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THE HARPSICORD MASTER. Containing plain & easy Instructions for Learners on the Spinnet or Harpsicord; written by the late famous Mr H Purcell at the request of a particular Friend, and taken from his own Manuscript, never before publish'd, being the best extant, together with a choice Collection of the newest Aires and Song-Tunes, Compos'd by the best Masters, and fitted for the Harpsicord, Spinnet or Harp, by those that compos'd them, all graven on Copper Plates. Price 1 shilling 6 pence.

THIS example of late seventeenth-century advertising prose appeared in the London newspaper *The Post Boy* October 21–3, 1697. It was in fact a transcription of the titlepage of this new collection of keyboard pieces. This was the customary practice at the time, and the titlepage fulfils both functions admirably: the imprint goes on to give details of where copies could be obtained — '. . . sould by J Walsh . . . at the Golden Harp & Hoboy in Catherine Street . . . and J Hare . . . at ye Golden Viol in St Pauls Churchyard, & at his shop in Freemans yard Cornhill.' Since the publication in 1612 of *Parthenia or the maydenhead of the first musicke that ever was printed for the virginalls*, very few volumes of keyboard music had appeared in print in England. *The Harpsichord Master* was certainly John Walsh's first venture into this field. He had begun his publishing business only two years earlier, in 1695, although he was to go on to found one of the greatest firms in the history of English music publishing. Similarly, *The Harpsichord Master* of 1697 was the first in a series of books with this name which Walsh and his successors published over the next forty years; and this in turn was only a small proportion of the numerous little musical instruction books which appeared about this time to satisfy a huge increase in public demand. Walsh was quick to exploit this demand, as he also exploited the related development of the popular press, in which he advertised most of his publications. In many cases these advertisements provide the only remaining evidence that the books in question ever existed.

Until recently the 1697 *Harpsichord Master* was one of these. Mainly through the mention of his name on the titlepage/advertisement, it has been noted in several works on Purcell, and there has been some speculation as to what exactly it contained. No copies were thought to have survived, which was a not uncommon fate for books of this type. However the unique extant copy is held in the Auckland Public Library, New Zealand, and it is from this copy that this edition, with its associated facsimile, has been made.

How does a seventeenth-century book of harpsichord music happen to turn up almost 300 years later on the other side of the world? Unfortunately very little of the history of the Auckland copy is known, although it is possible to make some reasonable conjectures covering the last hundred years or so. The book was donated to the library in March 1937 by Claude Philip Guyon Purchas, an Auckland resident, who died there the following year. The library has no correspondence or other information regarding this donation, which did not include any other material, music or otherwise; and there is nothing in the obituaries of Mr Purchas to suggest that he collected early music editions or had any particular interest in music at all. The book was duly catalogued and added to the library's Rare Book collection, which is not strong in music but contains New Zealand's largest collection of mediaeval manuscripts and incunabula (principally from the library of Sir George Grey, the early governor of New Zealand). It seems likely that Claude Purchas inherited *The Harpsichord Master* from his father, Arthur Guyon Purchas, a surgeon and

HARPSICHORD MASTER

1. Prelude for the fingering

Henry PURCELL



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Prelude for ye fingering by mr H. Purcell