

move

The Virtuoso Harpsichord Jacqueline Ogeil



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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Fantasia et Fuga in d ("Cromatico", BWV 903)

- 1** Fantasia 6'00"
- 2** Fuga 5'30"

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

- 3** Sonata in C (K. 420) 5'11"
- 4** Sonata in C (K. 421) 4'15"
- 5** Sonata in a (K. 175) 3'59"
- 6** Sonata in C (K. 513) 5'10"

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Suite in B-flat

- 7** Prelude 1'57"
- 8** Sonata 1'59"
- 9** Air & Variations 4'23"

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

Troisième Concert

- 10** La Lapopliniere 4'35"
- 11** La Timide 8'15"
- 12** Tambourins 3'07"

Naji Hakim (b. 1955)

Suite: Shasta (5 Movements for Harpsichord)

- 13** Rondo 3'49"
- 14** Aria 2'16"
- 15** Capriccio 4'39"
- 16** Recitativo 1'19"
- 17** Toccata 3'59"



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The harpsichord was, in its heyday, equally at home in the three “styles” according to which music was traditionally divided: chamber, church and theatre. In all of these it was essentially an ensemble instrument, often just one of several instruments (which in larger ensembles might amount to a multiplicity of theorbos, harpsichords, regals and organs) making up the continuo section. Its solo use was limited to the chamber – that is, to home or court entertainment; and while it had a brief life on the stage with the rise of the public concert in the eighteenth century, it was soon to be ousted by the fortepiano (at a later stage in its development to be inverted to “pianoforte”), an instrument far more suitable to the concert hall on account of its greater dynamic abilities.

The harpsichord, intimate by nature, is nevertheless capable of a wide range of expression, including the flamboyant and virtuosic, aspects that were explored in the early seventeenth century by such virtuosi as Bull and Frescobaldi, and in the eighteenth by the great 1685 trio – Handel, Bach and Scarlatti – and Rameau. The revival of the harpsichord in our time has seen

renewed interest in composition for it, both as an ensemble and as a solo instrument, and Hakim is among those who have provided it with a new language.

Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* has been a favourite of pianists for well over a century, and the number of extant sources, regrettably none of which is an autograph, suggests that it may also have been a favourite in the Bach circle. From these copies it is also possible to learn something of the evolution of the work. There exists, for example, an alternative version of the opening of the fantasy, while many other sources contain a variety of alterations. The work probably reached its final overall shape by 1720, minor adjustments being made over the next decade or so. This places its composition slightly ahead of the first book of the “48” (completed in 1722), at a time when there was widespread interest in exploring the possibilities offered by well-tempered tuning following emancipation from the mean-tone temperament that had been the keyboard norm for the past two centuries. Pieces exploring the liberated tonal range and sets

of pieces traversing all major and minor keys were in vogue, and the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* demonstrates an assured handling of the enlarged tonal palette, moving with consummate ease, in the middle of the Fantasy, through the amazing tonal succession from A minor up a semitone to B-flat minor, then down a tone to A-flat minor, down another (involving the problems of enharmonic notation) to F-sharp minor, up a fifth to C-sharp minor, then down a tritone to G minor. No less astounding is the chromatic descent through an octave of diminished seventh chords at the close of the movement. The subject of the Fugue employs ten of the twelve semitones (Bach was to use all twelve in the B-minor fugue of the first book of the “48”), but otherwise this movement is more reserved in its tonal behaviour.

Scarlatti remains the most enigmatic of the three great keyboard composers born in 1685 despite a number of full-length studies devoted to his works. The chronology of his 555 sonatas is far from certain. The theory that most of the sonatas are to be performed in pairs has not gained universal acceptance. Neapolitan, Portuguese and Spanish elements as well as the influences of other composers are still being identified in his works. The *Sonatas in C* (K. 420 & 421) may be a pair. Both are characterized by insistent rhythmic patterns suggestive of dance, the first in duple time, the second triple. The extraordinary *Sonata in a* (K. 175) appears to stand alone. Its dissonances were too much for the editor Longo, who re-wrote them as consonances! The clearly defined second subject (E major in the first part, A major in the second) anticipates classical sonata form, and a strong Iberian dance flavour is evident, especially in the heavily dissonant transition sections before the second subject. The *Sonata in C* (K. 513), also uncoupled, is

one of a handful of pieces labelled “Pastorale”. It is unusual in structure, the binary shape containing two sections, Moderato and Molto allegro, with a characteristic 12/8



pastoral lilt in the first “half”, while the second “half” is an unrelated Presto in 3/8. Longo identified the theme of the second section as a Neapolitan Christmas song.

It is difficult to explain the neglect that Handel’s keyboard music has suffered. Winton Dean acknowledges that “the music is uneven in quality and often below that of Bach and Domenico Scarlatti in technical finish. The invention however often rises very high.” But even the eight great suites published in 1720, all of them well finished works and probably the only solo keyboard music printed with Handel’s consent (“because surreptitious and incoherent Copies of them had got Abroad”), find only occasional performances today. The *Suite in B-flat*, a three-movement work devoid of dances, was printed “surrepticiously” in 1719 by arch-pirate Roger of Amsterdam. Walsh’s 1733 London edition is almost certainly nothing more than an unauthorized print of the same material. The *Prelude* is an improvisatory piece featuring arpeggiando chords interspersed with passage-work of considerable virtuosity. The *Sonata* is a short concerto-like movement, ritornello in structure. The Air is a noble theme that was to inspire one of Brahms’s greatest piano works, his Variations

on a *Theme of Handel*, opus 24. Handel's own variations are far more modest but nevertheless finely cumulative in effect.

Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concerts* were published in Paris in 1741. The scoring is for harpsichord, violin (or flute) and viol (or second violin), in which form the pieces are ancestors of the piano trio. Alternatively all five *concerts* can be played as solo harpsichord works, in which guise, according to their composer, they "leave nothing to be desired". In order to accommodate solo harpsichord performance some movements, including *La Timide*, are printed in alternative versions, while Rameau's preface gives a few instructions for the solo performance of the two *Tambourins*. In most movements, however, including *La Lapopliniere*, the harpsichord part of the ensemble version is to serve also as the solo version. The *Troisième Concert* is probably the most popular of the set, though solo performance of anything other than the re-written *La Timide* is rare. This movement exhibits an enormous expressive range as well as keyboard writing that foreshadows later writing for the piano. *La Lapopliniere* is apparently a sketch of the financier

whose name is usually spelled "La Pouplinière". According to Cuthbert Girdlestone, Jean-Philippe Rameau: His Life and Work, "It has a waywardness, a lack of poise and of soul, a mingling of whimsicality and dryness, an alternation of original and commonplace bars, which correspond to what we know of the great man."

Haji Hakim was born in Beirut, Lebanon. A graduate of the École Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications de Paris, he studied organ and improvisation with Jean Langlais. At the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris he was awarded first prizes in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, analysis, organ, improvisation and orchestration. He went on to win first prizes in the international organ and improvisation competitions at Haarlem, Beauvais, Lyon, Nuremberg, St Alban's, Strasbourg and Rennes. As a composer his successes include the Prix de Composition des Amis de l'Orgue, Paris 1984, for his *Symphony in Three Movements*, and the first prize in the International Composition Competition for organ at Collegedale, Tennessee, in 1986 for *The Embrace of Fire*. Previously the organist of the Basilica of the Sacré-

Coeur, Hakim now holds the coveted position of organist at La Trinité, succeeding Messiaen, who was titulaire for over sixty years. The composer has provided the following information on *Shasta*: "This suite is conceived like an imaginary ballet in five movements. Rondo, Aria, Capriccio, Recitativo and Toccata alternate driving rhythms, percussive effects and expressive harmonic motives, around an obsessional rhythmic cell (long-long-short-long-long).

The Toccata recalls in its coda the refrain of the initial Rondo. The work was commissioned by the Alienor Harpsichord Composition Awards and was premiered in June 1987 by George Lucktenberg at the Carnegie Hall in New York." During study of the work with the composer in 1993 Hakim explained that he perceived the harpsichord as a percussive and harmonic instrument, capable of biting and scratching. The two main influences in the writing of *Shasta* were Messiaen (in particular the second mode of limited transposition, additive and non-retrogradable rhythms) and Gershwin (including quotes from popular songs).

Jacqueline Ogeil



Jacqueline Ogeil, born in Sydney in 1968, studied at the University of Melbourne, from which she graduated with Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education and Master of Music degrees. Her teachers have included Colin Tilney (Toronto, as the recipient of a Rotary International Foundation Scholarship, 1990-1991), Gustav Leonhardt (Amsterdam, 1993) and John O'Donnell (Melbourne). Her concerts have included numerous performances of Bach's "*Goldberg*" *Variations*, the first Melbourne performance of Manuel de Falla's *Harpichord Concerto* and the Australian première of Hakim's *Shasta*. She has performed in the Melbourne International Festival of Organ and Harpichord, as well as the Melbourne Fringe, Castlemaine, Port Fairy and Collins Street Festivals, recorded for the ABC and 3MBS, and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Trust award.

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