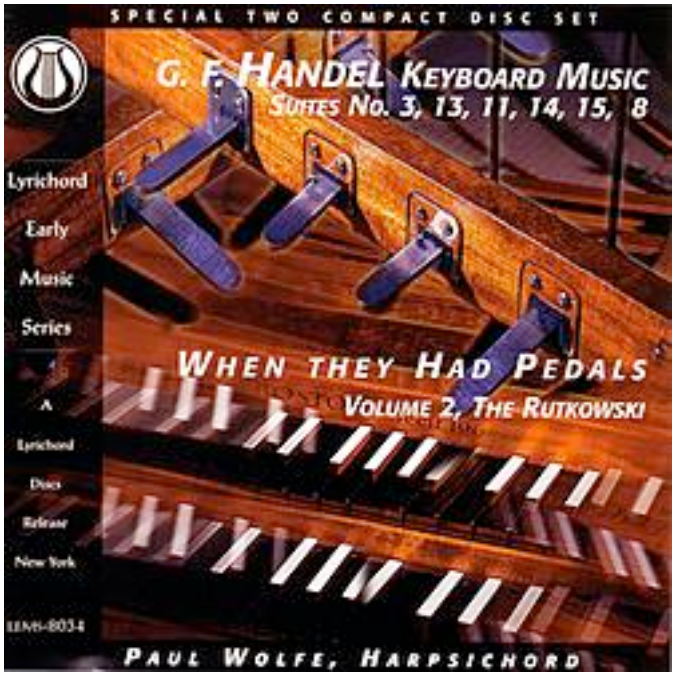

(LEMS 8034)

LEMS 8034

WHEN THEY HAD PEDALS, VOLUME 2

TWO DISCS
The Rutkowski
Handel Suites
Paul Wolfe, Harpsichord

CONTENTS OF DISC ONE
Handel Suites
Suite 3 No. 3 in D minor
1. Prelude 1:39
2. Fugue 2:38
3. Allemande 4:24
4 Courante 2:03
5. Air & Variations 9:19
6. Presto 5:16
Suite No. 13 in B flat minor
7. Allemande 2:06
8. Courante 1:38
9. Sarabande 3:00
10. Gigue 1:24

Suite No.11 in D minor
11. Allemande 2:59
12. Courante 1:47
13. Sarabande Variée 6:41
14. Gigue :57

When They Had Pedals (the Rutkowski)
Handel Suites
Paul Wolfe, Harpsichord

CONTENTS OF DISC TWO
Handel Suites
Suite No. 14 in G major
1. Allemande 1:55
2. Allegro 2:29
3. Courante 3:14
4. Air 1:35
5. Minuette 2:12
6. Gavotte Variée 3:31
7. Gigue 2:37
Suite No. 15 in D minor
8. Allemande 2:29
9. Courante 2:13
10. Sarabande 2:09
11. Gigue 1:10
Suite No. 8 in F minor
12. Prelude 2:48
13. Fugue 2:47
14. Allemande 2:48
15. Courante 2:21
16. Gigue 2:18

"WHEN THEY HAD PEDALS"
Harpsichord pedals are levers pressed by the foot for the purpose of engaging or disengaging the stops (or registers) of the instrument. In antique harpsichords this function was usually accomplished by hand levers, but the universal adoption of register-controlling pedals was a distinguishing feature of instruments built during the first half-century or so of the harpsichord revival. In 1888 the first "modern" instruments, by the French piano manufacturers Erard and Pleyel, had them. Arnold Dolmetsch added them to the instruments built under his direction for Chickering's in Boston (1906-11). America's first native builders in the 1930s and 40s -- John Challis, Julius Wahl, Claude Jean Chiasson -- made them standard equipment, as did the next generation of builders --

Christopher Bannister, Frank Rutkowski, and, early on, Frank Hubbard and William Dowd. The most popular imported European instruments by Pleyel, Neupert, Maendler-Schramm, Wittmayer, and Sperrhake all had pedals.

Pedals afforded the opportunity for players to change the timbres
emanating from the instrument without having to lift their hands from the keyboards; this helped listeners used to the extreme dynamic variations of the piano to overcome any innate sense that the harpsichord was a monotonous instrument. It was also a "sound of the times" -- something comparable to the frequent changes of orchestral color associated both with turn-of-the-century musical impressionism and the emerging experiments of the serial composers.

Since the best-known of 20th-century harpsichordists, the diminutive Wanda Landowska (1879-1959) played a large Pleyel instrument, the public came to equate this style of instrument and playing with its concept of "harpsichord". No one was more persuasive as a polemicist for the harpsichord than Mme. Landowska. Asserting that "her way" was "Bach's way" she gradually won over those who doubted that earlier music should be played on its intended instrument, even though her particular "intended" harpsichord sounded at least as much like a "plucked piano" as
it did an 18th-century prototype.

The importance accorded to the pedals and to changes of registration in harpsichord-playing at this time was nowhere more evident than in the first 20th-century harpsichord method, Technique du Clavecin, by Rgina Patorni-Casadesus (Paris, 1931). All eight pages of this instruction booklet dealt with the proper use of the pedals found on the Pleyel harpsichord, exercises for their smooth employment, and, as final essay, eight measures of music with several suggested schemes for effective registrational colors.

In Paul Wolfe's first recordings of early Italian and early English
music (When they Had Pedals, Vol 1, LEMS-8033) we find ourselves aurally close to the early years of the harpsichord revival, for the instrument on which he recorded these works is a striped zebra-wood Pleyel from 1907. Between the Ionic columns which form the legs of the instrument's stand is a lyre containing six pedals. These pedals worked in reverse to those of most harpsichord makers: off when down, on when raised. The registers engaged and disengaged by these devices include two sets of strings for the lower keyboard (one at unison pitch, one an octave higher). The upper keyboard controlled one unison stop which could be plucked by two different sets of plectra, one of which gave a more nasal sound. A set of tiny dampers, known as a buff (or lute) stop, could be engaged with this set of strings to create a dry, pizzicato sound; and there was a mechanical coupling device to allow both keyboards to be played together. The plectra which pluck the strings were of hardened leather.

In the magnificent nine-foot concert instrument by Frank Rutkowski,
utilized by Wolfe for his later recordings of the Handel Suites, a set

of deep-toned sub-unison strings (known, from organ terminology, as the "sixteen-foot stop") has been added to the palette of tonal
possibilities, following the example of Landowska's large concert Pleyel instruments, which included this stop at her request, beginning in 1912.

When Wolfe's recordings were made in the 1950s the repertoire must have seemed quite daring: not the magisterial Bach preferred by his teacher, the great Landowska, but complete albums of 17th-century works and often-ignored masterpieces by Bach's leading contemporary from the 18th! Subsequently the expansion of the recorded repertoire continued; however no-one could have predicted that, within a few years of these recordings, this style of harpsichord and such colorful playing would be replaced by a more restrained performing tradition on historical copy instruments. Based more and more carefully on surviving early harpsichords, these instruments replaced the ubiquitous leather plectra with quill or quill-substitute (Delrin plastic) and did away with pedals, reverting to hand levers. Playing the historically-based instruments introduced by Hubbard and Dowd in America and Martin Skowroneck in Germany, harpsichordists of the post-Landowska generation led the listening public "kicking and screaming" back to the 18th century.

For many listeners today, hearing Paul Wolfe's recordings will be an
introduction to the kaleidoscopic style of playing which helped the
harpsichord regain a place with the musical public. For others of us, it is a reminder of "how things were" when we first heard this resurrected relic of the past. It allows us to relive a bit of our first infatuation with the instrument and the excitement of discovering this new old music. Historians may tell us, quite rightly, that antique harpsichords were never like this: thus it was, in an attempt to recover the past, that a new instrument -- unique, individual, and quite different from its model -- was created. Despite, or perhaps because of, its differences, it became, often, a worthy medium for impassioned music-making. Listen, and enjoy!

-- Larry Palmer

LARRY PALMER, head of Harpsichord and Organ studies in the Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, is author of HARPSICHORD IN AMERICA: A 20TH-CENTURY REVIVAL (Indiana University Press, 1989/1993) and an active recitalist and recording artist.

PAUL WOLFE, born in Waco, Texas, majored in music at the University of Texas, from which he received his Master's Degree in 1950. After that, he studied piano with Webster Aiken, and harpsichord with Denise Restout and Madame Wanda Landowska. Mr. Wolfe

has been on the faculty of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, and appeared in concerts in many eastern universities and in New York City. He recorded several LPs for Experiences Anonymes in the 1950's. Mr. Wolfe currently lives in New Mexico.

PERFORMER'S NOTES
(reprinted from the original LP-release booklet.)
The available editions of Handel's Suites are generally inadequate—some indeed are unusable. I have been unable to find two which agree textually. Many editions which undoubtedly were prepared either in the last quarter of the past century or in a time grossly influenced by that era present the ornamentation written out almost always incorrectly and with such complexity that one is at a loss to discover the original. These editions also alter the text by adding notes in a manner outside Baroque practices (sometimes even changing the harmonic progression) to an extent that renders them physically impossible without a sustaining pedal—a devise foreign to Handel and the harpsichord. Perhaps the most notable in this group is that published by Augener. The new Bärenreiter, the Kalmus, and the Peters belong to what I consider the usable group of editions. To say that in preparing these recordings I used one edition would be false. I can only say that I used the printed pages of the Peters because the text there is fairly uncluttered and the spacing allowed me room to write in material which I found logical from the Kalmus, the Bärenreiter, and a few other editions. I make no claims for the finality of my conclusions; I do, of course, believe them to be reasonable.

As the historical and analytical notes on this music and Handel's performance practices state, improvisation was considered essential. I have attempted to follow this tradition — as its nature indicates — where either fancy or the music itself led me.

-- PAUL WOLFE

THE SUITE
The development of the suite presents an extremely interesting example of international cooperation, with Italy, France, Germany, Spain and England each making major contributions. Its origin is thought to lie in the combination of two dances, one in duple and one in triple time, a practice common in the I6th century (the familiar combinations Pavane-Galliard and Passamezzo Saltarello), and perhaps of more significance in the combination of three or more dances to be played in succession found in 16th century lute books. As the idea of a suite as a form evolved, each composer and country injected new ideas. It is interesting that the French, who contributed so many of the dances and so much of their eventual refinement, had little interest in the suite as a unit. By Handel's

time the suite was expanded to include non-dance movements (Fugue, Air, Passacaglia, etc.), but the basic idea of the form remained.

The suite is a comic form, in the old and grand sense of that word, the sense that Shakespeare intended when he called his plays comedies. In this form the opening is sad or doubtful (Prelude or Allemande), then, through a series of brilliant and complex workouts (Courante, Sarabande, and occasion ally Gavotte or Minuet), the whole is brought to a happy conclusion (Gigue). The brilliance of the form lies, of course, in the range and play of the center movements, one against the other.

One of the most important reasons for Handel's pre-eminence among late baroque composers is that he was able to maintain the comic sense and form in all of its grandness and complexity half way through a century that saw its virtual disappearance from Western Europe.

-- PAUL WOLFE and SAVILLE CLARK

HANDEL AND HIS SUITES FOR HARPSICHORD

George Frederick Handel was born in Halle, Germany, February 23, 1685, son of an official surgeon to the Dukes of Saxe-Merseburg and the Electors of Brandenburg. At the same time as he received his general education, Handel studied music with Zachau, then organist of St. Mary's Church, Halle. He made such progress that in 1697 he became Assistant Organist, and in 1702 Organist of the Cathedral Church of his native city. But he had already had a glimpse of court life in Berlin, and after only a year in his new post he left behind him the narrow world of the organ loft and journeyed to Hamburg, where he learned his métier as an operatic composer and worked with such men as Keiser and Mattheson.

The period in Hamburg was to be only one of a long series of travels and sojourns at cities and courts throughout Europe. In 1706 Handel went to Italy, writing operas, either real or thinly-disguised, and appearing as organist and harpsichordist in Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice. The Duke of Manchester, English Ambassador to Venice, tried to interest him in the possibility of settling in England, and Handel eventually accepted his advice even though he felt bound at first to attach himself to the court of George, Elector of Hanover. He soon obtained leave to visit England, but returned to Hanover until 1712. The second visit to England was in fact a final removal: Handel never returned to take up his court appointment in Hanover, but instead his royal patron followed him to England—as King George I.

Once he had settled in England, Handel left the country only on rare occasions, to find singers in Germany and Italy, to seek a cure for paralysis at Aix-la Chapelle, or to essay the musical receptivity of the Dublin populace. His early years were for the most part taken up with the production of opera and music for state occasions. In 1717 he

succeeded Pepusch as Master of the Chapel to the Duke of Chandos, but two years later he began a lengthy series of operatic ventures in London, the first of which was the formation of a Royal Academy of Music, supported by the King, the Earl of Burlington, and the Duke of New castle. Handel became a naturalized Englishman in 1726. As time went on he became increasingly interested in oratorio, and though his operatic successes and failures did not immediately cease, they slowly made way for the splendid succession of oratorios by which he eventually became known throughout the English-speaking world. He died in London April 14, 1759, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Handel's ability as a harpsichordist was often the subject of praise and approval, and even though his Suites (or 'Lessons' as they were sometimes called) do not perhaps represent his own performances at the instrument, they afford plentiful evidence of a vigorous and characteristic keyboard style. The Valesio Diary mentions Handel as an excellent player of the harpsichord when he visited Rome in 1707, and Mainwaring's generally accepted account of the meeting with Scarlatti is echoed by Dreyhaupt, the Halle historiographer, who recalls in 1750 Handel's "great skill and technical device in playing the harpsichord, greatly admired even by the Italians." Handel's friend Mattheson is generous in praising his brilliant style, and even when blindness afflicts ~;he great composer we find Sir Edward Turner writing to an acquaintance that "noble Handel hath lost an eye, but I have the rapture to say that St. Cecilia makes no complaint of any defect in his fingers."

In 1720, when the first book of Suites was published, Handel's prowess was spoken of by English visitors to Germany, by Lord Carteret, for example, who met Mattheson in Hamburg and agreed that Handel played the harpsichord in a beautiful and finished manner. In England, Handel sometimes played his Suites at social gatherings: Mrs. Pendarves, writing to her sister Ann Granville, mentions one such occasion when Handel "was in the best humor in the world, and played lessons and accompanied Strada and all the ladies that sang from seven o'the clock till eleven." In a later note she mentions that her brother has presented her with a copy of "Handel's Book of Lessons."

In November 1720 an oblong folio volume of 94 pages, containing eight Suites, was advertised in the Daily Courant and duly put on sale in two London music-shops. Handel's prefatory note reads: "I have been obliged to publish some of the following Lessons, because surreptitious and incorrect copies of them had got abroad. I have added several new ones to make the work more useful, which if it meets with a favorable reception I will still proceed to publish more, reckoning it my duty, with my small talent, to serve a nation from which I have received so generous a protection." The incorrect copies which Handel mentions had at that time already appeared in Amsterdam, and in spite of the London edition sanctioned by the composer another pirated reprint appeared in Le Cene's catalogues. Walsh reprinted Book I in 1732, and issued Book II in the following year, while in 1735 and 1736 approved editions came out in Amsterdam and Paris respectively.

It has sometimes been said that Handel wrote his Suites especially for his royal pupils,

the Princess Royal (Anne), Princess Amelia and Princess Caroline, for the supervision of whose musical education he received a salary of 200 pounds per annum. But there is no proof of this, for his appointment as music master at court did not apparently begin until eight years after the Suites were published. The fame of the first volume traveled rapidly to Germany, where it was mentioned in J. G. Walther's Dictionary in 1732 and in Jakob Adlung's Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelartheit as "among the best harpsichord music" in 1758.

DENIS STEVENS

The harpsichord used for this recording was designed and built especially for Mr. Wolfe by Frank Rutkowski, Stony Creek, Connecticut. It has two manuals (with a range of 5 octaves and two notes) and seven pedals. Lower manual: 4', 8', 16', and coupler. Upper manual: 8', 8' lute, and buff. The overall length is nine feet.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

The process of rediscovering vital, legendary performances hibernating in the oxide of high-quality, early master tapes, is a thrill that I have been fortunate enough to have had several times in the last few years. These performances, carefully committed at 30 ips to tape in late 1950's by the eminent engineer Jerry Newman, and then re-mastered with an equal amount of care and experience by Doug Pomeroy in the late 1990's, are among the first stereo recordings ever made. That they now allow us to hear these exceptional performances with such stunning fidelity is a testament to the skill of both the recordist, and the mastering engineer who freed these musical genies. If this were all there were to it, I would be quite satisfied, but in the case of these recordings there is even more.

We find ourselves at a small but rare moment in history. It is a moment when bulk of opinion about the harpsichords that dominated a good part of this century–with all their myriad of complex "bells and whistles" for coloring sound and modulating dynamics–need no longer be voiced with such declamations as "they were an historical aberration!" or "they were just plain wrong!". We have just slipped into the luxury of historical perspective, so that now, the foremost aspect of these instruments is simply that "they were". The Pleyels and Challis's of another generation, with all their latter day doo-dads of pedals, couplers, 16' stops, metal soundboards or other "improvements", are now part of history, as surely as are those instruments played by Bach, Handel and Scarlatti. That these modern instruments came into being at all is a fascinating and complicated story that is only now beginning to be more fully explored and understood. We do know that it is a story that is as much about this century's steadfast relationship to the piano as the principal instrument of Western music, as it is to the design and construction realities of keyboards of the more distant past.

A good deal of this story is told in Larry Palmer's wonderful book, The Harpsichord in America, a book that probably should be required reading to anyone even remotely interested in keyboard music and instruments.

The actual harpsichord shown in Daryl Solomon's dramatic de-constructed cover photograph is neither a Pleyel or a Rutkowski, but is in reality an instrument built in 1967 by Eric Herz of Boston, and owned by the Manhattan School of Music. I think it is fitting that this instrument is depicted here, because it is a 1969 Herz harpsichord that is played so brilliantly by Robert Edward Smith on the Wildboar recording of Bach, entitled Harpsichord in the Grand Manner (#WLBR9501). This wonderful CD, which dramatically documents what is likely the final chapter in the evolution of twentieth century pedal harpsichords, might also be required listening for anyone interested in the history of the harpsichord in this century.
-- NICK FRITSCH, Lyrichord Discs, July, 1998

CREDITS
Special Thanks to Larry Palmer, Doug Pomeroy Daryl Solomon, David Skolnik and The Manhattan School of Music, Richard Troeger, Beverly Merrill, Kathryn Cok, and to Jeffrey Dooley, for his invaluable help, advice, and enthusiasm for this project.
Produced by Nick Fritsch
Cover photograph by daryle solomon
Cover and booklet design, Gudrun Cram-Drach
Original LP versions produced by Beverly Merrill and Saville Clark, circa 1957

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