Harpsichord

Arsenic & Old Lace

for

Microtonally tuned Harpsichord and String Quartet

Jukka Tiensuu 1990

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Arsenic & Old Lace (1990)

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Performance note:

. *staccato*, about half of the written note length

' *staccatissimo*, always very short regardless of written note length

— *tenuto*, play the note to the full written length (only, no accent is intended).

The *glissandi* are played continuously at even speed during the indicated time (*not* portamento). Note-stems without head in the middle of a glissando are for orientation only, they are not to be articulated.

a quick glissando downwards.

very slow fluctuations (ca. a quarter-tone above and below the main note).

Accidentals apply to the remainder of the measure, but are sometimes repeated for easier reading.

Quarter-tone sharp and flat, respectively. However, the strings should adapt to the tuning of the harpsichord as much as possible. Special care should be taken when playing in unison with the harpsichord (e.g. bars 20-21 and 47).

tr All trills and other ornaments are semintonal and start on the main note. They trill continues till the end of the note even when this is tied over several bars.

b.220-226: Each player will do an individual *calando*. The 1/16-notes must not be synchronised and the players will arrive to bar 225 (and fade out) at different times.

Balance: The strings should adapt their dynamics to that of the harpsichord. Amplification of the harpsichord is recommended.

Harpsichord: diamond-shaped note-heads indicate keys to be played on the upper keyboard.

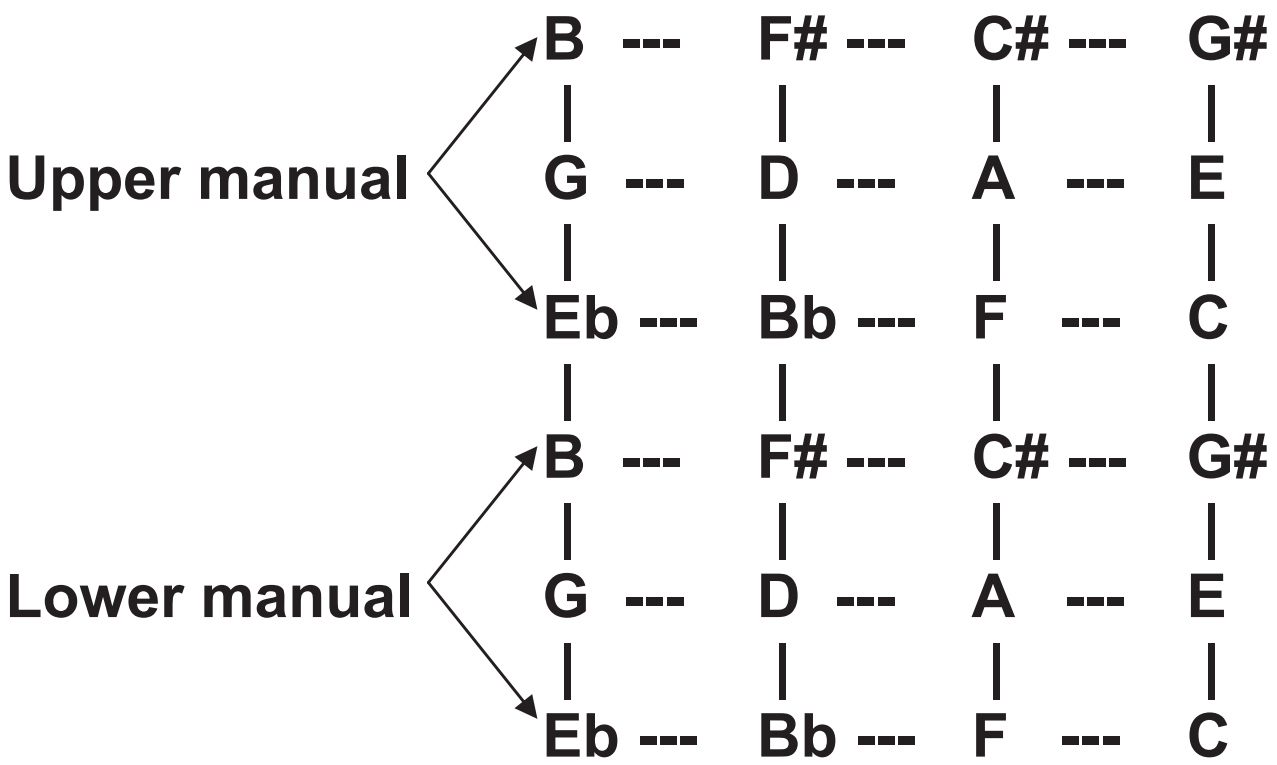
Although not indicated, a *let vibrate* is recommended throughout the piece, especially in slow sections (excluding naturally the *staccato* notes and notes separate by rests).

Cadenza: The harpsichordist can start his *cadenza* (a free improvisation) on B^b as soon as the string players have reached their final unison. The *cadenza* should finish with thirds D-F/D-F# (with optional microtonal variations) and preferably overlap (ad lib.) with the entrance of the violins in bars 227-228.

Jukka Tiensuu

Tuning of the harpsichord used in: *Fantango, M, Arsenic and Old Lace, Prélude mesuré*...

(Note: ”---” indicates a perfect fifth, ”|” indicates a perfect major third):



Note, that the interval from the lower manual B natural to the upper manual E flat is also a perfect major third. Same for lower F# to upper Bb etc. Thus a key on the upper manual sounds always 41 cents lower than the corresponding (”unison”) key on the lower manual.

***For checking:* Deviations from equal temperament in cents (if A is taken as reference):**

lower keyboard: C +16, C# -14, D –2, D# +10, E +2, F +14, F# -16, G –4, G# -12, A = 0, A# +12, B –18

upper keyboard: C -25, C# -55, D –43, D# -31, E -39, F -27, F# -57, G –45, G# -53, A -41, A# -29, B –59

You can also check that the following triads are perfect (fifth AND third perfect, no beat):

Major triads on: **D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb**

Minor triads on: **C#, D, F#, G, A, B(natural)**

Cembalo

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1

~ 42

v.1 pizz. *mp*

~ 42

CMB +8' +8'

f *p*

15

arco

tr

24

tr

32

~ 36

~ 36

tr

1 2 3 4

41

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

49

p

54

59 poco rit.

poco rit.

~ 54

~ 54

pp

mp

pp

tr

67

tr

mf pp

mf

pizz.

f

~ 72

~ 72

72

arco

p

78

6

84

90

99

pp

107

111

115

pp

pp

121

f

pp

127

131

p

pp

135

140

144

148

152

p

156

160

170

178

cresc.

183

188

190

193

200

206

213

219

molto calando

[Cadenza]

227

♩ ~ 42

p con calore

♩ ~ 42

(8', 8')

(improvisando)

+4' +K .

242

poco a poco cresc.

256

268

"ff"

Tutti .

(chromatic clusters)

8va

274

trillando sempre

-4 -K .

283

poco a poco dim. al (pp)

287

291

(loco e senza trillo)

(pp)

p

tr molto rall.

tr molto rall.

299

308

314

323

326

330

-8' +4'

337

344

350