

★FESTIVALS★



GOING FOR A SONG

The Brighton Early Music Festival 2012 celebrates its 10th birthday in 2012. Known for its lively and inspiring programming, this year's highlights include its most spectacular production yet: 'The 1589 Florentine Intermedi'. Organisers promise 'a thrilling experience with all sorts of surprises.'

For more information, see <http://www.bremf.org.uk>

Photo: ©BREMFM



Julian Perkins, one of the leaders of the new generation of virtuoso keyboard players in the UK, will play Frescobaldi and the Scarlattis – father and son – in a lunchtime clavichord recital on 30 September.

CAMBRIDGE EARLY MUSIC ITALIAN FESTIVAL 28-30 September

Italy was the source of many of the musical innovations of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and CEM's Festival of Italian Music explores this fertile period, welcoming some of Europe's foremost performers of these genres. It was exactly 300 years ago that Vivaldi published his ground-breaking set of 12 concertos, *L'Estro Armonico* (The Birth of Harmony), which *La Serenissima* (pictured), the Vivaldi orchestra *par excellence*, will be playing with terrific verve and style.

www.CambridgeEarlyMusic.org

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Come and Play!

Lorraine Liyanage, who runs a piano school in south London, has always been intrigued by the harpsichord. Inspired by a colleague to introduce the instrument to her young students in her home, she tells how the experiment has gone from strength to strength – and led to the purchase of a spinet that fits obligingly in her bay window...



Last Summer, I received an email from Petra Hajduchova, a local musician enquiring about the possibility of teaching at my piano school. I opened her CV, and the first thing I noticed in bold letters below her name were the words: Harpsichord, Piano, Organ. I was immediately intrigued, as I have always been fascinated by the harpsichord, and the few times I have played one, I absolutely loved it. My piano teacher is a first-study harpsichordist, and she regularly organised opportunities for us to play the harpsichord in our area of Ealing. When I met Petra, it became clear that I could offer the same opportunity to my piano students, as Petra has an English harpsichord at her home.

After Petra began teaching piano here, we arranged a masterclass in the autumn term, for all students who wanted to try playing one of their pieces on a harpsichord. The first class involved students from beginner to advanced, aged five to 40(ish!), with students playing the following pieces: *Suite de la Rejouissance* by Daquin (from the 2011 ABRSM Grade 2 Piano syllabus), Bach's *Prelude in E flat* (Trinity Grade 8 Piano syllabus), various Bach Inventions, and Bach's *Partita No.1*. In the one-hour session, Petra gave a brief introduction to the harpsichord and the various different types, each with a different name in each language. There was also little quiz at the end



Petra kindly brought her instrument to our student recital. The harpsichord was the highlight – suddenly lots of pianists – both young and old – were asking if they could try it!



to see whether students could remember the name for the harpsichord in various languages! Using a diagram of the shape of the sounding board, the students had fun identifying Petra's harpsichord (hers is English).

Then we had a fascinating demonstration of the inside of the instrument. My piano students are always sticking their heads inside the grand piano and love seeing how it works, and the harpsichord was possibly more exciting, as it is much easier to see how it is constructed. Petra explained that the instrument differs from the piano in that the strings are 'plucked' by what used to be a crow's quill, or leather, but is now a plastic plectra. We were all particularly delighted when Petra showed us that you can pull out all the jacks of the instrument! A well-played harpsichord requires regular tuning, and it was great to see how Petra tuned the instrument with a small tuning key. She also gave a brief explanation on the different temperaments used for tuning. The student playing the Bach



Petra also provided a brief explanation on the different temperaments used for tuning. The student playing the Bach Prelude and Fugue had never really questioned the meaning of The Well Tempered Clavier, so this was of particular interest

Prelude and Fugue had never really questioned the meaning of The Well Tempered Clavier, so this was of great interest to him. At the end of the session, we presented all participants with a certificate of attendance.

Petra most obligingly brought her instrument to our student recital in January 2012 at Kingsdale Foundation School, in West Dulwich, so we invited all the harpsichord masterclass attendees to perform a piece for an audience of around 100. The harpsichord was the highlight of the recital and lots of pianists – both young and old – were suddenly asking if they could try it!

Following on from the success of the first masterclass, my interest in the harpsichord was sufficiently piqued to start looking around for one to buy,



both for my students to play in their lessons and for my own practice. My piano room is a reasonable size, but as it is currently used for small informal concerts, I reluctantly decided against a harpsichord, that would reduce the audience capacity, in favour of a spinet that fits rather nicely into the bay window! Having the spinet in the piano room means that all our students can try it out in their lesson; about half our students have played it now, and they are all captivated by it. I have heard all sorts of pieces played on it, from baroque to pop. I personally do not mind what the young pianists play on it, as anything that inspires them to try make music is fantastic.

A second masterclass was planned, specifically for young pianists studying towards their ABRSM Graded examinations. This masterclass was run by Petra on the newly acquired Storrs spinet, from Peter Barnes in Bath. We had six students working towards their Grades 1 and 2 exams. They came ready with an A list ABRSM piece to try out at the class, which lasted around an hour. The culmination of the masterclass was a performance to their parents at the end of the session.

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In this class, we heard performances of pieces by Jean-Christophe Naudot, Louis-Claude Daquin and James Hook. Alanna, one of our more advanced students, performed a Bach invention. Petra discussed different ways to compensate for the lack of dynamics by varying the touch and articulation.

The A-list piece in the ABRSM exam is usually the piece that takes the longest to learn, as most students find the interpretation and notes harder to master than the B and C list. Being able to offer students the chance to play the piece on the harpsichord adds an interesting dimension to their learning. If a student starts learning this piece on the piano and loses motivation with it, this is a good time to swap over to the harpsichord to keep them motivated.

With so many of our students now bitten by the harpsichord bug, I started researching the options available for exams. A quick search of the major examination boards revealed that ABRSM start at Grade 4 - too high an entry point. I decided to go with the Victoria College of Music, primarily as they offer Special Visits, where they will come to us on a chosen date as they do not have a centre in London with a harpsichord. I also looked at the National College of Music, but decided against it, as the

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exam would be taken on a digital keyboard set to 'harpsichord' sound! There are currently two students preparing for their Grade 2 Harpsichord exams this July. The pieces they have chosen are King's March by Jeremiah Clarke, Rondino by Rameau and Purcell's Air in D minor. I hope to be able to report back to *Sounding Board* very soon with their favourable exam results!

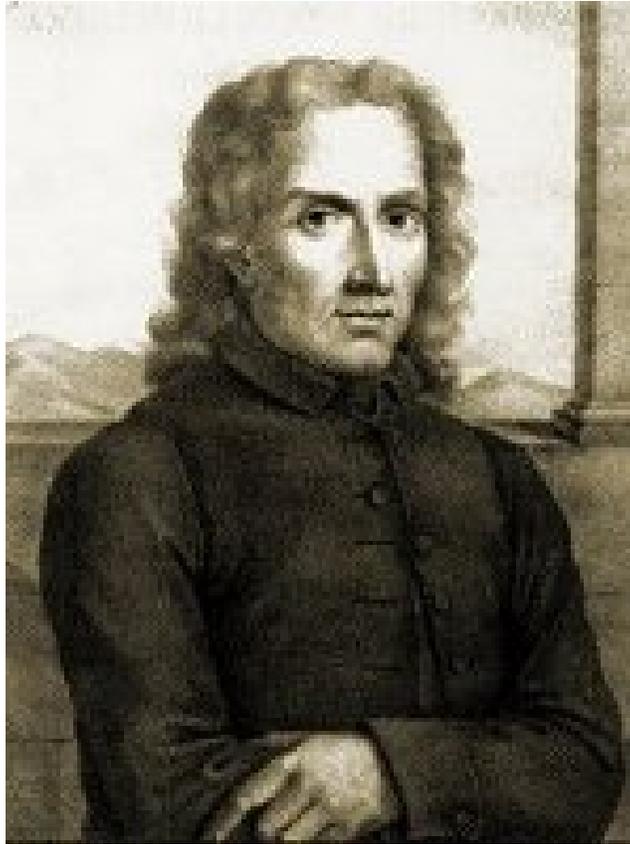
I am keen to keep introducing new students to the harpsichord, so I have arranged a school trip, in the October half-term, to Handel House. We run two school trips a year, open to all musicians in the local area, not just our students. The last was to Cadogan Hall, where eight of our students performed on-stage with the Southbank Sinfonia. The trip to Handel House will allow participants to learn about Handel's music, see where he lived and composed, dress up in Georgian clothing, hear a recital, and take part in a masterclass.

Finally, there is one event that I have in mind, after a recent visit to Alleyn's School in Dulwich. The school has offered its rehearsal space, the Lanchbery Room, as the venue for the 2013 Dulwich Piano Festival. This idea is very much in its early days, but if anyone has any thoughts on including a class to appeal to young harpsichordists, please get in touch. If the idea has potential to grow, I would love to organise a harpsichord festival in the near future! ✨



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REVIEW

Leonardo Leo, *Le Composizioni Per Tastiera*

Edited by Cosimo Prontera. Two Volumes.

Vol. I. Rome: 'Il Melograno', 2003

Although Leonardo Leo (1694-1744) is well-represented in vocal and choral works of Neapolitan origin, his keyboard works have not been available in a complete scholarly edition, until now. Cosimo Prontera, professor of Early Music at the University of Basilicata, and founder of La Confraternita de Musici, has championed Leo, as musical director of the eponymous annual festival;¹ in recordings, and with the publisher, Ezio Monti in Rome, by publishing his keyboard works. The first of two volumes contains the 14 toccatas, in their first annotated edition, plus the eight fugues and some extra pieces including minuets, marches, and a gentle pastorale.

¹ Barocco Festival, Leonardo Leo in towns around Leo's birthplace, in Puglia, including Brindisi, every August - now in its 15th year.

It has been suggested that the Franco-Flemish Giovanni de Macque left his mark on the early Neapolitan style, and certainly both Leo and Durante were interested in *stile antico* and used it in their church music. Fellerer suggests that whilst Durante wished to fuse the old style with the modern idiom, Leo preferred to keep the two types separate.² Dent proposed that 'Durante was sentimental and Leo was not',³ but I think this is not borne out in the pieces for harpsichord – although this will depend on how they are interpreted.

Leo's toccatas are not offshoots of the earlier Italian toccata model; they do not have free opening material, or virtuoso passages, and are not multi-sectional, but varied in form. Some are more like sonatas than toccatas, and there are fugal works, a giga with strong rhythmic interest and a mastery of melodic line. As a set, these pieces provide attractive, diverse and pedagogically useful material. Some are written in the Neapolitan partimento style which Ralph Krause describes, in the introduction to the volume, as a sort of guided improvisation with the occasional assistance of figures, beneath some of the bass notes. This device was in general use in Naples, and the first toccata has just such an opening with a single figured bass line, allowing a great deal of scope for improvisation in the right hand, before the entry of the written-out part. Those in two distinct voices seem more akin to Bach's two part inventions. Readers will recognise the opening of *Toccata 13*, which begins like one of the G major minuets found in the Anna Magdalena collection.

Certainly both Leo and Durante were interested in stile antico in their church music. Fellerer suggests that whilst Durante wished to fuse the old with the new, Leo preferred to keep the two compositional types separate.¹ Dent proposed that 'Durante was sentimental and Leo was not',¹ but this is not borne out in the pieces for harpsichord, in my opinion

The second volume will consist of Leo's 186 *Partimenti* which, as well as their function as teaching material, should prove an ideal introduction to the style.⁴ As they are not played frequently in concerts, I warmly recommend Prontera's recording of all 14 toccatas, which sets them beside his concerti: one for four violins and a couple for flute: *Leonardo Leo, La Musica da Stanza*, performed by Cosimo Prontera and La Confraternita de' Musici (Tactus, TC 693702). PC

² Grove quotes Fellerer and uses the terms, 'Duranismo' and Leismo'

³ Once again, the quotation is cited in Groves from Dent

⁴ For further information on this fascinating subject, pre-order Sanguinetti, Giorgio, *The Art of Partimento*. Oxford: OUP, 2012.



Pointers in Puglia

Angela Gillon reports on a harpsichord study week in Puglia, where the drama and high emotion of the Neapolitan musical tradition, is pleasantly lightened by al fresco lunches and the local wine

How do you locate a harpsichord in the heel of Italy, at short notice, and a scanty knowledge of Italian? No challenge for Edna (Secretary of the BHS) who swiftly emailed all Italian BHS members, and came up trumps when one put us in touch with Cosimo Prontera, director of La Confraternita de Musici in Brindisi. After several emails, and bottles of wine, to an Italian colleague for translations, negotiations were complete, and Cosimo agreed to hire us his own harpsichord for the week.

This is how Penelope Cave came to take ten of her regular students to Puglia. We stayed in a delightful masseria (a sixteenth-century fortified farmhouse) among olives and orange groves near the medieval town of Oria. The harpsichord proved to be a handsome copy of a Giusti instrument, strikingly

decorated in a suitably flamboyant style, with a full, bright tone which sounded very well indeed, in the tall vaulted stone rooms of the masseria.

Although the starting point for our study week was the Neapolitan tradition, we looked mainly at Leonardo Leo, Francesco Durante, Domenico Scarlatti and Domenico Cimarosa, as well as at Bernardo Pasquini and Michelangelo Rossi (whose careers were in Rome rather than Naples). As we had recently done a course on Frescobaldi, Penelope was keen for us to study the influence Frescobaldi had on his pupils, so Froberger was included.

Cosimo, who teaches at the University of Brindisi, and has produced a scholarly edition of the keyboard works of Leonardo Leo, attended on the day we studied him. With some trepidation, we each worked on one of the toccatas. At the end of our session we invited Cosimo to play his favourite; he had us spellbound with his interpretation of the beautiful *Toccatà in C minor*, No. 8 in his edition. Although Penelope insisted her Italian was non-existent, and Cosimo claimed the same of his English, you would not have thought so when you heard them passionately discussing the finer details of the music!



We learnt that the rather bare style in which Leo and Durante wrote was by no means the way in which they intended their pieces to be played. Durante was the master of *partimento* teaching practice in Naples, and Prontera's edition of Leo makes it clear that he, too, made use of thoroughbass figures to assist improvisation where necessary. Appropriate use of ornamentation is of course taken for granted by both, even though scarcely indicated in the score.



Another interesting discovery was that quite a lot of what now seems ‘exotic’ and ‘Spanish’ in the Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti has clear echoes in the music of his compatriots in southern Italy; there were, after all, longstanding links between Spain and the Kingdom of Naples, and the strong folk tradition of tarantella music in southern Italy may also have had its influence on the young Scarlatti before ever he heard the folk music of Spain. We listened to some tarantella music and also (what a contrast!) to a recording of Pergolesi’s *Stabat Mater*, both very convincing demonstrations of the Neapolitan love of dramatic vocal colour and high emotion.

The intensity of the lessons, particularly, for example, the day dedicated to Rossi’s toccatas, was lightened each day by a fantastic Italian lunch taken *al fresco* and served with the delicious, local Primativo. All sourced, prepared and served by Gill, a member of the party who somehow managed to achieve all this as well as participate in all the music sessions.

Of course, we didn’t of course spend *all* our time sitting around the harpsichord. The town of Oria nearby turned out to be a bit of an undiscovered gem, with a vast castle looming over it, and a fine cathedral with a crypt, in which mummified sixteenth and seventeenth century monks stand upright in their niches. It also has a pretty seventeenth century Neapolitan organ. There are other attractive towns nearby, each of which seems to have at least one fine baroque church, but our main excursion was southwards to the town of Lecce, famous for the extravagance of its baroque architecture, and well worth seeing – though not to everyone’s taste!

The week ended all too soon and it was time to say goodbye to the harpsichord as it was loaded into Cosimo's car. We would like to express thanks to Penelope, whose expert guidance and attention to detail kept everyone fully engaged on this often-unfamiliar repertoire, and to Cosimo for entrusting us with his harpsichord!

Cosimo Prontera runs an annual early music festival in Latiano in August, near Brindisi: <http://www.laconfraternitademusici.it/associazione.htm>

PS: ITALY COMES TO HANDEL HOUSE!

A BHS recital is given on the second Tuesday of each month at the Handel House Museum, and Jane Clark runs our concert series, selecting performers and liaising with them and the museum. Last year, she responded to a request from the group of BHS members who had returned from Italy, excited by the performance of Cosimo Prontera, the director of the Brindisi Leonardo Leo festival and La Confraternita de' Musici, and an invitation was dispatched to Puglia to invite him to give our June recital. As a specialist in the baroque music of Southern Italy, he offered us a showcase of how imaginative and expressively rich this repertoire can be. Whilst, in general, the BHS tries to promote British performers, it is a long-held English tradition to welcome foreign musicians and, indeed we have learnt much from them. Our sold-out June 2012 recital was no exception; a master class in the interpretation of Southern Italian music by a natural communicator, who brought the scores to life with improvised rococo embellishment and persuasive melodic shaping.

The concert opened with a vigorous performance of a Gregorio Strozzi Capriccio, and included the first London performance of an unpublished toccata and corrente by Gaetano Greco. It was also most revealing to hear the composer, Giovanni Salvatore, who rivals Frescobaldi in his keyboard works, and surpasses him in his output of sacred music. Salvatore's toccata, whilst sharing elements of Frescobaldi's style, had a continuity between sections which lent it a cohesive fluency. Cosimo Prontera explained that the reason

Salvatore was overshadowed was to do with geography, patronage and indeed, marketing. Cosimo suggests it was because Frescobaldi, in Rome, had the backing of the Pope, he had the funds for those beautiful title-pages which helped market them, whilst Salvatore's music looked much plainer. He played music by both Scarlatti, the first of whose reputation and success was huge within his lifetime and Domenico's, only after his death. A brilliant performance of the folia variations by Alessandro Scarlatti finished the concert to much applause. *CB*