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*The 1st International Conference
on Historical Keyboard Music
(ICHKM 2011)*

*University of Edinburgh
1st - 3rd July 2011*

A report by Andrew Woolley

The '1st International Conference on Historical Keyboard Music: Sources, Contexts and Performance' took place at the University of Edinburgh at the beginning of July. This conference, an international meeting of scholars and performers working in the field of keyboard studies, brought together a diverse range of expertise (working on music from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries), in both the academic and performance fields. It also attracted a broad base of interested listeners. Undoubtedly one of the prime attractions was the presence of the Raymond Russell and the Rodger Mirrey Collections of Early Keyboard Instruments at St Cecilia's Hall. Indeed, it was

recognised from the outset that the University of Edinburgh is an exceptional location for a conference of this kind.

By intention its scope was not bound by a particular historical time-frame, to encourage contact between researchers working on different periods, who share an interest in the keyboard as a musical 'medium'. Performance was also a vital component; a guiding 'philosophy' for this conference was a belief in its importance for shaping musical scholarship, and a desire to create an event that would encourage contact between specialists in research and those who are primarily active as performers. For this reason events that incorporated performances – some involving the collection of historical instruments – were at its heart, and we were pleased to host contributions from a number of leading exponents of historical keyboard instruments.

There were two recitals, in addition to numerous lecture-recitals over the course of the two main days of the conference (2nd-3rd July), many of which were open to the public. The opening recital was given by John Kitchen (University of Edinburgh) on the Reid Concert Hall's Ahrend organ. On the 2nd July, Robert Hill (University of Freiburg) performed on the 1805 Kuhlbörs fortepiano. The fortepiano recital included a complete cycle of W. F. Bach's polonaises, which were exciting to listen to on the instrument chosen. On 3rd July, Terence Charlston (Royal College of Music, London) presented two recital-demonstrations. The first involved a demonstration of two clavichords; an anonymous triple-fretted Flemish instrument of c.1620, and the Hubert double-fretted instrument of 1784. A video of the presentation can be viewed online at <http://vimeo.com> (<http://vimeo.com/user8147694>). It featured performances of English repertory, and interestingly, a performance of Beethoven's Rondo in C major, Op. 51 no. 1. As one can easily imagine, the clavichord presents unique challenges for performing the latter work. However, as Terence pointed out, these 'challenges' are instructive; a convincing performance is generated not only by the player's musical intuitions, but by the special qualities and limitations of the instrument. In the afternoon of the same day, he also gave the John Barnes Lecture on 'A Choice Collection? Performance and musical taste in late seventeenth-century English keyboard sources'. Included was a wide-ranging programme of music, performed on the 1668 Stephen Keene virginals, and the 1709 Thomas Barton harpsichord. It showed the high quality of much of this music, in particular the harpsichord music of John Baptist Draghi (d. 1708).

Throughout the conference there were a number of 40-minute lecture-recitals, which complemented the 'keynote' events that focussed on performance practice. Those on harpsichord included some excellent presentations from Mário Trilha (on João Cordeiro da Silva), Jane Clark (on François Couperin), Thérèse de Goede (on solo keyboard repertory as a source for continuo realisation, with special reference to Frescobaldi), Mario Aschauer (on Lully transcriptions) and Joyce Lindorff (on Pasquali).

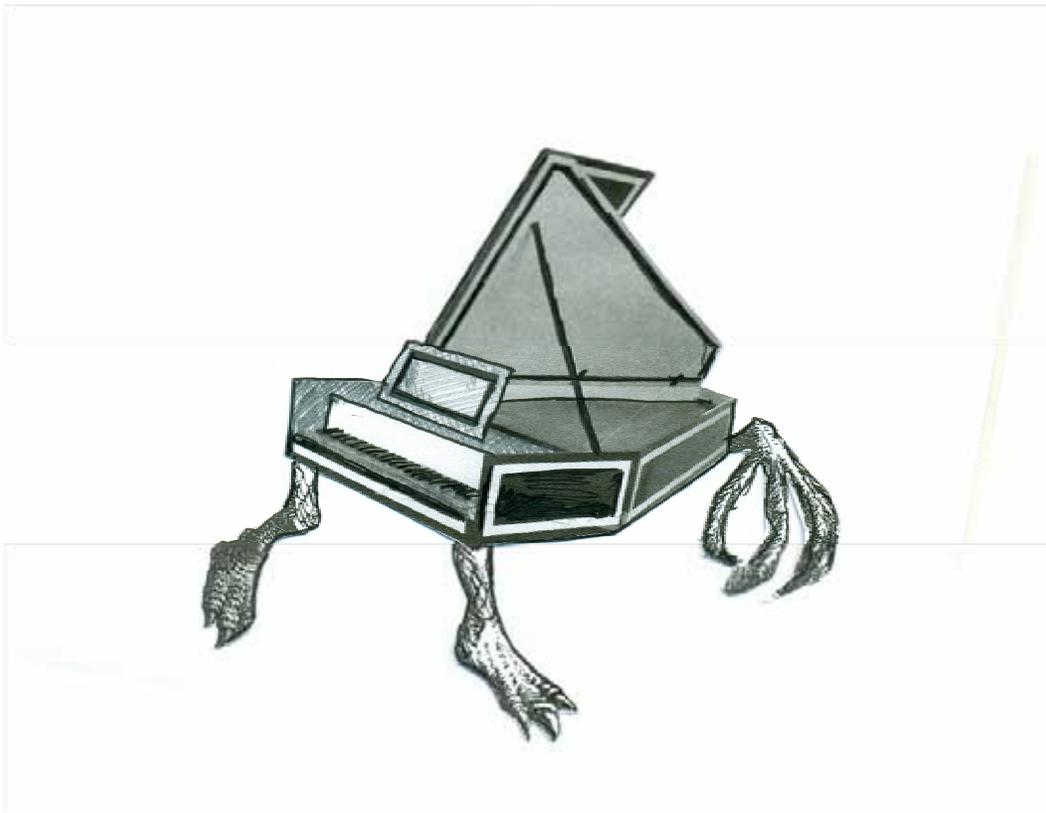
Three 'keynote' lectures that did not incorporate live performance were open to the public. Christine Jeanneret (University of Geneva), a leading Frescobaldi scholar, gave a 'whistle stop tour' of her work on Italian keyboard manuscripts, covering aspects ranging from the technologies of manuscript and print in the seventeenth-century to composers' working methods. Preceding Robert Hill's recital, Susan Wollenberg (University of Oxford) revisited C. P. E. Bach, in a lively talk on his keyboard writing in solo works and accompanied sonatas.

On the morning of the following day (3rd), Robert Hill delivered his presentation on 'Reverse-Engineering Late-Romantic Performance Practice: Agnes Nicholls' and Hamilton Harty's Performance of "At the Mid-Hour of Night"' (1908). The field of nineteenth-century performance practice is fairly undeveloped from the point of view of keyboard players; the literature has tended to concentrate on string performance. Robert's talk considered some methodologies that might be used in the analysis of early recordings of pianists, focussing on their approach to rubato. He presented several revealing examples that illustrated the rubato technique employed in Agnes Nicholls' and Hamilton Harty's recording of the F. H. Cowan song 'At the Mid-Hour of Night'. These involved playing the recording with a synchronised metronome to highlight the tempo modifications used by the performers, which pointed to some preliminary observations (for instance, in the regularity of the tempo fluctuation). The examples showed the sophistication of the rubato technique used by the performers, one deserving of analysis, and provided much food for thought on methodologies for exploring historical recordings as evidence of performance practice.

As an organiser of this conference, I was not best placed to attend many of the presentations. However, a generous quantity of feedback was offered by the attendees after the event, and by my colleagues. The overall quality of the presentations was reported as generally high. There were sessions covering an array of subjects, although within the framework of three parallel sessions there were inevitable clashes between related subjects. A file containing the complete abstracts can be downloaded from the conference website (<http://www.music.ed.ac.uk/ichkm-2011/>). It may be that a future ICHKM event should reduce the number of sessions running parallel to allow for fewer clashes (although the creation of a less 'intensive' timetable in this way has other drawbacks). The venue for the next conference is yet to be determined, but it is hoped that an event could run biannually; the University of Edinburgh in 2013 remains a possibility. A collection of essays arising from the conference, representative of its broad scope, is currently being considered by a publisher; it will be jointly edited by myself and John Kitchen. I also recommend visiting the Vimeo page for updates, since it is hoped that further videos of the conference can be posted there in due course. ✨

Andrew Woolley (University of Edinburgh)

See esp. Clive Brown, *Classical & Romantic Performing Practice 1750–1900* (Oxford, 1999).



TAMING THE BEASTS

En route to perform at St Cecilia's Hall in Edinburgh, Laura Tivendale recollects her experiences with historical harpsichords of one sort or another. Happily, she has discovered that the considerable efforts entailed usually pay dividends

I always have a slight sense of trepidation when I am off to perform on an historical harpsichord. My engagement at St. Cecilia's Hall is no exception; a rehearsal on the day of the concert to adjust to an unfamiliar and possibly demanding instrument, in a new environment. I have had a rather love-hate relationship with the historical instruments I have performed on, and I have often been known to refer to them as 'The Beasts'. You have to get to know and befriend them; if you make the effort, they will usually give a lot back in return. As a student, my

teacher's advice was that one needed a secure technique to cope with them. More than that, you have to be flexible, both technically and musically. You need to be accommodating in your expectations and performance ideals, but this in itself often brings new light to the music, perhaps regarding the choice of tempo or phrasing. These instruments require respect, understanding, awareness, technical ability and musical prowess. With this effort 'The Beasts' can in fact become close friends and produce the most stunning musical results.

On the long train journey from London to Edinburgh, I start to think about the programme, and the harpsichords I have played this repertoire on during the last couple of years. I can recall seventeen instruments; eleven modern copies and six historical ones. A number of the latter particularly stand out for giving me, and I hope my audiences, memorable experiences. Playing the Bach Prelude in G major, BWV 902 on the 1787 Shudi and Broadwood at Hatchlands needed a quick change in my registration plan. The single eight foot sounded quite thin and fragile to start with, so I changed the order of registration to accommodate this and balance the sound. It gave quite a lyrical and sensitive performance; however creating subtle articulation was particularly hard work. Performing Handel's Chaconne in G major (HWV 435) on the 1761 Shudi at Fenton House, gave me my first experience of a machine stop with pedals. After some hasty notes in my score and a little experimenting, the pedals allowed for greater freedom to enjoy all the various colours the harpsichord had to offer, creating a rich and sumptuous sound. C.P.E. Bach's *La Folia* presented another opportunity to have some fun with a machine stop, this time on the elaborate 1770 Shudi and Broadwood at Fenton House. The touch of this instrument was heavy and demanding, but the result of such hard and precise work was a full, rich and powerful sound. This,

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combined with the quirky registrations heightened the drama of the piece. Playing Peter Thresh's newly restored 1763 Miglia at the Little Missenden Festival brought such power and colour to the Scarlatti Sonatas K.318 and K.319. It produced an amazing differentiation between the voices with a greater clarity than I have heard before. It was incredibly hard work, with a wide octave span and heavy touch, but also immensely rewarding. The same could be said of the 1785 Portuguese harpsichord by Antunes at Finchcocks, which added the excitement of pedals to allow for rapid changes of registration. I have yet to have the opportunity to play on an original French instrument and I am delighted that I will be giving my Edinburgh recital on the 1755 double-manual harpsichord by Luigi Baillon, on which, in addition to the above works, I shall also be playing pieces by Rameau and Couperin, making the most of the eighteenth-century French sound.

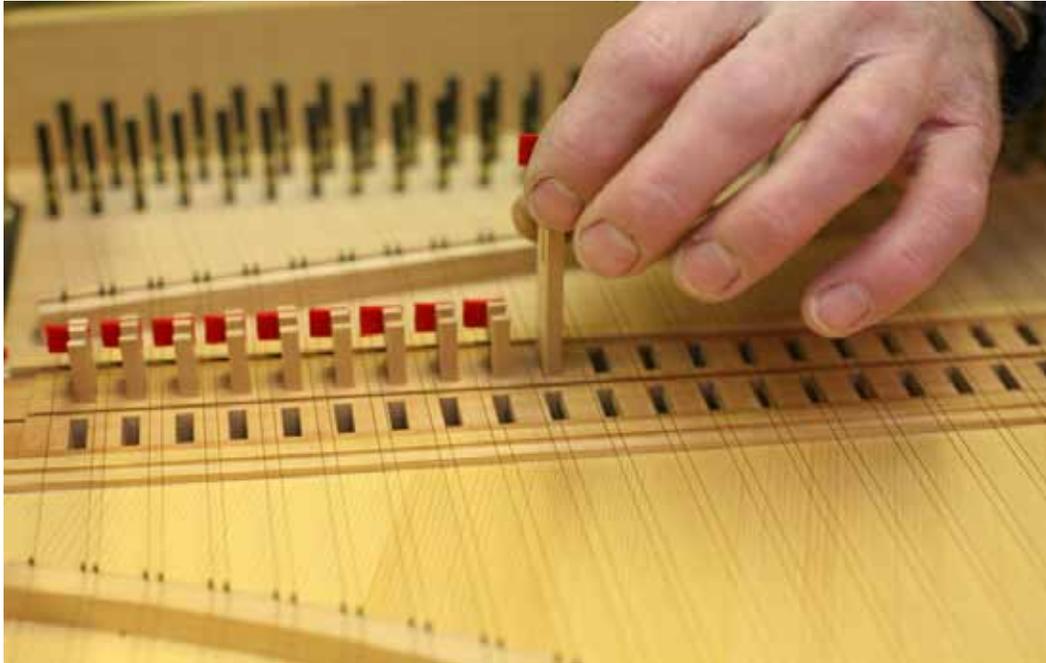
As I walk into St. Cecilia's Hall I am struck by the beauty of the harpsichord which I am to befriend that day; it really is a stunning instrument, beautifully decorated with *chinoiserie* scenes. I am greeted by John Raymond, who lovingly cares for these instruments, and I am immediately warned that it is rather soft voiced. It is a relief to face an instrument that is set up in

such a familiar way (my own harpsichord is a French double-manual after Goujon by Andrew Garlick) - no tricky pedals and machine stops to decipher this time! As soon as I start to play it though, I realise how different the two instruments actually are. I find that I am more aware of the keyboard than the strings and therefore feel less engagement with the sound. It is slightly unnerving having to trust my fingers more than my ears! Opening the lid fully (something I usually avoid due to personal preference) helps clarify the sound slightly for me, and I am told that it is projecting well into the hall. I play the Bach Prelude and realise that a very subtle level of articulation is also possible here. Moving to the Fughetta, I have to work harder than normal to create shape and interest, but the lighter chords and upbeats feel surprisingly easy and spritely. When I rehearse the Rameau, I discover how deliberate the attack must be, to ensure the bass notes speak clearly. I also need to slow the ornaments slightly to make sure that notes are fully cleared before repeating. This results in a slightly slower approach to tempo, which has the positive effect of allowing me greater time to truly shape each phrase. I work through my

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programme making similar adjustments to tempo, phrasing, ornaments and seeing how far I can push this instrument (and myself) to achieve the results I am seeking. After a couple of hours I realise how tiring this is and how hard I have been making my fingers work to compensate for an uneven and unfamiliar touch. A little stroll soaking up the colourful atmosphere of the Festival and mulling over my rehearsal is called for!

The concert goes extremely well. I am greeted by an excited and interested audience, and I wonder if they have any idea the lengths we as harpsichordists go to, in order to accommodate the different instruments we are presented with? The harpsichord holds its own, and I constantly give myself pointers to ensure I handle it with as much sensitivity and finesse as I can muster. The result is a rewarding performance of repertoire I know and love, but have never before played in quite the same way. I look forward to giving a performance of the same programme again next month. That concert will be performed on a modern copy of a French harpsichord - quite different, and which I am sure will bring its very own trials and tribulations! ✨



TUNE IN, DROP OUT?

Simon Neal reflects on some career highs and lows as a harpsichord tuner (ah, the good old days when you could check an instrument into an aircraft hold!) but also highlights a worrying trend: when will the next generation of harpsichord tuners materialise?

When I rather recklessly promised an article for this edition, it prompted me to air something that had recently been on my mind. I realise that probably few readers will know who I am, so a brief insight to my work as a harpsichord tuner, and how I got into it, might serve as a useful background. I decided at school that I wanted to become an organist. OK, already I may have lost some readers, but please don't turn off yet! I read music and studied the organ at the University of East Anglia, and also ended up doing a lot of piano accompaniment. My tutor introduced me to a great friend of his, Michael Thomas, who had a large collection of antique keyboard instruments in his rambling Norfolk mansion. This started what turned out to be a lifelong fascination with the harpsichord. I often visited Michael and his collection in my time at UEA, and he even lent me a harpsichord to house at the university, on which I could accompany those students who ventured into the baroque repertoire. Trying to work out how to tune the thing (and replace broken strings!) was my first experience into the mysteries of the technology of the instrument. Little did I know where it would lead...

After UEA came the Royal College of Music, where I did a year's postgraduate course in piano accompaniment, with harpsichord as second study. There was no early music department there in those days, and most of my harpsichord time, apart from lessons with Ruth Dyson, was shared between the baroque orchestra, run by Cat Mackintosh, and accompanying her violin pupils, as well as the recorder pupils of Ross Winters. The resident harpsichord in those days was a Goble Concert model, and although its solid structure kept it amazingly in tune, its upkeep was certainly not a priority for the overworked piano technician. My realisation that the mechanical issues of the instrument might be as pertinent as the artistic ones, led to my enrolment on the tuning and maintenance classes at the then Early Music Centre (EMC): In a warehouse in the City, one evening a week, you could go along to study a myriad of early-music related subjects, from building a lute or harp, to singing, dancing or perhaps learning the shawn, crumhorn or hurdy-gurdy. As you can imagine, it wasn't a particularly quiet place, but somehow Don Mackinnon and Mimi Waitzman managed to find a secluded room, with thick walls, in which to run their weekly harpsichord maintenance class. So it was that I spent my Thursday evenings with a group of enthusiastic (and often baffled) students; Don and his amazing electronic devices and Mimi with her charts and diagrams of various temperaments. It was a shame this only lasted one term, but it succeeded in getting me under the bonnet of the harpsichord.

My time at the RCM soon ended, and I was out on the street wondering how on earth to find a job. After some horrendous months of attempting to force less than enthusiastic school children to play scales on the piano, I got a call out of the blue from Mimi inviting me round to their workshop 'for a chat'. This chat turned into an invitation to have some more tuning lessons, with an eye to helping them out a bit with their hiring work. I gladly accepted, thinking this might help a little in my (by now) urgent quest to earn a living. Luckily I had a harpsichord at home, a cheap kit, rather badly put together, so now I spent many hours practising my tempered intervals of various shapes and sizes. After some intensive weeks of tuning, I was out on the road with Mimi. It was straight in at the deep end, because my first jobs included the English Bach Festival's Rameau productions, and Christopher Hogwood's recordings of the Mozart Symphonies.

Soon after this I met Richard Clayson and Andrew Garrett, who had heard that there was a new kid on the block who might be able to help with their hire work. Richard was especially keen on this for two reasons - he and Andrew had just purchased a new Goetze & Gwynn chamber organ that was quickly becoming popular, and he had also just helped deliver a brand-new, six octave fortepiano by Derek Adlam, to Melvyn Tan, which was going to need a lot of moving and tuning. Thus I was hurled into the world of organ and fortepiano care, which required a good set of muscles as much as a good pair of ears!

This all happened in the mid-1980s, and for me there then followed 15 years

riding on the crest of the early-music wave, when players (and tuners) never seemed short of work. There were many memorable projects, both artistic and logistic! Two I remember in particular. The Monteverdi Choir and the European Union Baroque Orchestra. EUBO is a training scheme that helps players bridge the gap between conservatoire and professional life. Ever since one of their first tours, when a Greek concert promoter tried to convince director Ton Koopman that a pair of Steinways were really harpsichords, the orchestra has equipped itself with a pair of small Italian harpsichords, complete with flight cases, which they have travelled with across the world. Flying with these instruments as normal hold luggage is now virtually impossible, but then it was quite normal to check them in, with the weight absorbed by the group baggage allowance. Of course this was not without its risks, and I have had to make some hasty repairs after baggage handlers have seen the words 'fragile, this way up' as a challenge rather than helpful advice. Somewhere I have a picture of a harpsichord wedged firmly in the opening of the airport luggage belt in Valencia, where staff were convinced it was small enough to be delivered along with the suitcases. EUBO has certainly provided me with the most exotic concert locations, ranging from South America to the Gaza Strip, Soweto and China, to name but a few.

Gardiner and his Monteverdi Choir also provided some unusual logistical challenges. During the Monteverdi 250th anniversary the organ builder Robin Jennings and I took seven instruments on a European tour alternating performances of the Vespers and *Poppea*. Having to criss-cross the Alps in January we equipped ourselves with shovels, sand and snow chains, but ironically the only place we had to dig ourselves out of the snow was the English rehearsal room! The tight schedule often required us each to tune a group of instruments at the same time on opposite sides of the stage simultaneously, and being locked into a freezing cold Cremona Cathedral in the middle of the night to tune everything for an early rehearsal the next day stands out from the many memories of that trip (which prompted me to write a separate article for *Harpsichord & Fortepiano Magazine*). Another 90s project of a fully staged, annual Mozart opera, saw me driving a fortepiano to Paris, Lisbon and Italy on a regular basis. As we were resident in each place for two or three weeks at a time, I found myself asked to transport all sorts of extras, from some of the smaller props to Gardiner children's pogo sticks and bikes, in addition to four dozen of his farm's best eggs - which all arrived intact I'm relieved to say.

The Bach Cantata tour of 2001 was the most amazing project of all these for me. Tuning the specially built chamber organ and a Mietke-copy harpsichord (by Robin Jennings and Andrew Wooderson respectively) in most of the European venues associated with Bach (and some not, such as New York), was something impossible to beat.

Just after this project a 'mid-life crisis' struck and I decided to retire from my

tuning work. I felt I'd got as far as I could progress with the work artistically, and the physical and anti-social demands of the job, such as lifting heavy organs and fortepianos, driving miles, working stupid hours and always when others were having their breaks, were all getting on top of me (literally, in the case of the instruments!). I was keen to have more regular hours, be employed, and see another side of the music business, or so I thought!

Very luckily The Sixteen soon had a position for me and I started a five year stint in their Oxford office, which meant moving house from London. That said, I never really gave up tuning completely and found myself doing bits and pieces in my free time. When The Sixteen decided to move to London, my nagging feelings of missing the old life, coincided with an offer from Trevor Pinnock to become his PA and tuner, so this persuaded me back into my old work, despite the reasons cited earlier for giving up!!

Of course I couldn't walk back into all my precious jobs, so I was forced to carve out a slightly different pattern of work, but thanks to Trevor and a variety of friends happy to use my instruments and services again, I managed to beat a slightly more user-friendly and social path in the way I operated.

Perhaps I have spent too long describing my past, but it is to make a point - I want to give a flavour of my way of life as a sort of advertisement. The reason is that those of us in the business of instrument hire, instrument making and related jobs, have realised that as we all near retirement, that there is hardly anyone to succeed us. With my work with EUBO, teaching and coaching on their annual audition courses, I am continually surprised by the difference in technical education that harpsichordists receive. Usually this knowledge, or often a worrying lack of it, depends in which country their education took place. The UK was often lagging behind, but there is now some specialised teaching of tuning in some of the UK conservatoires, which is a great improvement since my day. I wonder if any suggestion is made of alternative career possibilities, if work as a performer never materialises? I often ask myself why aren't there more people who have come down the same path as I did. Why is there so little interest in being involved in this small but vital part of the music industry? Perhaps we are heading back to the days when players supply their own instruments and tune them. How then do we cater for visiting players from overseas? Who is going to build new instruments?

So I end this article with these questions left open and welcome any comments that readers might have. Since talking to people a bit more about my concerns I have come across a couple of younger people that may help to keep these skills alive, but not many. I have also recently had some interesting informal conversations with establishments in the postgraduate educational scene, so I wait with interest to see whether the ideas discussed go any further, but it remains a concern seeing what might happen to these professions in the not too distant future. ✨

THANK THE MAKER!

David Law picks up where the previous article left off to offer some further thoughts and ask the question: What is the future of keyboard instrument making?

Back in the late sixties and through the seventies, there was a great feeling of excitement surrounding the whole early music scene; Everyone was in the process of finding out, and where the instruments were concerned that meant lots of young people trying things out. Often things didn't work (remember all this 'improved' jacks and metal or resin registers?). Not to mention the kits, few of which survive now. The big challenge in those days was to make something with a good sound. We learnt excellence in execution later. But most people spent some time with other, usually older, makers, or worked together, bouncing ideas off each other. Workshops were often rather rudimentary, machines small and decidedly crude.

Then as time went on, new workshops were established, makers took on assistants or apprentices, and the quality of work increased. We even had official courses in polytechnics! The future seemed assured. There was much research done, old instruments were painstakingly restored, and recorded, so we could hear what these fine instruments sounded like. This had, of course, been going on in the violin industry forever but these academic and practical principles were now applied to all early instruments. Many of us have intimate knowledge of numbers of antique instruments now in various collections both private and public.

The dearth of new makers was brought home to me a couple of years ago. Somebody rang to ask if I did such-and-such, and when I said yes, the reply was: 'Oh good, it seems most of you are dying off'. It seems we are missing not one generation, but two

I think we'd like to be sure that this body of knowledge remains for the future. But where are the younger makers, repairers and restorers? I can think of just three working with early keyboard instruments; there may be more but certainly not many. This was brought home to me a couple of years ago when I received a telephone call, somebody asked if I still did such and such, and I said yes, to which the reply was 'Oh good, it seems most of you are dying off". We seem to be missing not one generation but two. Why?

It may be that in this increasingly material world, few young people wish to work for small rewards, after all we don't as a rule make a fortune; pop stars, footballers and just occasionally artists do that. We who take pride in our work rarely respond positively to 'how much longer...'. (The answer is usually: 'When it's ready!') Business plan? What's that? But I don't believe every one is so mercenary.

There has to be a reason why this problem has slipped past us. The usual explanation is that if you work for yourself, alone, then the mere thought of finding the time to train someone else fills us with dread; we all take complete responsibility for our work, and shy away from doing the same for somebody else. But, I have come to believe there are other reasons. In crafts as in industry, there are no more apprentices. The idea of this has gone, the only education worth anything is academic, the only work to be lauded is clean, the sort of work that most of us think of as non-creative. In schools, sharp tools are avoided. In work, anywhere, the idea of any sort of personal responsibility either for your own safety or for the result of your actions is actively legislated against. Employers are terrified of employees tripping over and suing. It's not daft of course to make life safe, but at the expense of making anything at all? That's insane.

Yet here we are; our industry has all but gone, mostly to China it seems, and we are left with the Health and Safety at Work problem. Twice a year somebody from there telephones to ask to come and check my premises and machinery; depending on my mood they get a more or less polite refusal. I know that I'm very safety conscious, rarely do I injure myself, or damage the materials I work with. This is OK, so long as I don't have anyone else working in my workshops. If I were to employ, or have an assistant (free or self employed) I estimate that half my old and revered machines would have to be replaced, the other tools and machines would need twice as much space around them as I have, and I would be expected to fit finger trapping guards to pillar drills. I'd need to add doors and a host of other things. The result is that I work entirely alone; the result of that is that I'm not passing on any knowledge. This applies to so many people in so many related fields. I have a reasonable amount of archival material, with no time to sort it and make it useful. My paperwork alone eats into my time, thank goodness I'm not working in Italy, or I'd have to add VAT paperwork to everything else (everyone must be VAT

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registered there, Italian accountants are difficult to convince that one simply doesn't have a VAT number...) And accountants have a hard time believing in the sort of stuff you need to actually make things, having usually not created anything using wood, metal, paint etc in their short lives. I remember one registering disbelief over the cost of colour- corrected fluorescent tubes, essential for colour-matching finishes when restoring. There is more than one generation that know nothing of real practical issues. I remember my younger son starting at the local senior school, in a tech class (they call it 'resistive materials' now!), and being required to cut things. 'Can't I just use the bandsaw, Sir?' he asked, and then, when the answer was no: 'Well, I do at home, Sir, bigger bandsaw than that too!' was his reply. Most of the class had probably never been allowed anything sharp enough to cut anything, ever - not even a carrot!

Maybe there's no-one out there wanting to make things anymore, but I doubt it. We should all be doing what we can to make sure all the work that has gone into learning how early instruments work is available to all those budding harpsichordists out there, and they are not left to mend the instruments all by themselves

So, can we heal this gaping wound in our industry? I like the remedy Sir Paul Drayson thought up to address the problem of the lack of engineers in the UK. Every time there's a really big project, such as Concorde or the space race in the sixties, the number of engineers at universities increases. So he took Richard Noble aside, and asked him if he wouldn't mind having a go at the world land speed record again, please, and this time, why not try to reach 1000 mph? So Bloodhound (go on, Google it) was born; the car will run in 2012 having put engineering firmly in the minds of large numbers of school children of all ages, through a comprehensive education programme, and against all financial odds. So what can we do? Perhaps plead with our government that the Health and Safety Executive be disbanded, or at least have its teeth pulled, with regard to very small businesses. Reverse the stupid idea that you should be protected legally from the remote possibility of a cut finger; personal responsibility for your own safety and for the quality of your work should be actively encouraged, rather than the opposite. Maybe there's no-one out there wanting to make things anymore, but I doubt it. We should all be doing what we can to make sure all the work that has gone into learning how early instruments work is available to all those budding harpsichordists out there, and they are not left to mend the instruments all by themselves. ✱

