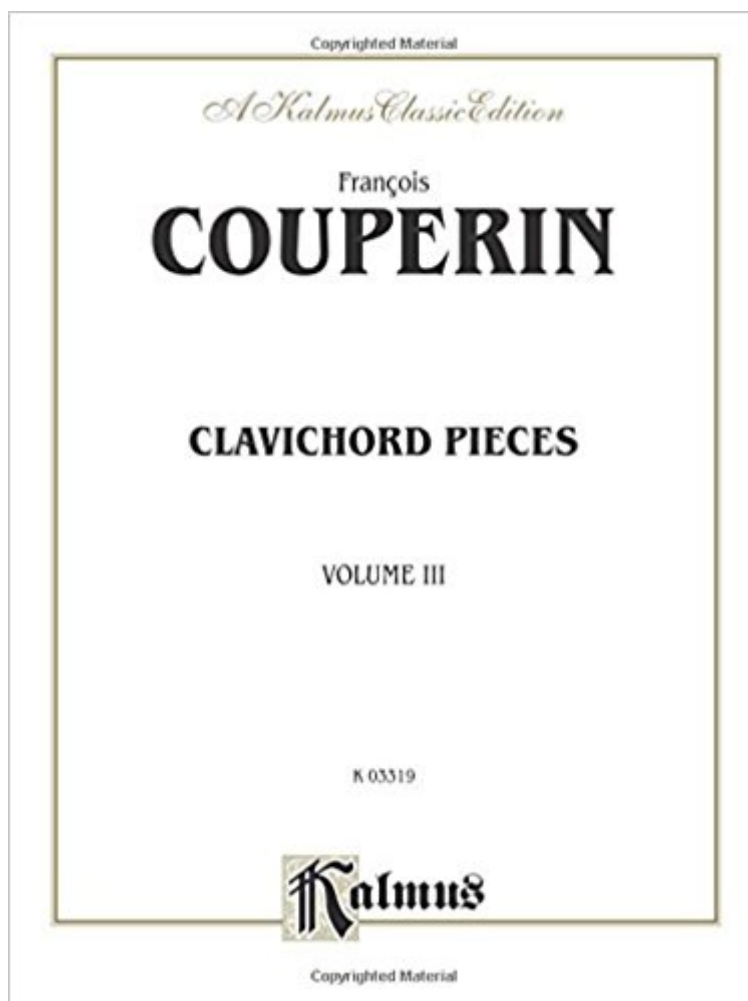


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# Clavichord Pieces, Vol 3 (Kalmus Edition)



## Synopsis

Couperin's harpsichord music can be played on solo harpsichord or performed as small chamber works. These pieces were grouped into ordres, which were Couperin's own version of suites, containing traditional dances as well as descriptive pieces. Many of Couperin's keyboard pieces have evocative, picturesque titles and express a mood through key choices, adventurous harmonies and (resolved) discords. They have been likened to miniature tone poems. This collection contains Ordres 10-12.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Imagine my delight! Here I am, an aficionado of the clavichord, an instrument that has suffered much at the hands of children (they break strings), composers (few have specifically designated this keyboard as the intended instrument), and recording engineers (who make heroic efforts to make it sound ancient, broken, out of tune and barely audible), and here I find a book of compositions specifically written for the clavichord! Leaving aside my doubts, since Couperin was a renowned harpsichordist, I ordered the volume. Sure enough, the cover says "Clavichord pieces". Inside, many of the pieces were unknown to me, a good sign, and I found dynamic markings on the scores, which could not be rendered on a harpsichord, for the simple reason that harpsichords are not, as we say these days, "velocity-sensitive". Banging the keys on a harpsichord will add a thumpy character to notes that pianists apparently enjoy, and a true fortissimo will impart to the case a

cavernous knocking while the jacks fly against the jack-rail in a most entertaining and percussive dance of death, while the instrument sways precariously on its stand. But the so-called notes will not for a moment become any the louder for it. Watching a pianist play a harpsichord is a little like watching a gorilla caress a chihuahua. You try not to grit your teeth, you look away now and then, and smile. The sense of dynamics on a harpsichord is all in the timing and the release. So the various crescendo and pp to ff markings must indicate that the music is scored for a pianoforte or a clavichord. The gentle clavichord responds to player's touch in complex ways, and has a dynamic range somewhere between ppp <sup>-12</sup> and p. The neighbors never complain. Alone among keyboard instruments, however, it is capable of all manner of expression, including vibrato and pitch bends, as the key directly pushes the little brass tangents against the strings, so that additional "aftertouch" pressure will raise a note's pitch by stretching the strings. This is what children invariably discover as a good way to flex the instrument out of tune before the strings start to snap, the keys break, and the repair bill rises. I started looking for the *bebung* (vibrato) symbol in the score, usually a dot under or over a note. Nichts. The dynamic markings on reflection proved to be typical piano transcription fare, wherein someone with a good graphic sense tastefully distributes opening and closing < and > signs and silly pp, mf and other symbols here and there so as to fill offending blank spaces in the score. So, what we have here is ... what? A quick look at the title page reveals that the same graphically endowed editor was in charge of the whole volume, as the original French title page clearly states "harpsichord pieces" (*pieces de clavecin*), which only someone for whom a dictionary is out of bounds would translate as "clavichord". Hence the less than perfect rating. It's a useful collection of harpsichord music if you ignore the dynamic markings, and it's playable on a clavichord, provided of course you don't aim for fortissimo. Kalmus should buy themselves a dictionary and maybe hire a better editor.

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