

SCHERBAKOV: Well let's face it, raising your voice while telling intimate things in order to be heard in the back rows would be absurd in any music! And I certainly have no experience of halls which aren't up to accommodating any pianissimo. 'Pronunciation', if I can use that term in this context, is the only thing that matters. From this point of view there's really no limit in using piano and pianissimo. If the message is clear, it will always carry.

SUDBIN: In fact, *under*-projection is the problem a pianist is more likely to encounter with Scarlatti, especially if one attempts to imitate the harpsichord on the modern piano which would have a deflating effect on the music. In fact, even Horowitz, one of the greatest masters of colour and articulation, surprisingly felt somewhat inhibited when he first approached Scarlatti. If I remember correctly, it was none other than Kirkpatrick himself who encouraged Horowitz to play more freely and not be too academic or overly cautious. Ironically, pianists often end up being more closed-minded than period instrumentalists when it comes to Scarlatti. In Russia, at the time when I studied there, using pedal in Scarlatti (and Bach) was a taboo. This seemed to me incomprehensible; it was like an apologetic gesture, signalling that though the piece was not being played on a period instrument, shunning the pedal and playing everything detached and mezzo-piano would somehow make it all better. In my opinion, there should be no shame for the pianist taking full advantage of all the tools that the modern piano has to offer. This includes a robust projection of sound, pedalling or manipulation in articulation, as long, of course, as it doesn't lead to caricature. Why choke the natural voice of an instrument in mistaken respect for the wrong kind of traditions? Arguably, and fortunately, there aren't that many traditions (if any) in the performance of Scarlatti's music. That in itself is among its great attractions.

JS: How much do you think of the piano in terms of other instruments (instruments other than the harpsichord)? Scarlatti obviously did. Do you ever 'orchestrate' the music in your head?

SUDBIN: No. I try to 'orchestrate' it *on the piano* as much as I can instead!

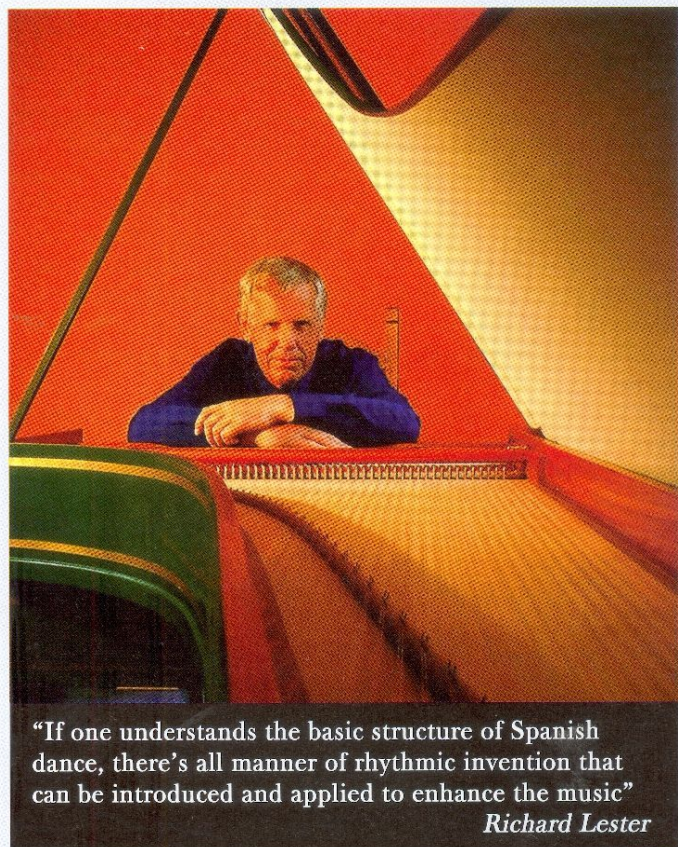
KATIN: I never orchestrate anything in my head! We're talking about the transition from harpsichord to piano. For me that's 'orchestration' enough.

FRITH: Many of the sonatas constantly suggest shifting groups of instruments – duos, trios, tutti etc – the writing explains itself and orchestral colours are as evident as in an early Beethoven piano sonata. Scarlatti's brass and percussion are very exciting – and maybe it's a good thing to keep the orchestral thoughts within an intellectual context since the fingers may overdo things!

SCHERBAKOV: It's a matter of definition. If we're speaking of 'orchestrating' as a method of actually imitating other instruments – no, I don't do it. However, if we're talking about voicing the texture – yes, I do. Absolutely. I do it always, and not only playing Scarlatti but *any* composer's work. There's no more rewarding experience than to give a score a multi-layer depth. We're playing the piano, after all! 'Orchestrating' a piano score in the most direct sense of the word can be frustrating because it will never prove satisfactory. I learned a lot about this while playing Beethoven's symphonies in the transcriptions by Liszt. Every attempt to 're-orchestrate' this music on the piano or actually to imitate an orchestra would be doomed to fail. The only possible solution is to 'orchestrate' the sonorities of the piano, in its own terms, by using the main principles of polyphony: maximum differentiation of all the voices and layers which make up the texture – and total integration of the dynamics, articulation and phrasing. The guitars or drums or small groups of instruments that are often heard in Scarlatti's music are easily depicted and can be very clearly transmitted by the modern piano.

JS: Are there valuable lessons for the pianist in the nature of Scarlatti's 'transcendence' of the harpsichord's limitations? Can the harpsichordist, ironically, here enhance the pianist's grasp of pianism?

SUDBIN: Interesting observation. I think it should (and hopefully does) work both ways. When I worked on the harpsichord in search of the



"If one understands the basic structure of Spanish dance, there's all manner of rhythmic invention that can be introduced and applied to enhance the music"

Richard Lester

possibilities that this medium offered compared to the piano, I was quickly overwhelmed by its potential as well as its limitations. While the differences are extreme – the two instruments are really worlds apart – both harpsichordists and pianists should ideally be trying to achieve the same goal: to use the instruments as best as they can to help their ideas blossom. I think a lot can be learned between these two mediums of expression but as I mentioned before, I strongly feel that the tendency of imitating one medium in another will just end up working against you.

FRITH: It's extraordinary how prescient Scarlatti was. So much of subsequent modern piano technique is contained in these sonatas. Diatonic thirds, for instance, so difficult in Hummel, are already here. The real test lies within the high level of exposure when executing such passages. We can always learn from the purity of early keyboard techniques, and Scarlatti employs these whilst jumping centuries ahead. This is probably one of the greatest challenges in performing him, actually.

JS: I suppose in a way we're back in the world of undercover transcription with this question, but have you any policy regarding octave-doubling in the bass?

SUDBIN: If I feel like doubling – or tripling, it will have to be done! And it would usually result from a spontaneous decision. With things like these, I reckon that if it takes me more than ten seconds to decide, then it'll probably be a bad idea.

LESTER: Octave-doubling in piano terms is often very effective in making a point. The same point can be made on the harpsichord, of course, albeit within the confines of keyboard range. Composers often wrote specifically for a certain type of instrument. Harpsichords vary in timbre, as do pianos, and one often finds that on the type of Spanish harpsichord Scarlatti wrote for, the bass has an incredible fullness and resonance that enhances the character of a particular section. One example out of many is the B♭ Sonata, K545, where the bass rhythm needs to be emphasised and punctuated to make a dramatic rhythmic point.

JS: What are the principal rhythmic challenges in his keyboard music?

LESTER: Well, they're many and varied, of course, but they're chiefly influenced by the dance. Having made an extensive study of Spanish folk