EDITIONS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
doi:10.1017/S1478570619000150

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN (1668–1733), ED. DENIS HERLIN
PIÈCES DE CLAVECIN, PREMIER LIVRE (1713) / PIÈCES DE CLAVECIN, SECOND LIVRE (1717)
Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2016 / 2018
pp. xxxvi + 128, ISMN 979 0 006 50561 6 / pp. xxxviii + 137, ISMN 979 0 006 50562 3

François Couperin's harpsichord music, comprising more than 230 pieces, was published in four books and in *L'Art de toucher le clavecin* between 1713 and 1730. Currently, Couperin's harpsichord music is available to modern musicians through Kenneth Gilbert's classic edition (Paris: Heugel, 1969–1972), in addition to a number of modern and facsimile editions (see Bruce Gustafson and David Fuller's *A Catalogue of French Harpsichord Music 1699–1780* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 88–100). Denis Herlin's edition, published by Bärenreiter in collaboration with the Ministère de la Culture of France and the Fondation Francis et Mica Salabert, represents the first serious effort to revamp this music for nearly half a century. The *Premier Livre* (1713) and *Second Livre* (1717), the two volumes under scrutiny here, were released in 2016 and 2018, and the remaining two volumes are in the pipeline. The *Second Livre* includes the eight preludes and an allemande from Couperin's treatise, which were originally published in 1716 and 1717 respectively.

Herlin's new editions are firmly based on a detailed examination of numerous exemplars of Couperin's prints, as well as recently rediscovered manuscript copies of the composer's music. For the first book, Herlin identifies sixteen impressions from sixty-nine copies; and for the second book, fifteen impressions from fifty-two copies. This alone testifies to the demand for Couperin's music throughout the eighteenth century. The critical commentaries provide detailed descriptions of principal and secondary sources and a summary of the main differences between different impressions of the two books and between the two editions of the *L'Art de toucher*. Notably, the edition comes with numerous facsimiles from original prints and concordant sources, such as an earlier version of 'La Florentine' from the *Second Ordre* (*Premier Livre*, 40–41), and the vocal version of 'Les Délices' from the *Septiême Ordre* (*Second Livre*, 19).

In his edition, Herlin reconstructs the musical text by closely observing fundamental attributes of the original prints, from the layout to the size of the ornaments. Performers will welcome the elimination of most page-turns, as in Couperin's original prints. This is done partly through the use of a large upright format accommodating as many as seven staff systems (typical pages contain four to six systems per page), and partly by restoring Couperin's system of indicating repeats, in which restatements of the rondeau theme are denoted by signs and not written out. As a result, pieces like 'La Favorite Chaconne' and 'Le Réveil-matin' (both from the *Troisiême Ordre* of the first book) can be played without the help of a page-turner. Furthermore, in Herlin's edition both the size and the placement of the accidentals show great respect for Couperin's original notation, and there is a clear distinction between straight legato slurs and curved ties to indicate held notes. By reverting to Couperin's notational details in matters small and large, Herlin places the modern performer in an ideal position to engage with the musical text in ways similar to that of an eighteenth-century musician. Aspects of the original that have been modernized for the convenience of present-day users include clefs and accidentals. In line with the highest standard of critical editions, all editorial emendations are indicated within square brackets or printed in small characters. The commentary at the back of each volume provides a detailed description of editorial interventions. In all, Herlin's edition is an example of a scholarly critical approach guided by a deep understanding of the musical sources and Couperin's idiosyncratic style. On all counts, it brings us closer to the spirit of Couperin's music than any previous edition.

Herlin's scholarly prefaces, presented in French and translated into English by Peter Bloom, make for a fascinating read, and significantly enhance our understanding of a number of key issues in Couperin's

harpsichord publications. Probing deeply into the circumstances of Couperin's life during the years preceding each publication, Herlin presents a cogent picture with interesting details and odd revelations. For example, he examines the relationship between Couperin's first book and the *Pièces choisies pour le clavecin de différents auteurs*, published by Ballard six years earlier, in 1707. Herlin retraces Couperin's experimentation with new styles in the *Pièces choisies*, and shows how he tested the waters by publishing his pieces anonymously. The positive reception of these pieces, as Couperin himself declared in his preface to the first book, paved the way for the composer fully to embrace 'character pieces' or 'musical portraits' in his *ordres*. Two pieces from *Pièces choisies*, 'La Diane' and 'La Badine', have been included in the *Premier Livre* on stylistic grounds, although 'La Badine' was attributed to Louis Marchard in at least two manuscript sources, as discussed by Herlin.

Interestingly, Herlin painstakingly explores the possible identities of Couperin's pupils, and shows how the deaths of several patrons may have been linked to a period of professional instability, as implied by Couperin's frequent changes of address in Paris during the second decade of the eighteenth century. Despite some uncertainties and fragile health, however, Couperin, with the help of François Du Plessy, spared neither time nor effort to achieve the highest precision in the engraving of his harpsichord pieces. Indeed, Couperin's exquisite style, requiring an elaborate set of ornament symbols and intricate keyboard textures, takes full advantage of Du Plessy's exceptional engraving. Other innovative features deployed by Couperin and Du Plessy, as pointed out by Herlin, include navigational pointers for repeats and the notation of complex rhythm.

Herlin's detailed study of the dedication and publication of both books provides concrete evidence of the wide dissemination of Couperin's music during the eighteenth century. More importantly, Herlin reveals corrections and modifications to the preliminary pages, titles and musical texts in later impressions. Some of the modifications to the text plates were made to update addresses and publication information, whereas others were made to correct errors in the musical plates. In the second book, Herlin reveals that thirty-one corrections were made to the score from three subsequent impressions. Obviously, all of these corrections have been duly incorporated into the current edition. Herlin's scrupulous work also allows him to formulate coherent titles with original spellings.

In addition, Herlin offers a substantial and nuanced discussion of performance-practice matters, covering topics such as tempo markings, the concepts of *mesure* and *mouvement* in French music, *notes inégales* in different time signatures, ornaments and instruments, drawing evidence from writings of influential eighteenth-century figures such as Sébastian de Brossard (1655–1730), Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667–1737) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). In all, Herlin's scholarly prefaces, completed with citations and footnotes, will prove hugely beneficial to researchers and students.

Couperin's own prefaces were presented bilingually in French and English. The glossary to Herlin's edition provides a comprehensive list of performance directions and work titles, as well as an explanation of Couperin's ornament symbols and signs, all competently translated into English by Peter Bloom. The precise meanings of Couperin's titles are, of course, beyond the scope of Herlin's edition. The interested reader can consult a wealth of materials written by such scholars as David Fuller ('Of Portraits, "Sapho" and Couperin: Titles and Characters in French Instrumental Music of the High Baroque', *Music and Letters* 78/2 (1997), 149–174), Jane Clark and Derek Connon (*The Mirror of Human Life: Reflections on François Couperin's 'Pièces de clavecin'* (London: Keyword Press, 2011)) and Wilfred Mellers (*François Couperin and the French Classical Tradition* (London: Faber, 1987)).

Recent discussions of historically informed performance have tended to cast doubt on the question of a composer's intentions, which are often presented as vague or imprecise. However, Herlin convincingly shows that Couperin, with the help of Du Plessy, developed an approach to engraved notation that allowed his published music to attain an unprecedented level of prescriptive intention. It is astounding that it has taken almost three hundred years for Couperin's clear intentions to be recast in a modern edition. Herlin's editions, combining scholarly integrity and musical awareness, have definitively raised the bar for

urtext editions of published music. Priced at about fifty euros for each volume, the edition is both for libraries and for individuals who value quality and integrity.

DAVID Y. S. CHUNG
dchung@hkbu.edu.hk

RECORDINGS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
doi:10.1017/S1478570619000174

CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH (1714–1788)
TANGERE
Alexei Lubimov (Tangentenflügel)
ECM 2112, 2017; one disc, 67 minutes

On *Tangere* (Latin: to touch), Alexei Lubimov records the 'Fantasias, Sonatas, Rondos and Solfeggi' of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach on a copy of a tangent piano (Tangentenflügel) by Späth & Schmahl, Regensburg (1794). In the eighteenth century the tangent piano spread throughout Europe, being referred to in Italy as the 'cembalo angelico' and in France as the 'clavecin harmonieux et céleste'. Franz Jacob Späth, a builder of pianos, clavichords and organs, was the most important of those producing tangent pianos in the second half of the eighteenth century: in 1751 he built one for the Elector of Bonn. As orders for his tangent pianos increased, he took his son-in-law, Christoph Friedrich Schmahl, into the business as a full partner. Their tangent pianos were the pride of some of the most eminent musicians of the day, including Mozart. Indeed, we read of Mozart in 1777 referring to the tangent piano as the 'Späthisches Klavier'.

By the early nineteenth century, Späth tangent pianos existed in many European countries, and now boasted a range of six octaves – but as the fortepiano was gaining in popularity over the harpsichord, so the tangent piano was also on the losing side. The instrument thus had only a short period of popularity, and it sank into obscurity around the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Some ten Späth and Schmahl tangents survive, dating from 1780 to 1801. They all have the same action and compass of five octaves, F^1 to f^3, but are of differing lengths, from 184 to 222 cm.

The tangent piano is an instrument whose strings are struck by freely moving narrow wooden posts resembling harpsichord jacks. Unlike the clavichord, where the tangent remains in contact with the string to keep the note sounding, the Tangentenflügel's tangent immediately leaves the string, allowing the string to vibrate freely. The instrument has an intermediate lever, increasing the velocity with which the jack-striking post is driven towards the strings. It offers much dynamic variation and has the advantage of combining the timbres and potential of other various keyboard instruments played in Bach's time: the instrument's treble range offers the brightness of a light-action piano, with its bass register occupying more of the sound world associated with the harpsichord. In addition, it is more powerful than most of the keyboard salon instruments of the time. Serving the new aesthetics of the period, the instrument offered a range of tone-altering devices, including an early damper system and a buff stop; players were now able to control the volume of sound by the strength with which they struck the keys. They could now engage the tangent piano's choice of timbres in playing that was highly expressive. It is easy to understand why this instrument, with its substantial expressive and coloristic potential, would appeal to Lubimov, who writes in his liner notes that the tangent piano