

DOUBLE-MANUAL HARPSICHORD

COUCHET 1671–73/BLANCHET (attr) 1757/TASKIN 1778 BMO-309

ex Kenneth Gilbert collection

Presently in the care of Atelier Marc Ducornet, Paris

- This famous original harpsichord has three sets of strings, but four registers of jacks with registration controlled by six *genouillères* (knee levers) under the front stand apron.
- The knee levers are arranged in two groups either side of centre. The three levers on the left push UP and lock to the LEFT; those on the right push UP and lock to the RIGHT.
- The registers are strongly sprung to their ON position when the knee levers are in their default (DOWN) position, so require some effort to operate.
- Considerable care must be taken engaging the knee levers because of the condition of the Louis XV table stand: It is safest to operate the levers by hand rather than knee.
- When pushed UP, the first lever retracts the front 8' register, turning the upper keyboard OFF and allowing those strings to resonate sympathetically.
- When pushed UP, the second lever turns OFF the 4' register on the lower keyboard.
- When pushed UP, the third lever turns OFF the quill back 8' register on the lower keyboard.
- When pushed UP, the fourth lever uncouples the upper keyboard from the lower: The usual knobs on the upper keyboard blocks are just for show, as the upper keyboard cannot be moved in the expected manner by the hands. Warning: This lever must not be released to couple the keyboards when any lower manual keys are depressed.
- When pushed UP, the fifth lever turns OFF the *peau de buffle* on the back 8' register.
- When pushed UP, the sixth lever raises the *peau de buffle* jacks from the lower manual keytails to lighten the action.
- The hand lever in the middle of the keywell operates the buff stop on the front 8' strings: Push the lever LEFT to engage the buff on the upper keyboard.
- The basic voice of this harpsichord with its two unison strings played from the lower keyboard is accomplished by the six knee levers from left to right being DOWN, UP, DOWN, DOWN, UP, & UP, and with the hand stop for the buff to the RIGHT.