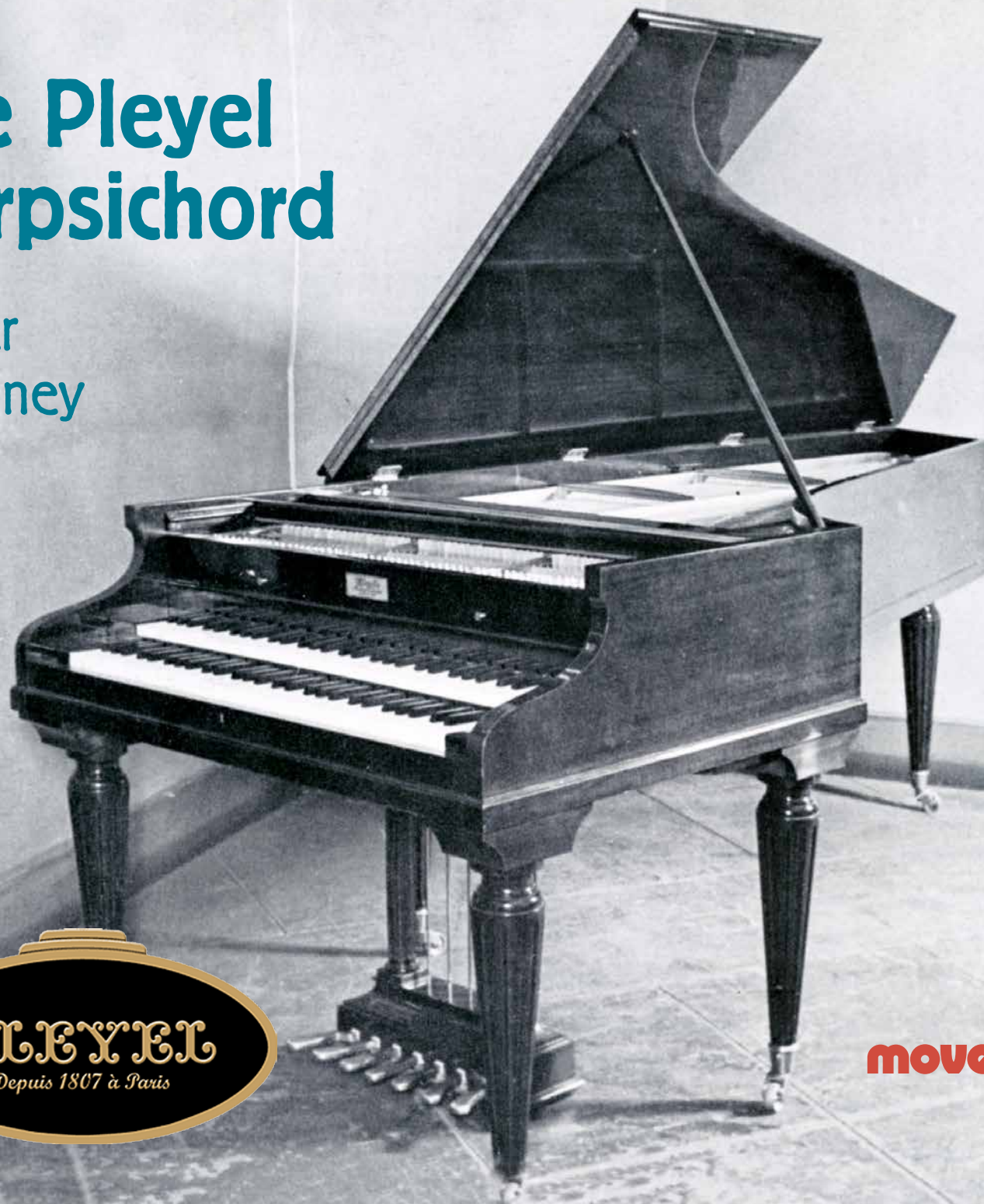


The Pleyel Harpsichord

Roger
Heagney



move

George Frederic Handel (1685–1759) Suite in A major

- 1** Präludium 2'06"
- 2** Allemande 3'36"
- 3** Courante 2'43"
- 4** Gigue 3'23"

Nicolas Le Bègue (1631–1702) Prelude en D la re sol

- 5** Prelude en D la re sol 2'09"
- 6** Allemande 3'09"
- 7** Courante - grave 1'36"
- 8** Courante - gaye 1'22"
- 9** Sarabande 2'20"
- 10** Gavotte 0'55"
- 11** Chaconne - grave 3'22"

Francois Couperin (1668–1733)

- 12** Les Baricades Mistérieuses (Sixième Ordre) 2'47"
- 13** Passacaille (Huitième Ordre) 6'55"

Baldassare Galuppi (1706–1785) Sonata in C minor

- 14** Larghetto 2'23"
- 15** Allegro 2'36"
- Sonata in C major
- 16** Andante 3'55"
- 17** Allegro 2'04"

The Pleyel 'Concert Grand Harpsichord' used for this recording was originally bought for the Canberra School of Music in 1965 by its founder and Director, Ernest Llewellyn. In the 1990s it was purchased by Melbourne based harpsichord maker Alastair McAllister, who restored it over the next several years. Importantly, it was revoiced with 'Delrin' plectra in place of the original leather used by Pleyel. Manufactured in 1963 this was one of the last harpsichords made by Pleyel although the company, which was founded in 1807, did continue to make pianos until its doors were closed for the last time on 14 January 2014.

Alastair prepared the harpsichord for Roger Heagney, who played it for his 'Harpsichord Masters' programme as a part of the 1998 Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpsichord. Many purists were surprised by its voice and variety of colours. As Roger said at the concert; "such an instrument should also be considered as historic". The instrument has 4 sets of strings, 2x8', 1x16', & 1x4', with a 'harp' stop for the upper manual and a manual coupler all of which are controlled by a set of seven pedals.

Known as the Grande Modèle de Concert, this harpsichord has the date of manufacture on its keyboards of 14 August 1963.

The old French piano making companies of Pleyel and Erard, together with one Louis Tomasini, motivated by the opportunity to display French technology to the world exhibited at the Paris exhibition of 1889 which, of course, marked the opening of the Eiffel tower. The three harpsichords exhibited were loosely based on a surviving Pascal Taskin harpsichord which had also been made in Paris in 1769, and so began the instrument's rebirth after almost one hundred years of neglect. Serendipitously, there was an increasing public interest in the performance of 'music of the past', so it was surely a timely renaissance.

The Polish keyboardist, Wanda Landowska, had eloped to Paris in 1900 and began her harpsichord playing career using early model Pleyels. Her memoirs record that she was soon to decide she wanted something more and she persuaded Pleyel's chief designer to go with her to museums and collections, to study their instruments. Eventually, after more than two years of work, Landowska played the new model

harpsichord, for the first time in public, at a concert given in Breslau, Poland, in 1912. Vastly different from an original instrument, it was provided with a full cast iron frame like a piano and was also equipped with overhead dampers and seven pedals, to enable register changes without taking ones hands from the keyboards. The plectra were all hard leather, and it boasted a 16' stop as well as an English style 'cut through lute' stop.

There are 4 sets of strings: 1x16', 2x8', and 1x4', plucked by five registers of jacks, two working from the upper manual and three from the lower manual. There is also a 'Buff' stop for the upper manual, and a manual coupler.

It has been described as the ultimate achievement of the piano-maker's art. Piano-like it may have been, but it was undeniably a harpsichord. It has been estimated that, over the next fifty years, Pleyel made as many as eighty such harpsichords; there exists an early model Pleyel in Canberra but this is the only concert grand known to be in Australia.

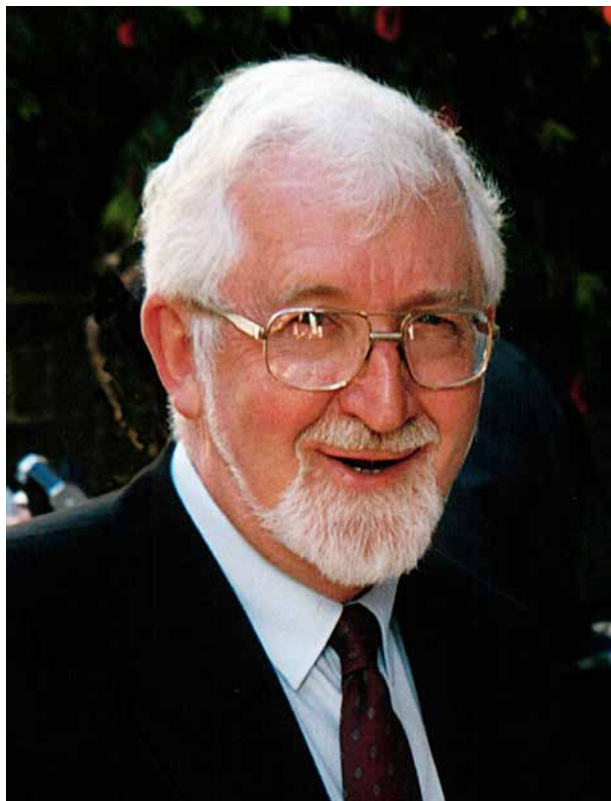
The restoration of this harpsichord, over two and a half years of spare time, involved (apart from a myriad other detail) a complete set of new jack tongues which have been voiced in delrin in place of the original leather. It is not

possible for the listener to determine the plectra material of a harpsichord from any distance, and it is perhaps still not clear cut even under the probing ears of the microphone.

However, the difference is sensed by the fingers of the player very readily indeed, and given the current fashion for authenticity, has perhaps made the instrument of more than passing interest to the historically minded performer.

Nothing of the grandeur of the sound has been compromised but the change of voicing material perhaps suggests some untapped possibilities for Pleyel, had they had the opportunity to take advantage of the development of such space age products as Delrin, Celcon, low tensile iron wire and so on. Sadly, such instruments are no longer being manufactured.

Alastair McAllister



Roger Heagney has gained an international reputation as a pianist, harpsichordist, conductor and composer giving recitals in Germany, France, England, Brunei and China, as well as festivals, radio and television in Australia.

He instituted the degree course in Church Music taught, until recently, as the Bachelor of Music at Australian Catholic University where he lectured in keyboard performance, music language studies, composition, choral training and conducting.

His keyboard teaching included several years as guest at the Canberra School of Music and at the Pan Pacific Music Camps in Sydney (2004/05/06). He has been a member of selection panels and adjudicator at many competitions.

During Heagney's 30 plus years as Director of Music at St Francis' Church, Melbourne, the St Francis' Choir gained a considerable reputation from numerous recordings, two overseas tours and its activity in commissioning and performing many new works by Australian composers. Many of his compositions have been for liturgical use. Since 2007, when Merlyn Quaife gave the Australian, European and

UK premieres of A Song Cycle written specially for her on texts by William Blake, he has collaborated with poet, Graeme Ellis. The result has been the song cycles Songs of Love and Death, Four Songs and Liederkreis. These have been recorded by the ABC under the title Fortune My Foe with Merlyn Quaife (Soprano) and Andrea Katz (Piano) and the CD released by Move Records.

His arrangements include Rhapsody in Blue and The Overture to Die Fledermaus for 8 pianos and realisations of some of the Bach Flute Sonatas recorded with Vernon Hill, Virginia Taylor and Jacqueline Johnson. A CD of 20th century piano trios by Shostakovich, Baran, Sculthorpe, Yu, and Copland is available from Move (MD 3176). In 1997 he received an OAM for services to music.

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