



Tears

Harpichord Laments
of the Seventeenth Century

Ewald Demeyere

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Acknowledgements

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WILLIAM BYRD (ca. 1540-1623)

[1] **Lachrimae Pavan** (V) **6:29**

JOHANN JACOB FROBERGER (1616-1667)

[2] **Fantasia VI FbWV 206** (from Libro Secondo, 1649) (H) **4:58**

Partita VI FbWV 612 (from Libro Quarto, 1656) (H)

[3] **Lamento sopra la dolorosa perdita della Real M.stá di Ferdinando IV** **5:32**

[4] **Gigue** **1:28**

[5] **Courant** **1:45**

[6] **Sarabande** **1:56**

THOMAS TOMKINS (1572-1656)

[7] **A Sad Pavan for these Distracted Tymes** (V) **9:14**

LOUIS COUPERIN (ca. 1626-1661)

Suite in F Major (H)

[8] **Prélude** **3:35**

[9] **Allemande grave** **3:14**

[10] **Courante** **1:15**

[11] **Courante** **1:27**

[12] **Sarabande** **2:05**

[13] **Branle de Basque** **0:46**

[14] **Chaconne** **2:29**

[15] **Tombeau de Mr de Blancrocher** **4:31**

MELCHIOR SCHILDT (1592/3-1667)

[16] **Paduana Lagrima** (V) **6:43**

total time 57:33

(H = Harpsichord; V = Virginal)

Amongst the seventeenth-century harpsichord repertoire, the genre of pieces referring to a loss, whether or not the death of a person, takes a special place, and forms the leitmotif of this disc. These introspective pieces, actually being meditations or contemplations, achieve in a uniquely profound way an almost spiritual level.

John Dowland's *Lachrymae Pavan*, initially a lute piece which the composer reworked as a lute song to the words *Flow my Tears* and as a consort piece, enjoyed great popularity in the seventeenth century. In fact, it occurs in more than one hundred manuscripts or prints in a variety of arrangements. For this CD I have included two of the finest of those transcriptions, by William Byrd and by Melchior Schildt. Byrd was one of the most influential composers of his generation, in his time called a *Father of Musick*

and *Britannicae Musicae Parens*. After having been organist at the Lincoln Cathedral (1563-72), Byrd joined the Chapel Royal in London, where he remained until his death. Amongst his many keyboard works, Byrd was particularly active in producing the often connected pair of dances, the pavan and galliard, much favoured at the time. Characteristic of the form of these dances is that both contain three sections, each of which is repeated mostly in varied form. In contrast to Byrd, Melchior Schildt is a rather unknown figure today. A pupil of Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck, Schildt worked as an organist at the Marienkirche in Wolfenbüttel (1623-26), at the Danish court in Copenhagen (1626-29) and at the Marktkirche in Hanover (1629-67). Amongst his surviving keyboard works, the *Paduana Lagrima* takes a special place. Just like Byrd's version, Schildt's setting of Dowland's

Lachrymae Pavan fully respects the sorrow and melancholy of the original, even if Schildt has incorporated unusual technical features such as runs in double thirds.

Besides occupying a post as organist at Worcester cathedral (1596-1646), Thomas Tomkins, a student of Byrd, became one of the last members of Chapel Royal in 1620-21 before Charles I would be beheaded on 30 January 1649. Although not being an arrangement of Dowland's signature song, Tomkins's *Sad Pavan for these Distracted Tymes* sets the same, or possibly an even darker, tone than that of *Flow my Tears*. Written in the old contrapuntal style, this piece dated 14 February 1649 expresses musically the sorrow which Tomkins, obviously a royalist, must have felt after the execution of Charles I. This piece therefore is completely devoid of any flamboyant or virtuosic

elements, consisting instead of predominantly long notes and many appoggiaturas. Whereas Tomkins did not actually provide variations for each section and did not indicate that each section should be repeated, I do perform this piece including varied repeats of the three sections, as was the custom for pavans. Because of the elegiac character of *A Sad Pavan*, however, I keep the degree of variation in the repeats fairly modest and on a contrapuntal rather than on a more instrumental level.

Born and raised in Stuttgart, Johann Jacob Froberger went to Vienna around 1634, where, from 1637 to 1657 but with interruptions, he held the post of organist at the imperial court. Those interruptions were due to the many travels and sojourns Froberger undertook throughout Europe, two of which undoubtedly had a profound influence on his

composing methods. Firstly, from 1637 to 1641 Froberger went to Rome to study with Girolamo Frescobaldi, where he must have been taught how to compose *toccate* and polyphonic pieces such as *ricercari*, *fantasie*, *canzone* and *capricci*. Secondly, in 1651 and again 1652 his many travels brought him to Paris where he met, amongst others, the lutenists Denis Gaultier and Charles Fleury – Sieur de Blancrocher, and most likely also Jacques Champion de Chambonnières and Louis Couperin, visits which allowed him to absorb the French style fully.

Froberger wrote almost exclusively for the keyboard, resulting in four *Libri*, the first and third of which have unfortunately been lost, and a *Libro di Capricci e Ricercati* (ca. 1658). On this disc I play the *Fantasia* FbWV 206 from his *Libro Secondo* (1649) and what we might call the

sixth partita FbWV 612 from his *Libro Quarto* (1656) – Froberger did not provide a unifying title for the dances which form a group. This partita is one the most famous compositions by Froberger due to its splendid opening piece, *Lament on the sad loss of His Royal Majesty FERDINAND IV, King of the Romans*, which replaces the usual *allemande*. The eldest son of Ferdinand III and successor to the throne, Ferdinand IV died unexpectedly in 1654. His early death aged under 21 undoubtedly explains Froberger's choice of both the 'virtuous' key of C major and the ascending scale over three octaves at the very end of the piece, the latter unquestionably representing the ascent of the soul of Ferdinand IV to heaven. The score of the *Lamento*, for that matter, is illustrated with symbols of death (including two putti leaning on tombstones with an hourglass between them). Since the three

other movements are also similarly decorated with an urn, a cross, a wreath etc., we might assume that the entire partita was actually conceived as a tribute to the dead King. For that reason, I have tended to play both the *gigue* and the *courante* in a more dignified manner than I would have done for any regular, that is to say non-programmatic, partita.

Although Froberger's *Fantasia* FbWV 206 has no programme, its main subject opening, with an ascending minor sixth followed by a descending diminished fourth and the generally slow note values, sets a rather dark tone, perfectly suiting the theme of this disc.

The way Louis Couperin, an uncle of François Couperin *le Grand*, became a member of the musical staff of the French court is quite remarkable. Growing up with his two brothers

François and Charles in the small town of Chaumes-en-Brie, Louis was discovered by the father of the French school of harpsichord playing, Jacques Champion de Chambonnières. According to Evrard Titon du Tillet, a French man of letters, the three Couperin brothers had decided to present Chambonnières with a dawn serenade. Chambonnières was apparently so impressed with the quality of Louis Couperin's compositions that he proposed to introduce him to Paris and at court. Subsequently Louis, who became Chambonnières's pupil, was appointed organist at the church of Saint-Gervais in Paris, one of the most prestigious posts in France at that time, and a court viol player.

Notwithstanding that Couperin's two main positions were that of an organist and a viol player – two instruments for which he did compose – the bulk

of his compositions were written for the harpsichord, and consisted of preludes and dances. It would appear that Louis Couperin did not organize his pieces into fixed suites. The main source for his harpsichord music, the Bauyn manuscript, presents the dances arranged by ascending key, and within each key they are further arranged for the most part by the type of dance (for instance, six allemandes in C major follow each other in this manuscript). As for the *préludes non mesurés* (see also below), they all appear before the dances and are arranged by ascending key. Although another manuscript containing a considerable number of Couperin's harpsichord pieces, the Parville manuscript, does present those pieces in a slightly more practical order, this cannot by any means represent the intention of the composer. Consequently, as was the custom in seventeenth-century

France, we seem to be invited by Couperin to assemble suites as we like.

For this disc I have compiled a suite in F major culminating in the famous *Tombeau de Mr de Blancrocher*, the Paris lutenist who suddenly lost his life in 1652, a tragic event inspiring several composers (including Froberger among others) to write a *tombeau* in his memory. Consequently, I have chosen to start 'my' suite with what seems to be the perfect *prélude non mesuré*, the one opening with the same melodic gesture as the *Tombeau*, and therefore suggesting, in my opinion, an equally introspective interpretative approach. A *prélude non mesuré* is a typically seventeenth-century French type of prelude written down without time signature and regular rhythms. In the case of Couperin only semi-breves are used in combination with

slurs, the latter mostly suggesting how long a certain note should be held or which notes should together form a chord or a melodic gesture. Because of the elegiac character of the opening and end pieces of 'my' suite, I thought the *Allemande grave*, the only allemande we have by Couperin with that description, would form the ideal choice to follow the *tombeau-prélude*.

Ewald Demeyere



Virginal "Mother and Child" built by Jef Van Boven (Ekeren 2006) after models by Andreas Ruckers.

Photo © Alfons Condes



Harpsichord built by Alan Gotto (Norwich 2012, Korneel Berolet collection) after the anonymous Austrian(?) instrument (c.1680) in the London Courtauld Institute.

Photo © 2012 Alan Gotto

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Ewald Demeyere

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A&R Challenge Records International: Wolfgang Reihing

Liner notes: Ewald Demeyere

Translation: Christopher Cartwright

Booklet editing: Marike Hassler

Cover photo: Hans Morren

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