

An Interview with Lothar Bemann

Beverly Woodward

Lothar Bemann is the current president of the German Clavichord Society (Deutsche Clavichord Societät). In the following interview with the editor of *Tangents* he speaks of the history and the activities of the DCS.

BW: When was the German Clavichord Society founded and by whom?

LB: The German Clavichord Society was founded in 1993 in Gelsenkirchen-Hassel. There were 22 founding members. The idea had arisen in late 1992 during a meeting organized by Alfred Gross. Clavichord players and builders, musicologists, and some interested amateurs came together in southern Germany (Pfullingen). After a long discussion about how to promote the clavichord, we decided to found the German Clavichord Society. The society is a registered society in Germany (an *eingetragener Verein*) and currently has 168 members.

BW: Where is the society based and who are the officers?

LB: Our first official address was in Northheim. Now it is in Göttingen. The presidents have been Jean Tournay (Belgium), Alfred Gross (Reutlingen), Michael Zapf (Frankfurt/Dreieich), and now myself (Göttingen). The other current officers are Dorothea Demel, vice-president, Volker-Ekkehard Krüger, secretary, and Antoinette Hermert-Grün, treasurer. Officers are elected every two years.

BW: Since your Board members live in different places in Germany, how do you manage to coordinate the activities of the society?

LB: We use e-mails, letters and conference calls. Sometimes we have a face-to-face meeting.

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C.P.E. Bach: The Complete Works

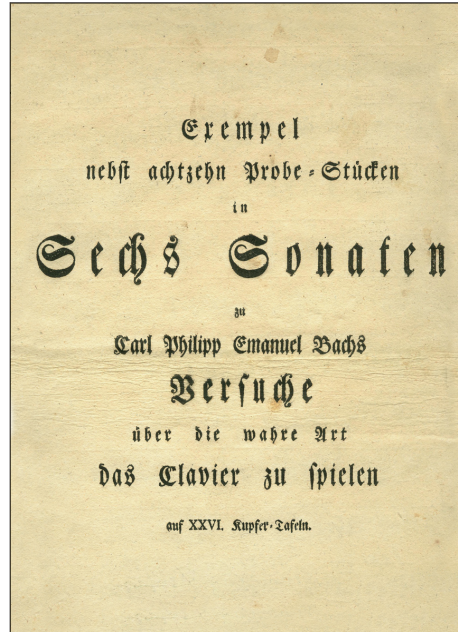
David Schulenberg

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788) is arguably the composer most closely associated with the clavichord. Until now, the absence of a collected scholarly edition of his music has been a great inconvenience to those seeking reliable texts of his keyboard works. All lovers of the clavichord will therefore be glad to learn that *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: The Complete Works* has issued its first volumes of keyboard music, along with other works by the second son of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The series is published by the Packard Humanities Institute. Directed by a board headed by BCS Artistic Adviser Christopher Hogwood, the project has editorial offices in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Contributing editors whose names may be familiar to friends of the BCS include Miklós Spányi and Mary Oleskiewicz. Already published are two volumes of solo keyboard music, the *Sei concerti per il cembalo concertato*, W. 43,* (designated vol. III/8 in the series) and four orchestral symphonies, W. 183 (vol. III/3). All volumes include detailed introductions and textual commentaries, as well as new critical editions of the music. Many volumes include early as well as later versions of the same pieces, the revised versions often incorporating ornaments, embellishments, and cadenzas absent from the composer's first drafts.

The first of the solo keyboard volumes (vol. I/8.2) is edited by Peter Wollny and contains a large number of early and miscellaneous pieces. Along with the familiar character pieces, many of which Bach published in the late 1750s, are works that have never previously been printed—not even in Darrell Berg's six-volume

facsimile edition *The Collected Works for Solo Keyboard by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach 1714-1788* (New York: Garland, 1985). Among these are dance movements and other pieces from the composer's formative years, as well as later compositions such as the four duetti for two keyboard instruments and the shorter pieces for a single keyboard instrument that constitute their original form.



Title page of the musical supplement to C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, volume 1 (Berlin, 1753), from The Bach Collection of Marcellene and Walter Mayhall

The present writer is responsible for a volume (vol. I/3) containing four sets of sonatas, including the eighteen *Probestücke* first published in 1753 to accompany the first volume of the composer's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments). In the same volume are the six *Neue Clavier-Stücke* or sonatinas later added to the *Probestücke*, as well as the six *Leichte Sonaten* and six *Sonates à l'usage des dames* first published

in about 1766 and 1770. These works have appeared previously, but never in a critical edition of this sort, which has involved detailed examination of over one hundred manuscript and printed sources. In addition to many small refinements of the musical text, both volumes will provide the most detailed account available of the sources

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Fleischman & Sykes Present Benefit Recital

On September 10, 2005, Maximilian Fleischman and Peter Sykes presented a house concert in Medfield, MA, in support of the BCS 2005-2006 recital program. The clavichords used were an instrument by Robert Goble and Sons, Oxford, 1972, and a very small clavichord by Arnold Dolmetsch, Haslemere, 1933. (The latter clavichord was described by Tim Hamilton in issue #18 of *Tangents*.) It was an uncommonly beautiful day, and following the recital a buffet reception was held in the garden of the hosts. The program of the recital follows. The first and last pieces are four-hand pieces and were played by both performers. Fleischman played the works by C.P.E. Bach and Benda; Sykes, those by J.S. Bach, Forget, and W.F. Bach. The J.S. Bach was played on the very small Dolmetsch. The piece by Forget was a prize winner in the British Clavichord Society composition competition.

The BCS expresses its heartfelt thanks to Max Fleischman, who came from Canada to participate in this event. Ω

C.P.E. Bach, continued from p.1
and sometimes complex compositional history of these works. Some of the discoveries made during the edition of volume I/3 were presented at the BCS's Clavichord Symposium during the 2003 Boston Early Music Festival.

Other volumes in preparation that will be of special interest to BCS members will contain additional keyboard sonatas and concertos as well as sonatas for flute and continuo. BCS members and others will no doubt appreciate the pricing of the new volumes, which is a fraction of what is usually charged for scholarly editions of this sort. For further information about the series, or to order volumes online, go to www.cpebach.org. Ω

Editor's Note

*A complete solo keyboard version of these works will be published later as vol. I/10.1.

- W.A. Mozart 1756-1791
Andante with Variations in G major, K.50
C.P.E. Bach 1714-1788
Fantasy in C major, W. 59/6
Sonata in C major, W. 55/1
Prestissimo
Andante
Allegretto
Jiri Antonin Benda 1722-1795
Sonata III in D minor
Allegro ma non tanto
Andantino
Allegro
J. S. Bach 1685-1750
Prelude and Fugue in E major, BWV 878
Philippe Forget b.1970
Petite Suite pour clavichorde
I. Orlando's Fury
II. Phoebe's Tango
III. Frog's Intermezzo
IV. Waltzing M...
W.F. Bach 1710-1784
Polonaise in C minor
W. A. Mozart
Sonata in C major, K. 521
Allegro
Andante
Allegretto

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TANGENTS

The Bulletin of the Boston Clavichord Society, published by The Boston Clavichord Society, P.O. Box 540515, Waltham MA 02454.

ISSN 1558-9706

<http://www.bostonclavichord.org>
Benjamin Martinez, Webmaster

The Boston Clavichord Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of the clavichord and its music. For information on becoming a Friend of the Society, please write to the above address.

TANGENTS is published biannually in the spring and in the fall, and is sent free to Friends of the BCS. Single copies and back issues can be obtained by writing to the address below.

Editor: Beverly Woodward
P.O. Box 540515,
Waltham MA 02454
Phone/Fax 781 891-0814

Graphic Design: Walden Associates

Printer: Allegra Print & Imaging
Waltham, MA

Submissions: This bulletin is a forum for its readers. We welcome articles, letters, questions and other contributions. Copy can be submitted by mail, e-mail or diskette to the Editor. Please contact her about preferred format before submission.

The copy deadlines are February 15 and September 1.

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(Bemmann, continued from p. 1)

BW: What are the organization's stated goals?

LB: Our goals are the promotion of clavichord playing and of dialogue between players, builders, musicologists, restorers and interested laypersons; the organization of recitals, exhibitions and meetings; and the creation of a clavichord-related archive.

BW: Let me ask you first about the archive. I have heard you referred to as the "fact man" for the German Clavichord Society. Have you collected all the data and the materials for the archive?

LB: I have collected all the materials and data, but I have been helped by many people in the "clavichord world" worldwide.

BW: What does the archive currently hold?

LB: The database currently includes:

1. A list of historical clavichord builders (about 630 entries).
2. A list of historical clavichords still in existence (more than 920 entries). This list includes anonymous clavichords which usually are excluded from common references like Boalch.
3. A list of historical clavichords no longer in existence (590 entries).
4. A list of historical (past) owners of clavichords (more than 330 entries).
5. A list of modern makers of clavichords (more than 950 entries).
6. A list of modern clavichords, including some drawings (more than 2950 entries). Included are exact replicas of historical instruments, copies which deviate to differing degrees from the original, cross-breeds which combine elements from different makers, instruments which are designated "after" XYZ, but are predominantly the builder's design, reconstructions of instruments after written or iconographical evidence, new designs following the established tradition, and newly invented instrument types.
7. A list of modern owners and players (more than 1650 entries).
8. A list of museums and instrument collections with clavichords (about 400 entries).
9. An iconographical list (320 entries).
10. A bibliography (more than 2300 entries)

In addition I have folders with various kinds of printed matter, including records of the activities of the German Clavichord Society; also clavichord-related publica-

tions, museum catalogs, books, and prints. Finally, I have a private collection of 470 clavichord recordings (78rpm, LPs and CDs) with more than 200 performers, and some clavichord-related films.

BW: That's an impressive collection. Do you intend to put any of the database information online?

LB: In the near future we shall post the bibliography on www.clavichord.info, the site of the German Clavichord Society.*

BW: The German Clavichord Society sponsors "Clavichord Days" twice a year.



Gustav Leonhardt and Lothar Bemmann during the 24th Clavichord Days of the Deutsche Clavichord Societät. Photo by Dorothea Demel

What events typically take place on these occasions?

LB: We have no fixed rules, but generally we have three recitals, an exhibition of clavichords and presentations by their builders, a lecture, a workshop on the tuning and maintenance of clavichords, and a visit to a musical instrument collection (in museums and elsewhere). Sometimes we also have exhibits of recordings or of iconographical items.

BW: About how many people generally participate in Clavichord Days?

LB: Typically there are 20 to 25 DCS members and 10 to 15 non-members present during lectures; the concerts have an attendance of 50-100 people, depending on the location and the artist.

BW: How do you advertise these events?

LB: We advertise in German music magazines, e.g., *Concerto*, *Toccata*, in local newspapers and on our website and events websites. There is also information in our publication, *Rundbrief*, which is published three to four times a year.

BW: I notice that you have held these Clavichord Days in many different locations. How do the locales get chosen?

LB: We get proposals from our members, sometimes with an offer to provide support for a program in a particular location. In addition, our Board members look for locales with clavichord collections to visit and with halls suitable for clavichord concerts. In May 2006 we will have Clavichord Days in our 26th location, in Bochum.**

BW: I noted in reading reports of your Clavichord Days that you have many builders exhibiting at these events. Has the number of builders in Germany and nearby increased since the German Clavichord Society was founded? If so, do you think that this is partly due to the society itself?

LB: The number of builders has increased somewhat. I think that this is the combined result of the International Clavichord Symposia at Magnano, the publication of *Clavichord International*, and all the activities of the national societies, including the German Clavichord Society.

BW: It appears that some builders are creating new models of clavichords, i.e., models not based on historical models. Can you give an idea of the specific innovations of these builders?

LB: For example, there is Benedikt Claas's pedal clavichord, which has no historical model and there are the quarter-tone clavichords (sometimes called Klavikantal) by Peter Kraul and Florian Sonnleitner. The quarter-tone clavichords have a second set of tiny keys above a regular unfretted keyboard. In the case of Florian Sonnleitner's, those quarter-tone keys are a separable sledge which can be detached. When inserted, the tangents of the quarter-tone keys will use the existing strings of the unfretted regular clavichord, thus making it fretted. In Peter Kraul's case, the construction is comparable, but not with detachable keys.

BW: Is the clavichord being taught in any German conservatories? If so, by whom?

LB: I know of Harald Vogel in Bremen, Gisela Gumz in Hamburg, Gerald Hambitzer in Cologne and Bernhard Klapprott in Weimar. Ω

Editor's Notes

*Readers are urged to visit the website of the German Clavichord Society, which contains extensive information about clavichord-related matters.

**Bochum is in northwestern Germany, not far from the Netherlands.

Renée Geoffrion in Recital at First Church, Cambridge

Peter Sykes

Renée Geoffrion, who lives and works near Limoges, France, visited the Boston area with her husband, composer Louis-Philippe Rivet, during late October 2005. While here, the versatile Geoffrion taught classes at the New England Conservatory, presented a recital, and demonstrated a clavichord of her own invention.

Geoffrion's recital took place on Sunday, October 30, in the Hastings Room at First Church in Cambridge. Her program contained works by composers familiar to BCS audiences – sonatas by C.P.E. Bach, W.F. Bach, and



Renée Geoffrion

Haydn, and a fantasia and prelude of Mozart, along with works by the Spanish composer Tarrega, and the premiere of a work by Rivet. The more familiar works were performed on a Dolmetsch-Chickering clavichord, the others on an electro-acoustic clavichord designed and built by Geoffrion. This sweet

sounding instrument, only modestly amplified, proved a worthy vehicle for the atmospheric Tarrega works (originally for guitar and transcribed for the clavichord by Geoffrion), and the Rivet, which was distinguished by being written for an unconventional keyboard tuning (the enharmonic genus of the hypolydian mode, a Greek scale). This piece's evocative tuning was reminiscent of non-Western music, creating an atmosphere of both mystery and serenity. Ms. Geoffrion's playing was fresh and expressive, and the warmth and

intimacy of the Hastings Room brought performer and audience together for a memorable experience.

Geoffrion has made a CD based on the program of this recital.

Information about this CD will soon be posted on the BCS website in the discography section, along with information about a CD featuring their duo, *Alliance contra Nature*, in which Geoffrion plays the electro-acoustic clavichord and Rivet the electric bass guitar. (Articles written by Geoffrion appear in issues #17 and #19 of *Tangents*.)

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Andrus Madsen at Friends Meeting House, Cambridge

David Schulenberg

Andrus Madsen presented a recital December 4, 2005 at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The program included Froberger's Lamento on the death of Ferdinand IV and his Meditation "faist sur ma mort future," as well as Buxtehude's variations on the chorale *Auf meinen lieben Gott*. An improvised *Tombeau de M. Schott* in memory of the late Howard Schott was preceded, appropriately enough, by Froberger's Fantasia no. 2, in the Phrygian mode. (Schott edited Froberger's complete keyboard works.) Madsen remarked that he had selected the fantasia for its expressive rather than its contrapuntal qualities, but both aspects of the music shone through, notwithstanding the difficulty of projecting four contrapuntal lines on a small clavichord.

Three other improvisations served as preludes to suites by Buxtehude, Froberger, and Weckmann. Improvisations naturally involve great risks; one admires Madsen for taking them, and for the diversity of style in his four improvisations. Even the notated pieces leave much to the player's discretion. A recently identified Berlin manuscript containing the Lamento and the Meditation indicates that both pieces are "played slowly, with discretion." Exactly what the latter term means was the subject of one of Schott's last scholarly publications; Madsen provided a beautiful demonstration of interpretive freedom, particularly as the Lamento died away in its concluding upward scale, representing the apotheosis of the deceased heir to the Habsburg throne.

The seventeenth-century-style instrument by Christopher Clarke, formerly Schott's, sounded a little forced in the concluding F-minor suite by Böhm, which is perhaps better suited to the harpsichord. But elsewhere the instrument was entirely appropriate, helping Madsen achieve his stated goal of recreating a quiet concert such as Weckmann or Buxtehude might have played in a north-German home.

Ω

Troeger Recording of The Art of the Fugue

Richard Troeger, a former president of the BCS, has made the first recording on clavichord of J.S. Bach's *The Art of the Fugue*. This pair of discs is volume IV of Troeger's groundbreaking series of clavichord recordings of Bach's keyboard music. Issued in 2005 by Lyrichord Discs, the volume also includes violin transcriptions and fantasias, including the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue (BWV 903). Detailed reviews of this set of recordings can be found in *The British Clavichord Society Newsletter*, no. 33, October 2005 and *Clavichord*

International, vol. 2, no. 2, November 2005. Further information regarding the Troeger recordings and their purchase is available at www.lyrichord.com.

Ω

Our Sister Publications: Editor's Note

In the report above, reference is made to *The British Clavichord Society Newsletter* and to *Clavichord International*. As noted, these publications contain detailed reviews of recordings, as well as reviews of clavichord-related books. BCS members are encouraged to subscribe to them for material not available in *Tangents*.

Turnabout is Fair Play or Repertoire Theft for Fun and Profit, Part 2

Peter Tracton

The first part of this article appeared in the last issue of *Tangents* (#19). Tracton is CEO of *Patco Resources*, a music research and licensing firm. He can be reached at musicinfo@patcoresources.com.

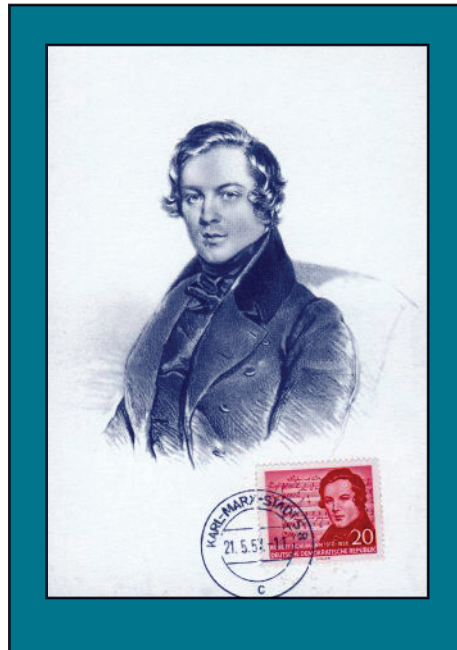
Chopin: By playing Chopin's Mazurka in C (op. 56, no. 3) on the harpsichord in her album *Dances of Ancient Poland* (RCA LP-LM 2830) Wanda Landowska finally got revenge on pianists for stealing her beloved Bach. There is no reason why we cannot play it on the clavichord as well, along with other mazurkas (especially the earlier ones) from the twelve published collections.

Schumann: This great keyboard poet wrote two collections of compositions for the young – an album of 43 pieces (op. 68) and three sonatas (op. 118). All of these pieces translate wonderfully to the clavichord with a minimum of adaptation. I always took great pleasure in playing *Fröhlicher Landmann* (The Happy Farmer) from op. 68 on my Zuckermann model IV, and it's not out of the question that some beginners in Germany and Scandinavia originally learned the pieces on clavichords back in the 1840s. But there's more: anyone who is lucky enough to be in possession of (or have access to) a pedal clavichord should look into Schumann's *Studien für den Pedal-Flügel* (op. 56). Sometimes attempted by organists, the only really successful performance I've encountered was an old "piano 3-hands" recording by Jörg Demus and Norman Shetler. I think that a pedal clavichord might do greater justice in particular to the fifth and sixth numbers in this collection.

Liszt: I'm kidding, right? Not at all. This master of the thundering octaves also produced a delightful collection of pieces called *Weihnachtsbaum* (S.186), of which two pieces, *O heilige Nacht* and *Die Hirten an der Krippe* (based on *In dulci Jubilo*) can be made to work nicely on the clavichord. Liszt's output of piano music was vast and some of it is spare enough in texture, requiring little or no pedal, to be adaptable to the clavichord. Take, for example, the *Consolations* (S. 172) of 1849-50: the first, fourth and fifth numbers in this collection are excellent candidates for clavichord performance.

Karg-Elert: Have you ever wondered what sort of music a composer such as Rachmaninoff would have produced if he

had written for the clavichord? With the music of Karg-Elert, who wrote in a richly chromatic late Romantic style, you can get a taste of what such music might have sounded like. His collection of pieces for harmonium and organ (either manuals only or with optional pedal) contains many



worthwhile items that can be adapted to performance on the clavichord.

Ravel: No, this is not a mistake. In 1913, Ravel composed a short prelude that, with a few minor alterations, some re-fingering and removal of some pianistic octave doublings can turn into a wonderful little sketch for the clavichord.

Satie: Although he wrote very idiomatically for the piano, some of the pieces in his 1914 collection of *Sports et Divertissements* do not require a lot of reworking to be successful on the clavichord. Specifically, one should try the *Choral Inappétissant*: (provided one doesn't take the "grave" direction too literally!), *La Balançoire*, *La Pêche*, *Les Quatre-coins* (remove the octave doubling in the bass) and *Le Tango* (so long as the 8va notes at the end are played loco).

Bartok: Some clavichordists have already begun performing pieces from *Mikrokosmos*, (Sz. 107) but quite a few items in his *For Children* (Sz. 42) and *First Term at the Piano* (Sz. 53) collections also make fine clavichord miniatures.

Gershwin: Is there really anything we

can steal from the output of a composer famous for his "fast and steely" (Oscar Levant's words) approach to the piano? Yes! Take a look at his Second Prelude for piano (1926), which was originally entitled *Lullaby in Blue*. If one does some "re-voicing" in the harmony and removes some of the octave doublings, it can become an effective clavichord piece. Which brings me to the subject of...

The Great American Songbook: Isn't it about time that one of our enterprising and talented members gave a thought to arranging some of America's greatest songs for the clavichord? We need someone who can follow in the footsteps of, for example, the late great Bobby Short and perform songs of Berlin, Porter, Kern, Gershwin, Warren and many others in effective clavichord stylings. Such arrangements could be used as encores for a concert program or, even better, as a project for a recording.

So, finally, what is the point of this exercise? It could not be more simple: people have always found it easier to approach the unfamiliar by means of the familiar. Average listeners will be more open to the sound of an instrument they don't know if they see the names of composers that they recognize, and hear music that they've always known and loved. When I tell people I play keyboard instruments I am frequently met with befuddlement when I mention the clavichord, or else someone will say something like "Clavichords? Oh, right! Doesn't Casio make those?" The ranks of clavichord enthusiasts will not grow until this situation is changed. The British Clavichord Society has already taken the important step of encouraging the composition and performance of new works for the clavichord. And I cannot praise too highly the essential work being done by many clavichordists to make us better acquainted with the hitherto little-known works of the truly "idiomatic" clavichord composers, such as Türk and Müthel. But we must do more. It's time to turn pirate and plunder some of the repertoire that will help popularize our beloved clavichord. Ω

Magnano Events

2006

Courses in early keyboard and choir performance and in organology will be offered **August 17-27, 2006** in Magnano, Italy. Further information may be obtained by using the contact information below or by calling Bernard Brauchli at (011) 41, 21, 728 59 76

2007

The planning committee for the **2007 VIII International Clavichord Symposium**, September 5-8, in Magnano is now accepting proposals for papers, with a preference for topics on *The Clavichord on the Iberian Peninsula* (history, inventory and



Juan Bermudo. *Declaracion de Instrumentos Musicales* (1555).

characteristics of known extant instruments, iconography, social and musical role, present state of clavichord building). The sympo-

sium will also include concerts and shorter recitals and a display of instruments.

Proposals should be addressed to the ICCS Committee no later than 15 January 2007. Proposals for performances should include a program of twenty minutes of music. Proposals for the exhibition of instruments should include all pertinent information on the copy or original to be displayed.

Contact: International Centre for Clavichord Studies, Via Roma 43, I 13887 Magnano (BI), Italy. Fax: (011) 39, 015, 6792 60. E-mail: info@MusicaAnticaMagnano.com. Website: www.MusicaAnticaMagnano.com.

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