

BCS TANGENTS

The Bulletin of the
Boston Clavichord Society
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Howard Schott (1923-2005)

Peter Sykes

An event honoring the life of Howard Schott with music and remembrances will take place on Sunday, November 13 at 7pm at First Church in Cambridge. All friends and admirers of Howard are invited to attend.

Howard Schott died on June 23, 2005.

Howard was a graduate of Yale University and Yale Law School. In mid-life he left a career in international law and recommenced the



Howard Schott

study of keyboards and keyboard music. He received his D. Phil from Oxford in 1978.

Howard was involved with the Boston Clavichord Society from its very beginnings. He served on the BCS Artistic Advisory Board from 1995 until his death. His last article in *Early Music* was entitled "The Clavichord Revival, 1800-1960." One paragraph within the article is particularly telling:

"The word 'revival' necessarily implies an antecedent demise. In truth the clavichord never quite died. Rather, it slumbered for decades...the clavichord continued to live on as a domestic and teaching instrument...playing its essential role as the keyboard of first instruction."

Howard's own role was also one of instruction; he tirelessly advocated for the clavichord and its use and was frequently found at clavichord-related meetings, recit-

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The Clavichord in the Education of a Keyboardist

Renée Geoffrion

Renée Geoffrion of Pierre-Buffière, France will appear in recital for the BCS on October 30, 2005.

Learning how to play a keyboard instrument implies working on a connection between a physical contact (digital perception) and a sound. Thus the clavierist must develop in the course of his or her apprenticeship an infinity of ways to touch for an infinity of shades produced. The beginner discovers this connection; for the experienced musician, the desire to produce a precise sound is in itself the motor of technical realization.

It troubles me to install barriers between the harpsichord, the clavichord, the pianoforte, the romantic piano and the modern piano. The modern piano is itself an historical instrument. Its evolution was complete more than a century ago. Ideally I try to present all the keyboard instruments, as well as their respective repertoires, to students, leaving them the freedom to orient themselves during their musical development towards a more or less early period, according to their individual taste.

Presently I am undertaking two types of experiments with respect to teaching the clavichord. My first set of experiments involves private music lessons where the teacher uses indifferently the piano and the clavichord with beginning students. My husband, Louis-Philippe Rivet, has contributed his experiences to this part of my report. The second kind of experiment has taken place in music schools and has involved students already having knowledge of a keyboard instrument (most often the piano).

Private Lessons

The clavichord is an excellent instrument for a first contact with a keyboard. The experience is simultaneously auditory, visual and sensory (tactile, etc.), so several steps need to be taken by the teacher. First, the teacher should play a few short pieces of different styles and character in order to

give the student an auditory introduction to the instrument. This is done so that the student's ear perceives the volume, register and tone quality of the instrument. Second, the teacher should explain and demonstrate posture, placement of arms, hand and fingers to produce a "nice" sound. This must be done along with pointing out the mechanism of the clavichord (how the clavichord produces sound). Third, the stu-



Renée Geoffrion's workshop

dent should be given an opportunity to try out the instrument. The teacher plays short exercises and encourages the student to imitate what was just played. This step not only enables the teacher to guide and correct the student's playing, but, above all, gives the teacher the opportunity to make the student aware of the most

crucial and important factor in music-making: acute attention to the sounds one produces ("self-hearing").

This step emphasizes that tone quality is a reward for a well-organized gesture (both for the beginner and for the accomplished musician). Beginners need to become aware of the placement and disposition of the hand/finger, the lift of the finger, firmness of touch (involving the amount of force used, pressure and quickness), a clear attack for the sound being produced, steadiness in holding a note (duration of the sound), vibrato effects, and a clean release of the key, i.e., silence

The clavichord opens the ears at first encounter. Compared to other keyboard instruments, it places the musician in direct contact with sound production and creates a situation where no note can be taken for

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The Clavichord as the Key to All Other Keyboard Instruments

Bernard Brauchli

Editor's Introduction: Following is part two of an article by the clavichord historian and performer Bernard Brauchli. Part one appeared in the last issue of *Tangents* (#18). The *Tangents* article is a shortened version of a much longer article by Brauchli that appeared in *de Clavicordio V: Proceedings of the International Clavichord Symposium [Magnano, Italy, 2001, pp. 45-61]*.

Johann Nikolau Forkel (1749-1818) was the first biographer of J. S. Bach. Forkel wrote: "His [Bach's] preference was for the clavichord. In his opinion harpsichords lacked soul, even if a totally different style of performance was used on them, and the pianofortes (sic!) was still only at a first stage of development during his lifetime... He found it [the clavichord] the most able to express his most refined thoughts..."

Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748) was a cousin of J.S. Bach. He wrote of the clavichord: "This well-known instrument is, so to speak, the first grammar of all players, for, when they master it, they can also succeed on the spinet, the harpsichord, the regal, the positive, and the organ."

The important scholar and musician Jacob Adlung (1699-1762) wrote in his first treatise *Anleitung zu der musikalischen Gelahrtheit* (Erfurt, 1758): "A clavichord is the best keyboard instrument for learning; and also for performing, if one wants to execute ornaments and Affects well."

A similar thought was expressed by Georg Simon Löhlein (1725-1781) in his *Clavier-Schule* (a treatise largely inspired by C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch*): "Without doubt any clavichord is better for a beginner than a harpsichord or pianoforte, and experience confirms this, for whoever learns on these instruments will never obtain the refinement in touch and expression of one who has started on the clavichord." This affirmation is particularly significant, as it mentions specifically the beneficial effects of the clavichord for the touch, and this even when the fortepiano was already widespread.

Charles Burney (1726-1814), the famous music historian, relates that while he was in Vienna he heard an eight or nine-year-old child playing the fortepiano astonishingly well. He wrote: "I inquired of Signor Giorgio, an Italian, who attend-

ed her, upon what instrument she usually practiced at home, and was answered 'on the Clavichord.' This accounts for her expression, and convinces me that children should learn upon that, or a Piano Forte, very early, and be obliged to give an expression to Lady Coventry's Minuet, or whatever is their first tune; otherwise, after long practice on a monotonous harpsichord, however useful for strengthening the hand, the case is hopeless."

The most famous eighteenth-century keyboard treatise is certainly the "*Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*" (Berlin, 1753 and 1762), written by one of

"Without doubt any clavichord is better for a beginner than a harpsichord or pianoforte, & experience confirms this..."

the greatest composers for the clavichord, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788). Bach advises: "Every keyboard instrument player must own a good harpsichord and a good clavichord, which allows him to play all kinds of things interchangeably. He who plays well on the clavichord will also be an accomplished harpsichordist, but not the reverse....those who concentrate on the harpsichord grow accustomed to playing in only one color, and the varied touch that only a good clavichord player can bring to the harpsichord remains hidden, surprising as it may seem when one would think that all fingers should produce the same kind of sound on the harpsichord. A demonstration of this can be given very easily by asking two persons, one who plays the clavichord well, and the other exclusively the harpsichord, to perform the same piece on the harpsichord one after the other, and judge if they produce the same effect."

Daniel Gottlob Türk (1750-1813) in his remarkable pedagogical treatise *Klavierschule* wrote: "At least in the beginning, the clavichord is unquestionably the best suited for learning, for on no other keyboard instrument is it possible to achieve finesse in playing as well as on this one. If, in addition, a harpsichord or a good pianoforte could be acquired later, the

pupil would gain even more, for by playing these instruments, the fingers achieve more strength and elasticity ... Whoever is not able to have [all these] instruments should choose the clavichord."

Thus, all these authors agree that the clavichord develops the sensitivity of touch of the performer; it will give him the opportunity to play in many different shades and colors; and it is only through this preparation that a harpsichordist will then be able to produce the same variety of touch on a harpsichord, which otherwise does sound very monotonous. Furthermore, it is on the clavichord that a player best develops skill in the art of articulation, a skill which can be applied to great benefit when playing either the early pianoforte or the modern piano. Ω

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Clavichord Symposium at the 2005 Boston Early Music Festival

David Schulenberg

As in 2003, the BCS hosted a symposium on clavichords and related topics during the 2005 Boston Early Music Festival. Once again the symposium took place in the Regis Auditorium of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which co-sponsored the event. Four internationally known speakers traveled to Boston to give their presentations, which took place on Thursday, June 16. David Schulenberg, a member of the BCS Board and professor of music at Wagner College in New York City, organized and moderated the event.

The first of two sessions, "Clavichords Seen and Heard," opened with a greeting from Darcy Kuronen, Curator of Musical Instruments at the museum. Laurence Libin, Research Curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, gave the first presentation

"New Light on Tannenberg's Clavichords." Expanding the report published in the spring, 2005 *Tangents* ("A Tannenberg Clavichord Identified") Libin discussed an instrument in the collection of the Moravian Historical Society in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. Through a fascinating combination of archival research and organological study, Libin demonstrated that the instrument was made in 1761 by David Tannenberg, the leading early American organ builder, and is therefore the oldest known surviving American clavichord.

Teri Noel Towe, a scholar of early recordings (and an attorney with the New York law firm of Ganz & Holliger) followed with "Gramophonade: Recordings of Bach on the Clavichord by Arnold Dolmetsch and his Pupils." The talk was dedicated to Howard Schott,¹ whose article on a related subject appeared in the November 2004 issue of *Early Music*. Towe discussed the evidence preserved in early recordings about performance traditions, extending back into the nineteenth century. He played selections from several rare, commercially unavailable recordings: Arnold Dolmetsch playing the prelude and fugue in D and

the prelude in B-flat from part 1 of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (also Dolmetsch's very rare 1921 acoustic recording of Bach's G-major toccata on harpsichord); a 1941 BBC interview with Violet Gordon Woodhouse that included her performance of the prelude in C from the *WTC1* as well as her amusing clavichord version of Mendelssohn's overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and two pieces by Herbert Howells, performed in concert by Ruth Dyson in 1990.

The second session, "Clavichords in Context," began with John Koster: "From Clavichord to Virginal: Technical and Social Transition in the Sixteenth Century." Koster is Conservator at the National Music Museum and Professor of Music at the University of South Dakota, both in Vermillion. He demonstrated how virginals gradually replaced clavichords in

the output of Flemish instrument makers during the Renaissance. Like Libin, he worked from a combination of documentary and organological sources, showing the importance of both archival and physical evidence for reconstructing the history of early instruments.

The session closed with a multimedia presentation by Peggy F. Baird, a scholar of musical iconography and a piano teacher for academically gifted students in Huntsville, Alabama. Her presentation was entitled "Quiet Music for the Eye: The Clavichord in Art."² Among the works discussed were two little-known paintings in American collections: "A Double Portrait of the Artist at the Clavichord" attributed to F. How (ca. 1650) in the Springfield Art Museum in Missouri, and the recently discovered "Woman in a Floral Dress Playing the Clavichord" by Franz Joseph Degle (1724-1812), dated 1763, from an American private collection. The latter includes a legible score for a Menueto in D (characterized by several sets of triplets and parallel thirds in the treble part). David Schulenberg performed the latter on the museum's Schiedmayer

clavichord, but after some discussion of the possible authorship of the minuet it remains unidentified. ³ Ω

Editors Notes

¹ Howard Schott was ill at the time of BEMF. He died a few days later. See the article about Schott on p. 1 of this issue.

² Ms. Baird's handout is enclosed with this bulletin.

³ Ms. Baird also discussed the painting "Young Woman Playing a Clavichord" that is in the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, MA, a painting that was reproduced in issue 15 of this newsletter (now bulletin). She drew attention to the silver gilt goblet behind the young woman, perhaps filled with gold coins. The young woman is about seven or eight years old. Experts believe that she is the daughter of the future emperor, Charles V, and that the painting was made at the time when her family arranged her betrothal to a nephew of the Pope. (Portraits were often made to celebrate important occasions.) The goblet may have been given by his family to hers at that time. This gift might also be a communion cup. Playing the clavichord might represent the anticipated harmony between the two families as a result of the impending marriage.

Tannenberg Clavichord Colloquium

A colloquium will be held July 11-15, 2006 to celebrate the discovery of the oldest known American clavichord, made by the German-American organ builder David Tannenberg (1728-1804). Participants will closely examine original documents and technical evidence surrounding identification of the clavichord and two others closely related to it. The first half of the colloquium will be held in historic old Salem in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The second half will take place at the Moravian Historical Society in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. Participation is limited. For further information, e-mail Laurence Libin at ksl@nic.com. Ω



Woman in a Floral Dress Playing the Clavichord (Private collection)

Fortino Plays at BEMF

Peter Sykes

On the afternoon of June 15, Sally Fortino of Basel, Switzerland, the featured soloist in this year's BCS offerings at the Boston Early Music Festival, presented a recital entitled "Fugues and Sonatas" in the chapel of the First and Second Church in Boston. A native of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Ms. Fortino earned the Diplom für alte Musik from the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis and for most of her career has lived in Basel. An active early keyboard performer and scholar, she has been for some years the curator of the Neumeier Collection of historic keyboards housed



Sally Fortino
in the *Schloss* at Bad Krozingen, Germany.
Her well-constructed program contained

fugues of Telemann, Krieger, Pachelbel, Handel and Bach, and sonatas of Wolf, Marpurg, Türk, Haydn, and Neefe. The recital offered a view of both conservative and progressive music styles; the fugues especially were beautifully expressive on the clavichord, and it was particularly satisfying to hear some works of comparatively unfamiliar composers. Ms. Fortino's sensitive and communicative performance served this music very well indeed. The sound of the 1972 Goble clavichord (formerly owned by the late Howard Schott) carried throughout the vaulting space of the chapel. Ω

Two Duos at BEMF

Alan Durfee

During BEMF 2005, the BCS organized a double duo concert to demonstrate the use of the clavichord with other instruments. The concert was held at an elegant early twentieth-century Boston town house, now occupied by the Goethe Institut. Music was played in the large front room and the reception that followed was held in the room just behind it. (It was in the rear room that the original owners held musical events, this purpose evident in the ornate wall decorations with musical instruments. The front room was the sitting room.)

The songs of Schubert and other composers of the nineteenth century are well known. Less well known are the songs of the late eighteenth century, the early German *Lieder*. Most of this repertoire is found in musical collections intended for amateurs, who performed these for their own amusement or for a small audience at home. Some of the emotion-laden songs were addressed to the clavichord.

Typical verses were "Gentle clavier, what delights you bring me," "Tears of joy moisten the strings!" "When life's cares whirl about me, you speak to me, trusty clavier," and "Be greeted by me enchanting clavier! What no language names rightly, the sickness deep within me, which my tongue confesses, I cry to you." Such songs might appear in weekly music magazines intended specifically for this amateur audience. Indeed the beginning

of a piece could be in the current issue, but its conclusion in the subsequent one, thus guaranteeing another purchase.

A group of these songs, selected by Sally Fortino,¹ was performed by soprano Laura Marshall (a recent graduate of the early music vocal performance program



Goethe Institut, Boston

of the Longy School of Music) with Sally accompanying her on the clavichord. Some of the song titles were *To my Clavier*, *To the Moon*, *To Roses*, and *The Fate of a Virtuoso* (a fate which, needless to say, is wretched). Prior to the concert, many of us were wondering how soprano and clavichord would adapt to each other. It turned out that this combina-

tion worked beautifully; the two have such different timbres that each is easily heard. It was wonderful to hear this music so finely performed.

The second half of the concert was performed by Mary Oleskiewicz on baroque flute (a transverse flute after Quantz) and David Schulenberg on clavichord. The first piece, Sonata in G minor for obligato keyboard and treble instrument is attributed to J.S. Bach. The remaining works were by two of his sons, Wilhelm Friedemann (Sonata in E minor for flute and basso continuo) and Carl Philipp Emanuel (Fantasia in E-flat for keyboard and Sonata in D for flute and continuo). We usually hear a baroque flute accompanied by harpsichord or fortepiano, but these performers showed how natural the clavichord is in the accompanying role. The texture of the music was transparent and the performance was eloquent throughout.

When the concert concluded, the doors at the end of the room were thrown open to reveal tables laden with sandwiches, fruit, cakes and cookies, the whole accompanied by--quite appropriately--German wine.

It is to be hoped that we will hear more concerts with these combinations, and that we too at home will sing our deepest emotions to the clavichord. Ω

*A collection of early German *lieder*, edited by Fortino, is forthcoming from Drake Mabry Publishing Co.