

## Newsletter January 2007

**Welcome to the eighth e-newsletter of the British Harpsichord Society.**

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## **Editorial**

This edition's innovation is the inclusion of your letters. There's no point in asking you to write in unless you see some result for your labours, and in any case, what you have to say is of interest to other readers. I'm sorry to say that nobody put forward a builder to feature for this issue, but Jane Clarke has kindly suggested two builders for future issues. I'm not going to say at this point who they are: wait and see! The illustration above is no less than a memorial window to Thomas Tomkins, to be found somewhere in Worcester Cathedral! John Erskine has unearthed it. There may be more about it in the next newsletter. I haven't hitherto commented on the Handel House recitals, except to say how delighted and grateful we are to have such a splendid venue for our events, but the recital on the 12th December was so extraordinary, I feel I have to say something. Bruce Kennedy, who built the Handel House instrument, had just completed an extensive regulation, so the instrument itself was on top form, and the Strasbourg-based harpsichordist, Aline Zylberajch, played a programme entitled 'Music at the Spanish Court'. Everyone I spoke to afterwards was amazed at her playing. Handel House volunteers who had heard her during the day said how special her playing had seemed to them. I have never heard such exquisite playing. Thank you so much, Aline!

Michael Ackerman

## **A Harpsichord for the Wordsworth House at Cockermouth**

The illustrations in this newsletter are of a new harpsichord by Robert Deegan. It has been commissioned by the National Trust for the Wordsworth House at Cockermouth in the Lake District. There is a harpsichord mentioned in the Wordsworth inventory, but that is now lost. The NT wanted an instrument that could be used a lot, ruling out an antique. In deciding on the best model, it was considered likely that the Wordsworths would have had something more modest than a Kirkman. So the single manual William Smith in the Bate Collection was considered appropriate. It has two eight foots, with a compass GG to g3. It is all brass strung and the tone is bright and bell-like.

An inaugural recital will be given when the house re-opens to the public next spring.

The instrument was on display at the Greenwich Exhibition: John Erskine is one of those who tried it, and he was most impressed! Thank you to Robert Deegan for bringing our attention to this instrument, and well done to the National Trust for their splendid patronage.

## **The Ambiance for Musical Performance**

There is so much more to a musical performance than music, performer and instrument. William Mitchell has written on the importance of lighting. The illustration is of William, his claviorganum and the players in a candle-lit St Clement's Church, Bournemouth.



## **Favourites**

We are grateful to readers who let us know about harpsichord matters, such as:

- favourite instruments
- recitals and concerts they have attended
- teachers
- builders
- maintenance issues

Mike Cooper has written in, suggesting it would be good if readers would also let us know about favourite recordings, and recordings they would particularly recommend. It's always fascinating to hear what 'plucks other people's strings'! So please do write in with your suggestions. Related to that is the article 'Recent Interesting Concerts On Line'. See below.

## **The Froberger Manuscript**

Alexander Day writes:

A hitherto unrecorded autograph manuscript by Johann Jakob Froberger [has been] auctioned by Sotheby's. The 259-page volume contains 36 pieces: six fantasies, six capriccios, five suites of four movements each, two méditations (one of which is the 'Méditation . . . sur ma mort future') and two tombeaux. According to Sotheby's, 18 of these pieces are completely new, undocumented and unpublished. Furthermore, the manuscript documents Froberger's association with his last patron, Sibylla of Württemberg, and reveals that he travelled to Madrid, where one of the newly-discovered works was composed.

It is known that the three celebrated autograph manuscripts (dated 1649, 1656 and 1658) of Froberger's keyboard music in the Austrian National Library formed part of a series of presentation volumes, the remaining volumes of which are presumed lost. However, the newly-discovered manuscript is apparently a later and totally unrecorded source of Froberger's music, having been written in the last year or two of his life and bound in an elaborate red morocco binding for the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. Sotheby's, who describe the volume as 'one of the most handsome fair copies ever produced by a composer of his own works', estimate[d] that it [would] fetch £300,000–500,000 in their November 30th Musical Manuscripts sale.

In fact, it realised £270,000. It was purchased by Bernard Quaritch Ltd, Antiquarian Booksellers, acting on behalf of a private client. Alistair McCapra has kindly provided a weblink, if you would like to read more. We now wait to see if the manuscript is going to be hoarded and gloated over privately or if it is going to be made generally available.



## Recent Interesting Concerts On Line

David Pinnegar writes: I hope our online recordings might be an inspiration, possibly to performers who might like somewhere to play, as well as to people who simply enjoy listening! At Hammerwood Park near East Grinstead [www.hammerwood.mistral.co.uk/concerts.htm](http://www.hammerwood.mistral.co.uk/concerts.htm), I have been trying to widen perspectives of both audiences and performers; also [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/concerts.htm](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/concerts.htm), with the full directory available at [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/), which is a snapshot of the result. We are encouraging the use of the harpsichord for music originally intended for the harpsichord (as well as modern jazz), unequal temperaments [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jerzy-owczarz-2006-unequal-temperament/](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jerzy-owczarz-2006-unequal-temperament/), the use of a Viennese action for Mozart [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jill-crossland-unequal-tempered-fortepiano/](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jill-crossland-unequal-tempered-fortepiano/), and even unequal temperament as a more musical tuning than equal - out of preference, for music later than that to which it is usually applied [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/joanna-powell-cello/](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/joanna-powell-cello/) [www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jong-gyung-park-unequal-temperament/](http://www.jungleboffin.com/mp3/jong-gyung-park-unequal-temperament/).

## **The Grand European Recorder Tour**

A concert by Cathryn Dew (recorders) and Micaela Schmidt (harpsichord) on 4th November was performed in the delightful surroundings of the Milner Hall as part of the Winchester Early Music Series. The music ranged from mid 16th to the 18th centuries and featured composers from the main Baroque centres of music - including Rome, Venice, Paris, Hamburg and London.

Starting with Diego Ortiz (also a gamba player, who was born in Toledo but worked in Naples), Cathryn and Micaela played the Passamezzo moderno from a group of improvisatory pieces using the main ground bases of the day. Remaining in Italy, this was followed by the Sonata Terza by the violinist Giovanni Battista Fontana (which was written as instrumental music, as opposed to being composed for the voice). Cathryn then played variations on a folk tune by the Dutch player Jan Van Eyck (Wat Zalmen op den Avond doen). Van Eyck was a blind carillon player who also used to sit outside the Church, improvising on the recorder, and fortunately much of this music was written down. For all the Renaissance pieces, Cathryn performed on a wide-bore Ganessi instrument made by the Norwegian Bodil Diesen. That piece was followed by a harpsichord solo by the Parisian Jean-Henri D'Anglebert, a Prélude nonmesuré (2me suite in G) - with no bar lines or rhythms. This is, therefore, an even more improvisatory piece than the Ortiz, since the performer has only guidelines to follow, and Michaela showed the unusual appearance of the music to members of the audience during the interval. Her instrument was an Italian harpsichord inspired by early eighteenth-century models. Two works based on grounds (very popular with English amateur players), one anonymous and the other by Robert Carr, were followed by the Sonata in F (Opus 5 no.4) by Arcangelo Corelli. These sonatas were written for the violin (hence few breathing places for recorder players!) but then arranged for recorder with graces 'by an eminent master'. For the later works, Cathryn's treble recorder was a Stanesby copy made by Tim Cramore.

The second half of the programme opened with Handel's A minor sonata, followed by two Telemann works - a Fantasie for harpsichord and Cathryn's favourite piece of music - the amazingly sad-sounding F min Sonata (from Der Getreuer Musikmeister). The concert finished with a compelling rendition of Vivaldi's Sonata in G min (op 13a, no 6 RV 58).

## Gustav Leonhardt at the Bank

John Erskine writes about a recent funding-raising recital at the Bank of England where, since there were no chairs, it was standing room only. And fundraising for what? Read on.



## Thomas Tomkins Society

There is an introduction here to the new Thomas Tomkins Society – and a cordial invitation to join.

## Stephen Dodgson

JE writes:

The British Harpsichord Society is mounting an afternoon event, entitled ‘**Fifty years of music for harpsichord by Stephen Dodgson**’, as a tribute to Stephen’s important contribution to contemporary music for the harpsichord. In particular, the event marks the publication (now imminent) of the new collected edition of his works for harpsichord: these consist of Five Sets of Inventions and Sonata-Divisions, to be available in a three-volume edition that can be pre-ordered by subscription now. From 2pm on Saturday 2nd June at Handel House, Pamela Nash, editor of the Cadenza Music publication of Stephen’s music, will lead an afternoon exploring its contents in the company of fellow harpsichordists. **(Details of all the**

**British Harpsichord Society recitals arranged so far for this year - others are being finalised now - can be seen on the web site: simply follow this link.)**

## **Harpsichordists' Recording Opportunity**

Michael Preibisch, general manager of Classic Concert Records, writes:

Classic Concert Records is offering the possibility for outstanding harpsichordists to produce their next CD with Classic Concert. We are searching for new artists and projects to grow up our early music catalogue. We offer a worldwide distribution network and artist management support. Please feel free to get in contact with us via phone or email. We would love to hear your plans for your internationally distributed CD Project. Please take a look on Classic Concert Music Group [www.classicconcert.com/](http://www.classicconcert.com/) to learn more about our activities. You are very welcome to send your demo recording direct to us.

Hope to hear from you ...

## **Boalch Database**

WV writes:

[An] interesting piece of news from Darryl Martin was that the University of Edinburgh is about to start making the Boalch database available online, before extensively revising it and bringing it up to date. Donald Boalch's *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440-1840* is the standard reference to the known surviving historic instruments. The last edition, the third edited by Dr Charles Mould, was published in 1995 and was a considerable advance on the venerable earlier editions. It is now out of print and second-hand copies practically impossible to find. This new project is welcome news indeed.

## **Winchester Early Music Series**

Please have a look at what the Winchester Early Music Series has to offer, culminating in an Early Keyboard Weekend 25th-27th May 2007.

## **Boston Early Music Festival**

Stephen Cooley writes:

I am pleased to announce plans for the next biennial Boston Early Music Festival & Exhibition (June 11-17, 2007) and enthusiastically invite you to participate in this most distinguished Exhibition, the largest of its kind in the USA. For application materials, please follow the link to our website's Exhibitor Information page.

The theme for the 2007 Festival & Exhibition, our fourteenth biennial celebration, is **Feast of the Gods**. The feast will begin with the North American fully-staged premiere of Jean-Baptiste Lully's 1678 operatic masterpiece *Psyché*, and continue with dozens of 'official' performances and 'fringe' concerts by leading artists and ensembles including **Le Poème Harmonique**, **Ensemble Clement Janequin**, **Sequentia**, **The King's Noyse**, **Tragicomedia**, **Nachtmusique**, **The Royal Wind Music**, the Grammy-nominated **BEMF Orchestra**, and recitals by **Alexander Weimann** (harpsichord), **Kristian Bezuidenhout** (fortepiano) and **Petra Müllejans** (violin), **Carolyn Sampson** (soprano) and **Liz Kenny** (lute), and so much more.

The Exhibition will return to the **The Radisson Hotel** at 200 Stuart Street in Boston, which will continue to provide all of our exhibit space, as well as venues for symposia, lectures, workshops, and demonstrations, in their customary helpful and conscientious manner.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact BEMF Exhibition Manager Stephen Cooley at 617-661-1812 or [stephen@bemf.org](mailto:stephen@bemf.org).

### **Your Letters**

If in response to what you read here, you would like to reply to any letter, please would you address it to me, marking it either for possible publication, or private, in which case I shall send it to the correspondent without comment. I don't want to publish members' e-mail addresses - firstly for the privacy of the individual, secondly to avoid spam attacks.

### **Harpsichord and Fortepiano**

To all harpsichord lovers:

Hello,

It is always rewarding to read the British Harpsichord Society Newsletter; unfortunately, living in a country which is so far from the UK (Argentina), I am unable to attend the very interesting musical events you advertise in the Newsletter. Nevertheless, there are interesting articles on many topics related to the harpsichord. Speaking about the harpsichord and fortepiano, I'd like to comment on an inflexion point (if it is really proper to call it as such) in the declining history of the harpsichord and the rising of the new instrument, the fortepiano, during the eighteenth century: I am referring to the beautiful Concerto for harpsichord and fortepiano by Karl Philip Emmanuel Bach: this concerto reflects the encounter between both instruments, and it is really moving to think of a possibly different history if the harpsichord lovers and manufacturers had joined on a path which could have lead to technical improvements in the harpsichord, such as those introduced in the manufacturing of always better fortepianos, up to the present day. I know that these thoughts may not be approved of by the 'orthodox' faction within harpsichord enthusiasts, but this is the way I see it.

Kind regards from

Prof. Dr. Pedro A. Tesone

School of Medicine, Buenos Aires University

### **Yes to Harpsichords**

I am glad someone else is speaking up. While I'm not in Britain, I do understand that many works (mostly baroque) are played on the piano. I got some records a long time ago, for a good price at a clearance sale. I bought the Brandenburg Concerti on two albums. I was disappointed that not only were some of the movements hurried through (did the musicians want to get finished early to go to lunch?) but also that the harpsichord had been replaced by the piano! This was especially notable in the fifth concerto. I was very disappointed, and could not listen for more than two times. I ended up giving them away.

While I don't mind some harpsichord music being played on the piano (if for nothing else, just variety and also for people who may not own harpsichords - they can at least get an idea of what certain baroque music sounds like if well-played, so that they may have an idea how their playing should sound), I wish that more harpsichord recordings were available. Even an organization dedicated to classical music [can prove disappointing]: I belong to a CD club called The Musical Heritage Society, and I would expect that they would have a treasure trove of Harpsichord music, but that's not so.

Anyway, I am happy that others feel the same way. Please keep up the good work. Perhaps I should let radio stations and The Musical Heritage Society know that there are many out here who love and crave more harpsichord recordings.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Miki Lindsay

*MA writes: Thank you, Miki, for your support. In fact you were the only one to write on this topic. The reason no one in Great Britain has commented is perhaps because they no longer listen to Radio 3. I know that I am not the only one to object to the endless brainless chatter to which one is subjected nowadays, together with the paucity of broadcasts of interest to pre-Classical music lovers.*

### **Pleyel and Hubbard**

Hi. Thanks for the newsletter. It is very interesting, and if I lived in England, I would be at some of those recitals, I can tell you. We don't have a lot of such things going on around here where I live in Mi.

I was interested in your mention of John Paul. I have his book, and at one time owned one of his early single-manual harpsichords which, he lamented to say, was once a piano-forte. It didn't fare very well in our climate, so I traded it in, with a bit of additional funds, for a Hubbard French, which I love. Beside that, I do own a Pleyel, being a loyal fan of Landowska and pupil of one of her students - Dan Pinkham.

Thanks again.

Donald F. Green

Bay City , Mi. USA

*MA writes: Are there other Landowska fans out there? Do write in and let us know.*

