

# Basic Detail Report

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## Harpsichord

### Date

1798

### Primary Maker

Joseph Kirckman

### Description

This two-manual harpsichord is one of the last made by the Kirckman firm, which, alongside the rival Shudi-Broadwood firm, dominated English harpsichord making for most of the eighteenth century. Joseph Kirckman, head of the firm from about 1790, was the grand nephew of its founder, Jacob Kirckman, an Alsatian cabinetmaker of Swiss extraction, who, along with Burkat Shudi, had

learned the trade from Hermann Tabel, himself an immigrant to London from the Low Countries. Shortly after Tabel's death in 1738, Kirckman married his widow, thereby gaining possession of the master's stock and business. In design, construction, and disposition, the Kirckman harpsichord of 1798 is of the standard English model, already to be found in a surviving harpsichord by Hermann Tabel made in 1721. It has the typical two-manual disposition of five-octave FF-f3 compass (61 notes), lower manual with 8' and 4' registers, a "dogleg" 8' shared by both keyboards, a nasal ("lute") 8' on the upper, and a buff stop to the lower-manual 8'. There are two pedals: a machine stop and a Venetian swell. The machine stop, as it is pressed down, turns off the 4' and dogleg 8' registers while the lower-manual solo 8' remains in the on position and the upper-manual nasal 8' is engaged. With the swell pedal, the player can control the volume by opening and closing a set of louvers over the soundboard. This instrument, with its palette of color much wider than that offered by the typical French or Italian harpsichord, epitomizes the bold, rich tone for which English harpsichords have long been noted.

### Dimensions

Length: 2505 mm Width: 942.5 mm String length: c2: 352.5 mm