

[Producer Don Pash] Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome once again to Encore. It is a pleasure to have with us this evening Dr. Ernst Victor Wolff, internationally renowned harpsichordist and pianist. Dr. Wolff is head of the piano department here at Michigan State College. Dr. Wolff, welcome to our program. It is a real pleasure to have you with us. And now I'm going to sit back and listen to a very fine half hour of harpsichord music.

[Dr. Ernst Wolff] Thank you Mr. Pash. I want to give you a few explanations about the specific qualities of the harpsichord. It is generally known as a predecessor of the piano. That's a very misleading notion because it has practically nothing to do with the piano except that it has a keyboard which activates this mechanism. I'm going to sit down at the harpsichord and want to show you what all these pedals are there for. If I strike one key, I get just one tone. That's like with the piano. Now, if I put in a whole additional set of strings, I get two tones, in this case the upper octave that comes with it. Now with another stop pedal I add the lower octave then I can mix all three. In this case by striking down one key I activate three different strings. You might wonder about the two keyboards, too. This is only an additional facility to use any single colors represented by stops independently. So I can play one color on the upper keyboard, I use the lute, and play against it on the lower keyboard a plain melody. [Dr. Wolff demonstrating on harpsichord] In order to give you a variety of examples of specific harpsichord literature I have chosen three sonatas by the Italian Scarlatti to begin with. Now these sonatas have only one movement. They are short pieces. The character of the first sonata is a festive one approximately written in the style of a Handel overture for orchestra.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

You will have noticed or be thinking of the piano after all how different the mechanism is with this instrument. The strings here are plucked whereas the strings of the piano are struck but the harpsichord has been accused of not being able of real legato playing. In order to prove to the contrary i'm going to play the next sonata by Scarlatti which is a very lyrical pastoral piece.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

The third and last piece of this group is a typical example of the floret style which harpsichordists preferred.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

Scarlatti was the greatest Italian harpsichordist as a composer and performer. He was by chance born the same year as Bach and Handel were born and now I want to give you a composition by a French composer who was just two years older than the rest of them. The French were known for preference to program music and this piece by Jean -Philippe Rameau is called La Poule, The Hemp. It's a typical picture of Barnyard Light

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

The third composer for our program tonight is George Frederick Handel. So we get a representative not only of a third but of the third and the fourth country because he belonged just as much to England as to Germany where he was born. I will play for

you parts of one of his 16 suites which he wrote for harpsichord. The first is an aria with variations. I'll play you the aria first- a typical example for the florid ornamentation which was very significant for all 18th century music and the preceding century.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

This aria is followed by a set of variations which are not as remarkable as the aria itself; they just serve to develop the playfulness which comes naturally with the harpsichord.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

Now the final piece of the same suite.

[Dr. Wolff playing harpsichord]

[Don Pash] Dr. Wolff, I want to thank you for a very fine harpsichord program. It has been a real pleasure to have you with us this evening and now I would like to extend a special invitation for you to come back again sometime I hope in the near future. At that time perhaps for a piano recital because many of us have heard you play piano recitals and we would like to have you here on Encore or on any other programs here at WKAR-TV. And now ladies and gentlemen next week at this very same time we will have as our special guest Mr. Romeo Tata, violinist, and Mr. Joseph Evans, pianist. And in succeeding weeks we are going to present an opera. The opera will be the Alec Wilder one-act opera, Excursion, and another precursor of the piano will be presented in the weeks to come. Mr. Howard Silber of the Music Department here at Michigan State College will present a program of clavichord music. We have other programs planned for you for the spring quarter beginning in April. Piano recitals, instrumental recitals, and I invite you all to be tuned to WKAR-TV at eight o'clock each Sunday evening for these programs. And so, until next week at this very same time, I thank you and good night.

[Outro music playing]

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