

Introduction

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The harpsichord has enjoyed a prominent role in virtually every musical style and genre for an almost unbroken period of 600 years. It is found as a solo instrument, in chamber ensembles, concertos, secular and sacred vocal works, and, more recently, in commercials, movies and television shows (*The Addams Family* being perhaps the best-known example). As a harpsichordist, I have long felt that we needed a comprehensive but user-friendly source of information about the instrument and its repertoire. I hope this book fulfills that need.

Written by the leading experts in the field, including many who come from or live in the countries of the national styles about which they are writing, it offers separate chapters on just about every aspect of the harpsichord, such as the history of the instrument and how to tune it, the role of the harpsichord in ensembles, its extensive use in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and almost every era or national style. Readers will find insights into the rich harpsichord traditions of England, the Netherlands, northern and southern Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. A separate chapter is devoted to Domenico Scarlatti, another discusses the role of the harpsichord in the life and music of J. S. Bach and Handel, and several authors take us to places that are not often associated with extensive harpsichord music and performance, such as Russia, the Nordic and Baltic countries, and colonial Spanish and Portuguese America. Our suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter will enable readers to explore the many subjects discussed in greater depth, and the appendices at the end of the book provides those who want to play the music with lists of composers, reliable editions, or original sources. In other words, let this book serve as a faithful companion for all who love the harpsichord and its music, and want to learn more about it, for many years to come.