

An Interview with Kevin Spindler

Peter Sykes

Kevin Spindler builds and rebuilds clavichords and harpsichords at his shop in Stonington, CT. He can be found online at spindlerharpsichords.com

PS: Kevin, tell us what led you to the world of early keyboards in general.

KS: I studied piano as a child and in my teens began studying organ.

PS: Where was this?

KS: This was in my hometown of South Bend, Indiana. At some point I had heard a harpsichord for the first time, perhaps on that show, "The Addams Family," which I used to watch. I was so fascinated by the sound of it that I went to my local public library and dug up everything I could find on the harpsichord, both books and records. Unfortunately there were not that many available. This was before CDs were invented. I do recall finding one LP of clavichord music in the same library. I listened to it. It was a recording of Ralph Kirkpatrick playing *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. I thought it was a lovely sound, but at the time I couldn't find anyone in South Bend who owned a clavichord and there were only a handful of people who owned harpsichords.

PS: So you were interested in harpsichords as well.

KS: Yes, at the time my primary focus in early music and early keyboards was mostly on the harpsichord and the organ. As I got more into the harpsichord, I got away from playing Chopin and Liszt on the piano and I got more into Bach. I could only play Bach on the organ or a modern piano, since I didn't own a harpsichord and didn't have access to one. But when I was 18 I inherited some money which enabled me to buy my first harpsichord, so at that point

(Continued on p.4)

Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier

Kenneth Cooper

Kenneth Cooper is a harpsichordist and president and artistic director of the Berkshire Bach Society. The following article is excerpted from program notes written by Cooper for a performance in 2006 of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I.

"At the very time when the world was beginning to degenerate in another direction, when light melody-making was gaining the upper hand and people were becoming tired of difficult harmonies, the late Capellmeister was the one who knew how to keep to the golden mean, and taught us how to combine an agreeable and flowing melody with the richest harmonies". F.W.Marpurg¹

When Bach's children began to show signs of their enormous talent, the master realized they were going to need repertoire to help them develop not only a "singing style of playing" (Bach) but a working knowledge of how to exploit their own good ideas (i.e. composition). He had strong opinions about how this should be done, and while Telemann, Handel, Couperin and others had published a variety of "lessons" which Bach admired, he knew that these works represented the proverbial drop in the bucket. The rest is history: Bach supplied his children, students and colleagues (at the time and forever afterwards) with a miraculous but thoroughly practical body of keyboard pieces, among them the Inventions and Sinfonias, the French and English Suites, the Partitas, the Italian Concerto, the *Orgelbüchlein* and dozens of Preludes and Fugues, many of which found a permanent home in *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. The full title reads: *The Well-Tempered Clavier, or Preludes and Fugues through all the tones and semitones, both involving the major third (Ut Re Mi) as well as the minor third (Re Mi Fa). For the use and profit of musical youngsters anxious to learn, as well as for the recreation of those already skilled in this study, assembled and composed by Johann Sebastian Bach.*

The title, however, like most else in the 18th century, displays multiple meanings. 'Well-tempered' suggests not only 'well-

equalized,' 'well-controlled' and 'well-tuned,' but also and with not such a subtle hint to the kids, 'well-behaved.' The word 'clavier,' too, has a checkered history, usually connoting 'keyboard,' but to a certain (German) segment of the musical population at the time, also 'clavichord.' Hence the fiery words exchanged between clavi-

chordist Arnold Dolmetsch and harpsichordist Wanda Landowska as to which instrument Bach had in mind were mostly moot. Publishers, above all, loved the word 'clavier' because of its simultaneous vagueness and inclusiveness; and while the character and texture of any one of Bach's pieces might suggest this keyboard or that one, Bach didn't see fit to decide for us.

The 48 Preludes and Fugues were not published during Bach's lifetime (few of his works were), but were widely circulated in manuscript copies... The work was finally printed (by Kollmann) in 1799, the idea being to carve the commandments in stone, so to speak, and put an end to its continual growth and reinterpretation. The age of Baroque ornamentation and improvisation—of Baroque music itself as a process—was here dealt a death-blow; the era of the definitive version had begun.

Bach's...understanding of fugal language involved estimating the structural potential, then creating sufficient distraction. Marpurg wrote: "Just consider how many times the principal subject must be heard in a fugue. If, in addition, it must be heard constantly in the same keys...with nothing else in between, always the same way, can one possibly conceal one's distaste? Truly that is not the way the great-

(Continued on p.6)



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Benjamin Alardp.2

VanDelft and Rootp.3

Composing for the clavichord. p.3

Kramer book.p.6

Benjamin Alard Recital

Paul Rabin

Ordinarily the Boston Clavichord Society sponsors only clavichord recitals. In the case of Benjamin Alard, this was the original plan. It turned out, however, that Alard was not ready to do a clavichord recital, so the BCS decided to co-sponsor with the First Lutheran Church of Boston the recital which Paul Rabin reviews in what follows. Rabin plays early keyboards and is the Clerk of the Board of Directors of the BCS. Editor



Benjamin Alard

Earlier this year, members of the Boston Clavichord Society had the pleasure of meeting Benjamin Alard, the young French organist and harpsichord player. Only twenty-three years old, Alard has studied organ with Louis Thiry, François Ménessier, and Jean-Claude Zehnder, and harpsichord with Elisabeth Joyé and Andrea Marcon. He has had a busy performing and recording career since winning both first prize and the audience award at the 2004 Bruges International Harpsichord competition. For the past three years, he has been organist at the church of St-Louis-en-l'Isle in Paris.

A few days after his arrival, Alard gave a harpsichord master class for Peter Sykes' students at Boston University, where we first saw his strikingly assured musical instincts and technique, sensitivity of touch and articulation, clarity of gesture, and calm elegance.

These qualities were demonstrated to a larger audience at his public recital at First Lutheran Church, Boston on Friday, February 29.

The first half of the concert was performed on a new harpsichord by Allan Winkler based upon an early 18th-century German model. It was a treat to hear this instrument, which responded well to the acoustics in the sanctuary, gaining richness of tone

without losing its characteristic speaking quality.

Alard opened with Buxtehude's Praeludium in G minor, BuxWV 163 - one of two manualiter praeludia for organ, but also effective on the harpsichord. Alard nicely balanced the impetuosity of its toccata ancestry with Buxtehude's sense of structure and control, and brought out the contrasting affects of each section. Alard's

declamatory articulation and plasticity of line were also put to good effect in Bach's Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826 (1727) - perhaps among the less French of the set, with more than usually abstracted dance forms.

The second part of the concert was performed on the church's wonderful pipe organ, built by Richards, Fowkes & Co. in 2000, and especially suited to 17th and 18th century German organ music. Alard again started with Buxtehude. The Praeludium in D Major, BuxWV 139 is more toccata-like than the G minor, with less overt organization, and more striking contrasts of mood. The remainder of the program was all Bach. The Fugue in B minor on a theme by Corelli, BWV 579, an early work with a 17th-century flavor, was followed by the Trio Sonata No. 4 in E minor, BWV 528. After the long central movement, the gigue-like finale sparkled. Bach's monumental Prelude and Fugue in E minor - the "Wedge", BWV 548 - brought the concert to a majestic conclusion.

Alard's recordings:

Andreas Bach Book: Hortus 045

Bach Transcriptions: Hortus 050

Manuscript Bauyn: Hortus 065

(released October 2008)

Ω

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: 781 891-0814

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.

Copy deadlines are Sept. 15 and March 1.

Board of Directors:

Peter Sykes, President
David Schulenberg, Vice President
Beverly Woodward, Treasurer
Paul Monsky, Assistant Treasurer
Paul Rabin, Clerk
Tim Hamilton, Assistant Clerk
Sylvia Berry
Paulette Grunden
Christa Rakich
Jay Tucker

Board of Artistic Advisors:

Joan Benson
Clifford Boehmer
Bernard Brauchli
Lynn Edwards Butler
Christopher Hogwood
Margaret Irwin-Brandon
Mark Kroll
Darcy Kuronen
William Porter
Howard Schott†
Richard Troeger



Van Delft & Root Recital

Peter Sykes

On Tuesday, April 1, 2008, the Boston Clavichord Society presented Menno van Delft, clavichord, and Marten Root, traverso, in recital in the Hale Chapel of First Church in Boston. This performance



Menno Van Delft & Martin Root

preceded a series of performances and master classes co-sponsored by the BCS and the Cambridge Society for Early Music. The April 1 program contained works of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Johann Adolf

Scheibe, and Christian Carl Rolle, all admirably suited to the Hass-inspired clavichord built for the late Howard Schott by Thomas Goble in 1972. This was the fifth concert in which the BCS presented the clavichord as an ensemble instrument, showing yet again its viability as a partner to other instruments or voices. Menno van Delft teaches harpsichord, clavichord, basso continuo, and ensemble playing at the Conservatory of Amsterdam (formerly the Sweelinck Conservatorium), as well as at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg. Martin Root teaches baroque flute at the Amsterdam Conserva-

tory and holds a position as professor of baroque and classical flute at the Hochschule für Künste in Bremen. The two musicians, both also active performers and recording artists, revealed an innate sense of ensemble performance in the duo works, with subtle give and take of musical direction and a flexibility of line that was both energetic and expressively beautiful.

In the solo clavichord works van Delft proved a master of the instrument's expressive resources. Not a hint of the massive difficulties inherent in clavichord performance was evident; instead, dynamic and color variety revealed the musical message in every work. The densely packed works of Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, with their quicksilver mood changes and complex internal structure, were made clear to the ear in van Delft's experienced hands, while in the famous C.P.E. Bach solo flute sonata Root's well-focused sound and command of rhetorical pacing made the phrases soar in the resonant chapel acoustics.

Particularly interesting was the sonata by Johann Adolf Scheibe, known to most

music lovers only as the man who attacked the music of Johann Sebastian Bach in a famous diatribe, charging it with over-complexity and artificiality. This reviewer must confess a predilection to dislike the work purely for that reason, but instead was charmed by the gracious balance of phrases and felicitous melodies. A composer of music so pretty and easy to take in was perhaps intimidated by the complex difficulties found in much of Bach.

The balance between the two instruments was perfect from where this reviewer was seated, in the back half of the chapel; every note of the clavichord was heard distinctly while there was no sense of the flutist needing to tread lightly in accommodation of the clavichord. This was a delightful concert, in which a rare opportunity to hear two of the most active advocates of the art was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience.

Van Delft's clavichord recordings include: *J.S. Bach, Art of Fugue*: Brilliant Classics 99372/9 (Part 2 has some clavichord tracks.) *Johann Gottfried Mützel, 3 Sonates & 2 Ariosi avec 12 Variations*: 2-Teknon TK 12-252 Root has made many recordings on the Globe label. Ω

Composing for the Clavichord: A Short Guide

Francis Knights

In 2004, the *British Clavichord Society* sponsored a competition for new clavichord compositions. Francis Knights prepared a short guide for the contestants, many of whom were unfamiliar with the clavichord. Excerpts are printed below with the hope that they will inspire further efforts at "composing for the clavichord." Editor

Since the 19th century revival of the instrument begun by Arnold Dolmetsch, a number of modern writers (Herbert Howells, Ernst Pepping, Lou Harrison and others) have composed new works for the instrument, trying to create a contemporary language which still respects the qualities of this most intimate of musical instruments. It has even been used in folk, jazz and pop music...

In absolute terms, relative to the modern

concert grand piano, the loudest clavichords have a dynamic range of perhaps *pppp-mf*. Because the listener's and player's ears adjust quickly to the relative dynamic level, composers have historically notated this range from *pp-ff*. It is often most rewarding to explore the dynamics at the quietest levels...

Like other quiet instruments (for example, the lute) the clavichord's tone seems to emerge from silence in a way that differs from the harpsichord or even piano. It is therefore worth considering carefully the purpose and meaning of rests, and of gaps between phrases; some clavichord music has a Zen-like interaction between what is heard and what is unheard. Gesture, mood and meaning, too, need to be considered within this context. Ω

Magnano Reminder

Our readers are reminded that the International Clavichord Symposium, sponsored by the International Centre for Clavichord Studies, will take place September 16-19, 2009 in Magnano, Italy. Proposals of papers and performances should be addressed to the ICCS Committee no later than January 15, 2009. The principal topics for the symposium are 1) Haydn and the Clavichord and 2) From Clavichord to Fortepiano. Proposals for music should include a program of thirty minutes of music. Info@MusicaAnticaMagnano.com Ω

NB: The complete article, which appeared in the *International Clavichord Directory*, can be accessed online at <http://saturn.nildram.co.uk/~bcs/guide.htm>. The author can be contacted via e-mail at fk750@hotmail.com

(Spindler, continued from p.1)

I basically abandoned the organ and piano and focused on studying the harpsichord.

PS: So there was someone there with whom you could study the harpsichord.

KS: Not really. However, I had a friend on the faculty of the University of Notre Dame who owned a harpsichord and also gave lessons. I never got around to studying formally with her, but she helped me a lot by giving me tips and pointers on playing the instrument.

PS: Did you ever take formal harpsichord lessons?

KS: No.

PS: Your interest in the instrument quickly moved towards building. What caused you to become interested in actually constructing instruments?

KS: In the summer of '85 I was unemployed. At the time my hometown was experiencing a sort of local recession. There weren't many jobs available. I had contacted David Way at Zuckermann Harpsichords with an interest in ordering a clavichord at some point. We spoke on the phone and I ended by ordering an instrument, their newly introduced Hubert instrument, which I ordered as a custom finished clavichord because I knew nothing about building. In fact up till this point I had never played a clavichord. I had only heard one on a recording.

PS: Wow.

KS: I had seen them in books and I thought this can't be so different to play from a harpsichord.

PS: Ha!

KS: I spoke with David Way and I sent him a deposit early in the summer of '85. As the summer wore on, the need to find a job and make some money became a lot more pressing. I found I was forced to ring up David and cancel the clavichord order because at that point I couldn't afford to actually pay for it. I called him up and cancelled the order and asked for a refund. He then began asking me what I knew about the technical aspects of the harpsichord. I told him that I knew how to voice and quill, I knew how to tune, I knew how to do basic regulation and maintenance, having owned one at that point for close to two years. He immediately offered me a job over the phone.

PS: Really!!

KS: Yes. He sent me a check for the refund and a roundtrip train ticket from

South Bend to Stonington with the understanding that I could come and stay for two or three weeks, work in the shop, and decide whether or not this was what I wanted to do. Since I had no other prospects where I was living, I took him up on his offer. I came to Stonington and stayed for two and a half weeks. I basically fell in love with the area and the business and the craft of building instruments. At the time there were a lot of very good people working in the shop and they were extremely helpful. I decided that this was what I real-



Clavichord by Kevin Spindler after the 1543 Domenico Pisarenensis.

ly wanted to do and I started work at Zuckermann's officially on September 4, 1985. I continued there until I left in May of 2001 in order to open my own workshop.

PS: So I suppose that it was at Zuckermann's that you saw your first real clavichord.

KS: Yes.

PS: What was your impression of that instrument and of the clavichord in general?

KS: When I sat down and spent a few hours playing it, I almost immediately fell in love with it. I was really astonished at how sensitive it was to touch and dynamics, certainly much more than a harpsichord.

PS: What was the interval between that and the first clavichord that you built?

KS: I started building my first clavichord in December 1985. At the time I was living in a very small apartment, and my own harpsichord as well as my other belongings were still in storage. I needed something on which to practice at home. I thought that the so-called Hubert model was the ideal choice, so I bought one of the kits and

started building it.

PS: You completed that instrument and practiced on it.

KS: Yes, I kept it for almost three years and then I sold it to a friend of mine in New York City.

PS: Have you always had a clavichord since then?

KS: Pretty much.

PS: Different models?

KS: Yes.

PS: How many clavichords have you made since then?

KS: At Zuckermann's I made between 20 and 30 instruments. On my own, fewer than ten.

PS: The ones you made at Zuckermann's were from kit parts, I presume, while you made all the parts yourself for the ones you made on your own.

KS: Yes, that's right.

PS: And you've also been researching old instruments and making your own designs.

KS: Yes.

PS: Tell me something about that.

KS: After working at Zuckermann's for two or three years I became interested in doing my own design and research work. I was very interested in building exact copies of surviving antique instruments such as the 1637 Andreas Ruckers harpsichord in Nuremberg, which fascinated me. I was also very interested in the 1543 Domenico Pisarenensis clavichord, which is in Leipzig, and I built one of those in 1991. I was fascinated by reconstructing the earlier sorts of harpsichords and clavichords.

PS: What was it about those instruments that interested you?

KS: Well, I have a fondness for the keyboard music of that period and I noticed that the majority of modern builders don't offer these earlier styles of clavichords. I have always been interested in knowing what these instruments sounded like, how the actions felt, and how they played. When I built the first early style clavichord, which was the Pisarenensis in Leipzig, I found the sound and action of the instrument opened an entirely new door of interpretation for the music of that period, and that the sound fit the music perfectly.

PS: A number of us have had that experience in different ways. But this is not the only kind of clavichord you have made on your own. You have also built other models. Tell me about those.

KS: A couple of years ago I built a five-octave unfretted clavichord based on the 1784 Hoffmann at Yale. That turned out quite well. I also built an exact copy as I could of the instrument 18165 in the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Compared with other triple-fretted instruments of this period, this has one of the largest cases. This instrument also is one of the few surviving German clavichords of the early 1600s that has split keys for the semitones D sharp and E flat in all three octaves.

PS: But not G sharp, A flat?

KS: No.

PS: Interesting.

KS: I had a client who wanted this instrument. She had seen it on a trip to Europe, I believe, so she commissioned me to build one. I did and it was quite successful. I have another client who is interested in ordering the same instrument from me, so hopefully I'll get to build another one.

PS: Wonderful. What is your experience when you see an old instrument?

KS: Quite interesting. I learn a lot even after twenty-some years in this business. Every time I go down to Yale and look at the instruments there and play something or hear someone else play something, I hear something different or something that I never noticed before.. Unfortunately there aren't that many restored clavichords at Yale to play, but those that are playable are quite nice.

PS: I agree. I played a little one there that was exquisite. Tell me what is important to you as a builder in making a clavichord.

KS: I try to reconstruct the sound and the touch of an antique instrument as it was when it was new. I always use the best wood and the best materials I can find. I do my own R & D. I build these instruments individually one at a time by hand. I try to build the very best instrument I can. Whether it's a large instrument or a small instrument, each instrument gets the same level of attention to detail.

PS: You've also spent some time rebuilding or restringing other clavichords that you've not made yourself. Can you tell me something about that.

KS: I seem to have found a niche in this business. I have a long list of clients who have instruments by other builders, made in the 70s and 80s, that have not been updated. We now know more about stringing, stringing materials, and action setup than we did in those days. So a lot of my work is rebuilding and updating instruments by other builders to the correct standards of stringing, voicing, action setup and so forth.. Quite a few of those have been various models of clavichords....

PS: You mean that these instruments embodied various levels of historical faithfulness?



Clavichord by Kevin Spindler after the 1543 Domenico Pisarenensis.

KS: Yes. I worked on some I thought were not going to be worth bothering with, because they incorporated too many so-called modern ideas. But after I restrung them and redid the tangents and the actions, they turned out surprisingly well. Those instruments that I brought up to date that had been built following more or less exact historical principles turned out extraordinarily well after being restrung to a new stringing list using more up-to-date wire, filing and voicing the tangents, and redoing the listing cloth. All these things when you put them together make a difference.

PS: I can certainly attest to that, having had one of my clavichords given that treatment by you. What is the most beautiful clavichord you've ever seen or played?

KS: That's tough call. One of the most revolutionary instruments that I ever saw or played was a copy of an 1804 Lindholm instrument by Andrew Lagerquist which I saw on exhibit at the Boston Early Music Festival in 01 or 03. That instrument was absolutely extraordinary to me because it had such a beautiful big dark sound. Up to

that point I had never heard an iron-scaled late 18th or early 19th century Swedish clavichord, nor had I been that interested in them. After I saw and played Andy's instrument at BEMF that year, I was so smitten by it that I immediately went about finding the actual drawing for that instrument. That's one of the instruments that I hope to build one day.

PS: I notice that there are a number of clavichords in progress in your shop here.

KS: One of the ones I am working on now is basically of my own design. It's based on the so-called Tosi instrument that is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston but I

have incorporated some design elements from instruments numbers 2 and 3 in the Leipzig collection. This instrument has a C/E to c^{'''} 45-note keyboard range with the low F# and G# split. It is the second time I've built an instrument in this style or, should I say, of this particular time period, the first being the 1543 Pisarenensis clavichord which I built in

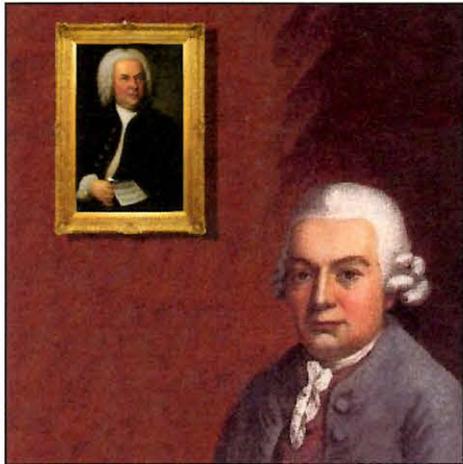
1991. I'm really looking forward to hearing it. The other clavichord I am working on, which is for you, Peter, is based on an anonymous German instrument, c. 1740, in the Gemeentemuseum in the Hague. It's very similar to the Hubert design. It's pairwise fretted and the bottom octave is chromatic. It has elements too of an earlier German style. It has a straight bridge, slightly curved in the treble. The case is smaller and shallower than a typical Hubert. I also have a commission for one of the Stein travel clavichords, one that's also in the Hague—I believe from 1787. This is a C to f^{'''} unfretted single strung primarily iron-scaled instrument.

PS: Is there anything else you would like to add?

KS: I really enjoy building clavichords. I'm interested in many different types of clavichords, primarily earlier instruments. Something else that really fascinates me are the two-manual pedal clavichords, especially the Gerstenberg instrument in Leipzig, and I hope to have a chance to build one of those someday. Ω

Richard Kramer on C.P.E. Bach

The excerpt below is from a book recently published by BCS member Richard Kramer: *Unfinished Music*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, \$39.95, ISBN 13: 978-0-19-532682-6. In this provocative book C.P.E. Bach and the improvisatory as a mode of thought figure prominently. Editor



The decision to place the *Fantasia* at the end, the ultimate *Probestück*, tells us much about its place in Emanuel Bach's aesthetics. Fantasies are similarly placed in the three last collections *für Kenner und Liebhaber* (IV, 1783; V, 1785; VI, 1787). When we encounter fantasies in the music of the earlier eighteenth century, they, too, are about the improvisatory. One thinks, inevitably, of the *Chromatic Fantasy* of Sebastian Bach. But here, as elsewhere, the fantasy means to exercise the mind, and the fingers, as a preliminary; a tuning up, a gradual coming into focus before the reason of fugue. For Bach the father and Bach the son, the reversal is poignantly evident in how they constructed the repertoires of their final years. For the father, the final works are grand summations, compendia of fugal ingenuity. For Emanuel Bach, the final keyboard work in the catalogue is the *Fantasia* in F# minor from 1787—C.P.E. Bach's *Empfindungen*, as he himself inscribed one of its autographs—a plangent fantasy of farewell, riddling and paradoxical, even in the contradictory signals transmitted across the pages of its two autograph redactions. Ω

(WTC, continued from p.1)

est fugue-maker of our time, old Bach, thought. How many ingenious transpositions of the principal subject, how many splendidly assorted subsidiary ideas you will find there!"²

But the Mozartean generation that revived the Bach fugues saw them solely in terms of their artifice—the architecture of subject entries; and if the formal structure of the fugue was the major attraction, then it was the piano, with its dynamic ability to bring out voices above other voices, that made possible such an interpretation. Can we blame Mozart for being astonished at Bach's structure, for playing the fugues on the piano so as to underline that structure and for ignoring those elements adorning the subject that were perhaps of more transient interest to him? Bernard Shaw later warned against those who attempt "to pass off the forms of music for music itself, ... who think that it is the cowl that makes the monk."³

By this time, some thought (e.g., Rockstro in *Groves* II, 1905) that "Bach was attracted to the fugal means of expression because of its romantic possibilities..." and compared the treatment of the subject to an *idée fixe* or Wagnerian *leitmotiv*. This relocation of interpretive weight onto the subject necessitated an increasingly slower tempo: witness the clear pattern of fugal re-interpretation and sanctification, primarily through slowness, cleanness and strictness. In a letter to his sister, Mozart wrote: "If a fugue is not played slowly one cannot hear the entrance of the subject distinctly and clearly, and consequently it is of no effect."⁴ Chopin (c. 1835) called Bach's preludes and fugues "*l'indispensable du pianiste*" and advised that they be played "steady as a metronome." Schweitzer wrote in 1905: "It is not so much that we enjoy *The Well-Tempered Clavier* as that we are edified by it."

But eventually the tide changed:

Landowska (1949): "What has destroyed the human relationship between us and the fugue is having valued only the skill with which it is constructed and having denied it all capacity for emotion and expression."⁵

Casals (1954): Bach's Preludes and Fugues are "the perfect elixir of youth... It is inconceivable to think of them as 'ob-

jective' pieces in which the performer's personality should not play any part."⁶

In the critical literature about *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, a certain bias can be detected: detailed commentary on the fugues is usually limited to analyses of their phenomenal form and structure (i.e., where the subjects and countersubjects appear and how they combine, etc.); detailed commentary on the *preludes* is almost non-existent. This is disheartening, but understandable: the preludes, on the whole, have no easily definable structure. They derive from the most ephemeral of all art-forms, improvisation. There is a poetic beauty to a well-sculpted chord progression, but its realization, its inflection, its 'tone of voice' depends on the detail of the moment.

In *The Well-Tempered Clavier* we learn a dramatic lesson in how to develop musical imagery from the simplicity of a recurring arpeggio (as in Preludes 1,2,3—in Bach's hands not quite so simple) through the filigree of a more decorative arpeggiation (Preludes 5,6,11,15,21) to an elaboration so melodic that its underlying progression is no longer obvious (Preludes 7,8,9,13,22). We see before our very eyes how a harmony exercise becomes an artwork, taking shape amid the cultural scenery of its time—chamber music, dance, aria—and containing many worldly elements: French ornaments, for example, and virtuoso cadenzas... It is no accident that romantic composers, Chopin and Debussy outstandingly, honored Bach with their highly individualistic and idiomatic preludes. Could we even conceive of 24 Chopin or Debussy fugues? Ω

¹ F.W. Marburg, *Abhandlung von der Fuge*, Berlin, 1754; quoted in H. David & A. Mendel (eds.), *The Bach Reader*, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1966, pp. 254-5.

² F.W. Marburg, *Kritische Briefe über die Tonkunst*, Berlin, 1760; quoted in H. David & A. Mendel (eds.), *ibid*, pp. 257.

³ George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94*, vol. 1, Constable & Co. Ltd., London, pp.216-17.

⁴ April 20, 1782

⁵ Denise Restout (ed.), *Landowska on Music*, Stein & Day, New York, 1964, p. 173.

⁶ J. M. Corredor, *Conversations with Casals*, Dutton, New York, 1958, p. 109.