

About the Harpsichord

This instrument was conceived with the purpose of addressing a new group of artistic, economic and portability requirements. The design is in the spirit of the XVI century International school, which survived in various forms through the XVII century. One beautiful example is the 1623 engraving by Marin Mersenne included in Frank Hubbard's *Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making* (Plate X). Antiques of this tradition have had little survival rate compared to the Franco-Flemish instruments of this time.

The harpsichord has 55 notes, with no chromatics in the bass. There are two eight foot registers strung entirely in brass. The keyboard transposes to three positions (A=392, 415 and 440). The dimensions are 68x31x7 1/4". The weight is 52 pounds. The finish is natural cherry panels with glazed borders on the case exterior and inside of the lid. The keywell is cherry and the keyboard has boxwood naturals with ebonized sharps.

Some important features deserve to be mentioned separately by way of example. Brass wire existed well before 1500 and is assumed to be the string material of the earliest proto-harpsichords in the mid-fifteenth century. The actual tensile strength of the wire remained unchanged until the nineteenth century. The 1623 Mersenne harpsichord appears to have all the characteristics of the brass International school, including sounding nut-bridges and 8' and 4' choirs. The bridge, in Italian fashion, is angled not curved in the bass. The case walls rest on the baseboard, without an Italian outer case. Overall, the shape can be considered more Flemish than Italian. These features seem to have been standardized by harpsichord builders throughout Europe for almost 150 years, which is the reason why this instrument, and therefore its modern counterpart, can be referred to as the International Harpsichord.

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presents

Julietta Alvarado

in a

Harpsichord Dedication Recital

Harpsichord by Willard Martin, 1992

Monday, April 19, 1993

8:15 pm

St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel, UST