Handel edition may support the argument that at least some of the material recorded here is Handel's. Like those of Stanley, these works could be played on organ or harpsichord and have a bipartite slow-fast structure. **No.1**, in C major, opens with a Diapason movement and continues with a fugato Principal movement, which on the harpsichord reveals the contrast between unison (8 foot) and octave (4 foot) pitches. **No.4**, in G minor, calls for Cornet and Echo in the fast movement, which bears latent hallmarks of the Italian influence on Handel's earlier works. **No.8**, also in C major, is a Full Voluntary with a richly textured slow movement and a double-subject fugue in which Handel's familiar nobility of style shines through the faster tempo.

Domenico Scarlatti stands on the boundary between Baroque and Classical eras. Like his contemporaries Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel, Scarlatti was noted for his prowess as a keyboard player, reflected in his substantial collection of over 500 sonatas, many of them composed in Madrid where he served as a court musician. Most of them are single movements in binary form, each half being repeated. The pair of sonatas recorded here are both sprightly in character and betray the influence of traditional Spanish music. The **Sonata in F major, K274** is full of leaping intervals and sequences over dominant pedal notes, giving an impression of fanfares, whilst the **Sonata in C minor, K254** is more dramatic and urgent, with imitative two-part writing that accommodates intricate rhythmic interplay and contrary motion, laced with much chromaticism.

Giles Farnaby was a contributor to the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. Like his father, he was a member of the Worshipful Company of Joiners; his cousin Nicholas was a noted maker of musical instruments, including virginals, and Farnaby may well have been a maker of virginals himself. Certainly, the bulk of his 50 strong output of keyboard pieces were intended for the virginal and amongst them is the only known work for two virginals. His pieces have a particular charm, and are a significant contribution to the keyboard repertoire in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Following the convention of naming keyboard pieces after their dedicatee or composer, **Giles Farnaby's Dreame, His Rest and His Humour** form a short suite and allow the demonstration of contrasting registrations. **Giles Farnaby's Dreame** is a pavan, **His Rest** is a galliard and **His Humour** is a musical joke, parodying various other keyboard nuances of the Tudor period by playing about with chromaticism, imitative writing between lightly textured treble and thickly textured bass and ultimately the use of a hexachord (ascending and descending half-scale) as a cantus firmus.

William Tisdall (or Tisdale) is one of the most enigmatic figures in English music, as so little about him can be verified. The death of a William Tisdall in 1603 in London is recorded, as also is the death of another in 1605, although this could be the same person, with one of the dates being a clerical error. His entire surviving output consists of seven keyboard pieces, five of which can be found in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. Of these, the **Pavana chromatica - Mrs Katherin Tregian's pavan** suggests that he had some connection to the Tregian family of Cornwall; like them, it is possible that Tisdall was a Catholic recusant. The piece is unusual both for its lack of a galliard, normally always paired with the pavane as a musical form, and for its astonishing chromatic dissonances, heightened in effect by this unequal temperament.

Born in the Campania region and educated in Naples, **Domenico Cimarosa** was most famous in his lifetime for opera buffa. Composing 80 such works, he rivalled Mozart with his success in the genre. His keyboard sonatas, intended for harpsichord or fortepiano, are as numerous as his operas, but are considerably smaller in scale. Most are single movements with no repeats, more tightly constructed than those of Scarlatti. This gives them a more ephemeral quality, like a bagatelle, although they are carefully constructed with clear development and recapitulation of melodic and harmonic themes. The **Sonata in G minor** unfolds its ornately expressive melody over a slow ostinato crotchet bass, whilst those in **A major** and **B flat major** alternate cheerful opening gestures with sequential figures over Alberti basses, a common feature of Cimarosa's faster sonatas. The sunny accessible nature of these works easily accounts for their popularity.

John Stanley was undoubtedly one of the most celebrated musicians of 18th century London. Blinded in an early childhood accident, Stanley pursued musical studies with Maurice Greene, Master of the Royal Musick, and at university in Oxford, and was based for nearly all of his life in London, ultimately holding appointments at the Temple Church and as Master of the Royal Musick. Prolific in numerous genres, it is his Voluntaries for which he is best known. The three Voluntaries presented here are drawn from the set of ten making up Stanley's opus 5. **Voluntary No.1 in C major** has four movements: a slow introduction for the Diapasons followed by a stately March for Trumpet and Echo (here, as elsewhere on this recording, the Venetian swell shutters of the Culliford harpsichord are alternately opened and closed to generate the echo effect); another brief plaintive slow movement in the relative minor follows on, giving way to a sprightly melodic fourth movement calling for further echo effects, interpreted here with freely expressive use of the stop machine as well as the swell shutters. **Voluntary No.4 in E minor** is of the more common slow-fast construction, the slow movement being in triple time whilst the fast movement (for Cornet and Echo) features imitative writing between melody and bass; the overall effect is strongly reminiscent of an Italian concerto grosso. **Voluntary No.9 in G minor** is likewise in two sections but calls for Full Organ throughout, the second section being a fugue with a subject in two contrasting phrases: a rising melody

answered by a descending sequence featuring catchy octave leaps. Another notable feature is the incorporation of descending sequences as episodes, each leading to a fresh entry of the subject. Again, the influence of continental styles is remarkably strong.

Johann Christian Bach was the eleventh and youngest of Johann Sebastian Bach's sons. His keyboard sonatas were first published in London in 1765 and were intended for harpsichord or fortepiano. The nimble yet stately **Minuet** from the **Sonata, Op.5 No.1** is played here by Kenneth Mobbs.

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The Instrument

The harpsichord used in this recording was made in 1785 by Thomas Culliford for Messrs. Longman & Broderip. In the late 19th century, it unfortunately fell into the hands of Arnold Dolmetsch who, misguidedly, decided to convert it into a double-manual instrument, in the course of which much of the original Machine-Stop mechanism was removed, and the original keyboard and name-batten discarded.

The instrument came into the possession of the present owner in 1965. After a considerable period of careful thought, it was finally decided to restore it to its original single-manual state, as made by Thomas Culliford in 1785. His clever re-arrangement of the conventional Machine-Stop mechanism had enabled it to perform many of the tonal and dynamic changes more common to the usual double-manual and more expensive harpsichord by the simpler use of just the left pedal, thus allowing both hands to remain on the keyboard; these changes could then either be increased or decreased by the use of the right pedal operating the Venetian Swell.

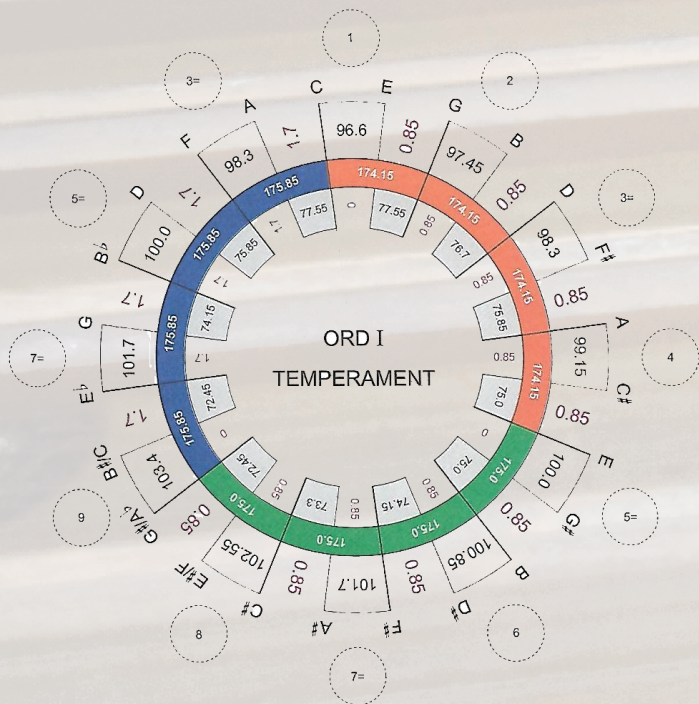
The harpsichord is at Handel's pitch of 1751 ($A = 422.5$) and is tuned to Ord Temperament, restoring to each key its individual tonality. In 1752, d'Alembert described this unequal temperament as "le tempèrément ordinaire," and it is quoted in British Encyclopaedias as late as the 1790s. This harpsichord has the usual 3 registers of 1st Unison, Lute and Octave, all being quilled: the 2nd Unison is voiced somewhat louder with leather. It also has a Harp stop.

The late 18th century English harpsichord, with its ability to create both tonal and dynamic changes, has generally had a very bad press, often being described as "decadent." It is, however, no more decadent than the keyboard music it was expressly designed to serve so successfully at the end of the century.

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from **The Temperament of Keyboard Music**
Its Character, its Musicality, and its History
 by A.C.N. Mackenzie of Ord (2007)

Mark Swinton

Mark Swinton was educated at the King's School, Chester, and at the University of York, graduating with BA in Music in 2002 and MA in Music two years later. He has studied with David Briggs, Roger Fisher, Dr Francis Jackson and John Scott Whiteley, amongst others, and has participated in masterclasses with Johannes Geffert and Dame Gillian Weir. A Fellow of the Royal College of Organists since 2006, he has given numerous recitals at venues throughout the UK. He has also performed, as both a soloist and accompanist, in France, Germany, Holland and Spain. His first solo recording, *Colours of the Klais* (Cloister Records) marked the 10th anniversary in 2007 of the Klais organ in Bath Abbey; 2016 saw the release of *A Bach Family Album* (Willowhayne Records). He has an occasional duo partnership with violinist Lucy Phillips; they have given concerts together in Bath, Chester, Warwick and Workstop, and recorded a CD.



Since 2011, Mark has been Assistant Director at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick, having previously held positions at Kendal Parish Church, Bath Abbey and Royal High School, and Clifton College, Bristol. At Warwick, he accompanies the St Mary's Choirs of Boys, Girls and Men in four choral services every week whilst assisting with their training and direction. He has appeared with them in concert, including the premières of choral works by Naji Hakim and David Briggs, on tours throughout the UK and abroad, on radio and television broadcasts, and on two recent CD recordings to date: *Christmas from Warwick* and *Gaudeamus omnes: celebrating Warwick 1100* (Regent Records). He also directs St Mary's Scholars, an adult chamber choir that sings occasional services in St Mary's whilst undertaking its own programme of concerts and tours.

Although primarily an organist, Mark has performed as a harpsichordist since student days in York, often appearing as a continuo player with the University Baroque Ensemble and even venturing into the world of contemporary music for the instrument via what is now known as the Chimera Ensemble. He has also accompanied the soprano Yvonne Seymour and provided continuo for the Yorkshire Youth Orchestra and EU Chamber Orchestra. It was in the course of directing a performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* from the harpsichord at Clifton College in 2004 that Mark first encountered Alexander Mackenzie of Ord and had the opportunity to play the 1785 Culliford instrument which was used for this recording. This was the first of numerous meetings that ultimately led to this release.

He is married to Holly, a dyslexia specialist and private tutor.

Their son Conrad was born in 2013.

www.markswinton.co.uk



The instrument before restoration



The instrument after restoration



The instrument's Venetian Swell

The Ord-Tempered Harpsichord

Mark Swinton

Longman & Broderip Harpsichord
(manufactured by Thomas Culliford, 1785)

GEORGE FREDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

Voluntary No.1 in C major **3:10**

1 (Largo) 1:51

2 Allegro 1:19

Voluntary No.4 in G minor **3:44**

3 Slow 1:16

4 Allegro 2:28

Voluntary No.8 in C major **3:54**

5 Grave 1:41

6 Allegro 2:13

DOMENICO SCARLATTI (1685-1757)

7 Sonata in F major, K274 3:22

8 Sonata in C minor, K254 4:02

GILES FARNABY (1560-1640)

9 Giles Farnaby's Dreame 1:27

10 His Rest 1:06

11 His Humour 3:23

WILLIAM TISDALL (c. 1570-?1603)

12 Pavana chromatica 5:33

DOMENICO CIMAROSA (1749-1801)

13 Sonata in A major 2:52

14 Sonata in G minor 3:05

15 Sonata in B flat major 1:59

JOHN STANLEY (1712-1786)

Voluntary in C major, Op.5 No.1 **7:58**

16 Adagio 1:14

17 Andante 2:48

18 Slow 1:00

19 Allegro 2:56

Voluntary in E minor, Op.5 No.4 **4:49**

20 Adagio 1:16

21 Allegro 3:33

Voluntary in G minor, Op.5 No.9 **5:33**

22 Largo 2:03

23 Allegro 3:30

JOHANN CHRISTIAN BACH (1735-1782)

24 Minuet in B flat major* 2:24

GEORGE FREDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

25 Sarabande (Suite No.1)* 1:36

TOTAL TIME: 60:12

*played by Kenneth Mobbs

Recorded at 24-bit 192KHz (tracks 1-23)

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