

# BCS TANGENTS

The Bulletin of the  
Boston Clavichord Society  
Number 29, Winter, 2010

## Notes from the Editor BCS 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Beverly Woodward

The year 2010 is the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Boston Clavichord Society. Included with this mailing of the 29<sup>th</sup> issue of our bulletin, *Tangents* (formerly *The Boston Clavichord Society Newsletter*<sup>1</sup>), is a short history of the BCS, which I wrote at the request of *Clavichord International*. It appeared in the May 2010 (vol. 14, no.1) issue of *CI*. (In the enclosed reprint, we have replaced, where possible, black and white photos with color photos.)

The Boston Clavichord Society was founded at about the same time as the British Clavichord Society. Neither society is large, but both have flourished (not financially, but in other ways) because of the enthusiasm and knowledgeability of a core group of supporters. In the United States, however, the size of our country presents a challenge. Some of our Friends live far from anyone else with an interest in the clavichord. Some have never had the opportunity to hear the instrument performed in public. To be sure, the BCS has a flourishing concert series in the Boston area, and the Boston Early Music Festival is now incorporating clavichord performances in its official calendar of events. However, the majority of BCS Friends live far from the Boston area—in thirty states, Canada, Mexico, and several European countries. Given this situation, the BCS bulletin and website play an essential role.

In connection with this anniversary we sent a questionnaire to all current BCS Friends. We were pleased that about half

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<sup>1</sup> The first ten issues of *The Boston Clavichord Society Newsletter* were edited by Alan Durfee, a founder of the society.

## My Clavichord Collection

Peter Sykes

The first clavichord I ever saw was in a church in East Bridgewater, Massachusetts; I was perhaps 11 or 12 years old. Looking back, it had to have been a Zuckermann single-strung clavichord kit from the sixties. I remember being thoroughly unimpressed. It made practically no sound, and the keys were clunky and heavy (they were actually piano keys). As an aspiring piano student, I dismissed the thing as uninteresting. A year or so later, however, I was completely bitten by the early keyboard bug, thanks to hearing a record of harpsichord music. I just had to have something to play that wasn't a piano.

*Zuckermann Clavichord, 1971, range GG–e*”, 58 notes, A-440, unfretted (1).

Looking in the Zuckermann catalogue of kits, I saw that the clavichord kit they offered had been redesigned, and was now called the “Double-Strung Clavichord.” The price of the kit was \$250, just within reach of an enterprising teenager. The kit was purchased and was assembled over Christmas break in 1971. The instrument looked like a real clavichord (although at that point I had zero experience in this regard). It was made of plywood nicely veneered with black walnut, and had pretty moldings at the edges of the case and lid. It still had heavily bushed keys, but they were quite a bit lighter than those of that other clavichord I had seen, and it actually made a sound that could be heard. It was not at all challenging to play (as I found out later) and I played it quite a bit both at home and in the concerts I was then giving in churches, nursing homes, and ladies' clubs. I soon went on to build a harpsichord from a kit (and then another and then another) but kept that clavichord in my collection and continued to play it.

When I got to the New England Conservatory in 1975 I discovered a clavichord in one of their early music rooms (then on the second floor, above Brown Hall). It had been made by the Chickering piano company in 1906 “under the direction of Arnold

Dolmetsch” and bore the serial number 7. Even though the outside of the cherry case was faded and scarred from countless violin cases laid on it, the inside glowed with a golden hue. There were so many broken strings that only a pentatonic scale was possible in certain octaves, but I was still aware that this instrument represented something quite a bit finer than the clavichord I had at home in Brockton. The sound was rich, resonant, and in the bass, actually quite powerful. This instrument impressed me. *Carl Fudge clavichord, 1978, range C/E–c*”, 45 notes with bass short octave, A-440, double fretted (2).

In my first year of graduate school in the organ program at NEC I became aware of kits offered by a local builder, Carl Fudge. Having by then assembled about five harpsichord kits, I was interested in his



*Renée Geoffrion, Limoges, France, 2011, modified design of a Hubert clavichord,*

small fretted clavichord kit; I thought it would complement my Zuckermann clavichord. I purchased and built one of those instruments in the summer of 1978. Once it was completed, I ran into a wall; I couldn't play it! The keys, compared to those of the Zuckermann instrument, were tiny, the action was demandingly precise, and notes, especially in the treble, seemed to bounce and spit rather than produce a clear tone. I had discovered the challenges of the true historical clavichord, and used the instrument as my instructor for the next year or so, until I could produce a passably acceptable tone in all the registers—and with all my fingers. I still regard this experience as being one of the most enduringly valuable in my education.

*Chickering and Sons, Boston, 1906, no. 4, “made under the supervision of Arnold Dolmetsch”*  
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# Ursula Dütschler in Concert

David Schulenberg

The Hastings Room at First Church in Cambridge was nearly full on April 11, 2010, as Swiss clavichordist Ursula Dütschler played a program of music by Bach



Ursula Dütschler

and three of his sons, using a fine five-octave unfretted instrument by Dolmetsch. Major works by Johann Sebastian—the Prelude, Allegro, and Fugue in E-flat, BWV 998, and the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue in D minor, BWV 903—opened and closed the program, framing compositions by Wilhelm Friedemann, Johann Christoph Friedrich, and Johann Christian. The conspicuous absence of music by Carl Philipp Emanuel afforded an opportunity to hear works that are less well known and less often played on the clavichord.

The opening BWV 998 was one such work. Designated by Sebastian for lute or “Cembal,” it survives only in the composer’s keyboard score and today is most often performed in arrangements for guitar. Although one or two passages are not quite playable (as written) by two hands at a keyboard instrument, the piece might well have been performed “on the clavichord,” as Bach’s pupil Agricola reported was the case for Sebastian’s suites and sonatas for unaccompanied violin and cello. We have the similar testimony of Griepenkerl, a pupil of the Bach biographer Forkel, that Friedemann’s remarkable polonaises are best played on the clavichord. Of the three that were heard this evening (nos. 1, 8, and 3), the expressive no. 8 in E minor is, as Griepenkerl observed in his edition of *circa* 1819, in fact an adagio; it is particularly suited to the instrument. The same is true of Friedemann’s E-minor fantasia, F. 21, remarkable for its recitative passages, although only his two C-minor fantasias are actually documented as having been played on the clavichord—perhaps in pri-

vate concerts at Berlin or the university town of Göttingen.

Christian Bach’s D-major sonata, op. 5, no. 2, was published in London as a work for fortepiano or harpsichord in 1766, and Mozart arranged it six years later as a concerto for keyboard and orchestra. Yet it too would have been played on the clavichord by Germans coming across its first edition, and its quasi-orchestral textures recur in clavichord sonatas such as Emanuel’s W. 55/4 (composed in 1765 but published only in 1779). The clavichord was probably still the first choice for the little-known sonata in E-flat by J. C. F. Bach, the last in a set of six published at Leipzig for “clavier” or piano in 1785. Although described on their title page as “easy” (*leichte*), these are substantial works, midway in style between Emanuel’s so-called *Empfindsamkeit* (“sensitive” or “sentimental” style) and Christian’s classicism.

Dütschler, who is also known as a harpsichordist and fortepianist, has many strengths in this repertory, including sure fingers and a fine sense of expressive or “rhetorical” timing and phrasing. The latter served her especially well in the works by the sons, in which one was also glad to hear stylish cadenzas where called for in the sonatas and the fantasia. Particularly in the polyphonically conceived pieces by J. S. Bach, one might have wished for greater attention to the bass and inner voices. Occasionally, too, one missed a clear response to these works’ remarkable harmonic tensions, as in an enharmonic passage that occurs, perhaps surprisingly, in the slow movement of Friedrich’s sonata. Given the performance medium, it would have been interesting to hear the Chromatic Fantasy played from Griepenkerl’s edition (available in reprints) which seems to recast the work for clavichord. This was, however, a thoroughly enjoyable evening of well-played and well-chosen music. Ω

## T A N G E N T S

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Benjamin Martinez, Webmaster

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

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## Michael Tsalka in Concert

Peter Sykes

The Boston Clavichord Society presented Michael Tsalka in concert on Sunday, June 6, at the home of BCS board member Paul Rabin and his wife Arlene Snyder. Dr. Tsalka, currently Professor for Harpsichord and Chamber Music at the Escuela Superior de Musica, National Center for the Arts, in Mexico City, has an extensive international background. Born in Tel Aviv, he received his initial musical education in Israel. He continued his studies in Germany, Italy and the United States and has performed in Europe, the U.S., Canada, Latin America, Israel, and Asia. His scholarly interests center on D.G. Türk. He is recording Türk's 48 keyboard sonatas and is also making a critical edition of these works for

Artaria Editions in New Zealand.

Tsalka presented a varied program of music on two instruments: a large Goble unfretted clavichord, and a smaller fretted instrument by Peter Fisk. His program ranged from Sweelinck, Rameau (the first time this writer has ever heard Rameau on a clavichord!) and Bach, to Türk, Mozart, and Kull, and even a work by a contemporary composer, Stephen Dodgson. The Dodgson piece, two movements from a Suite for Clavichord written in 1967, contained wistful melodies and bitonal harmonies well suited for the instrument. Tsalka is a strong performer, whose personality shines forth in every phrase. Moments of tender delicacy alternated with vigor and unbridled strength in fortissimo passages; his wit was shown at the very



Michael Tsalka

end of the Mozart variations on "Salve tu, Domine," where the final resolving chord was given very late and very short. The variations by Kull on "Gubben Noak" were almost pianistic in their virtuosic flowery writing, but Tsalka made them convincing on the clavichord. His playing of the Türk sonatas, ideal clavichord music from almost every point of view, was natural and unaffected, musical and logical, with much care given to the shaping of phrases. Tsalka has a way of imparting to each beginning a certain 'come hither' quality; the listener feels fully engaged from the start of each piece. A brewing thunderstorm and cloudburst during the second half gave some additional drama to certain passages, but did nothing to distract the rapt audience from the recital. Ω

## Benjamin Martinez: Painter, designer, BCS webmaster

Beverly Woodward

The BCS bulletin, *Tangents*, is a major component of the activities of the BCS and enables us to reach many people who do not live in or near the greater-Boston area. Volunteer authors in this country and elsewhere provide the content, while I do the editing with the assistance of my husband, Paul Monsky. The actual physical product is the result of the labors of Benjamin Martinez, designer par excellence (and author of witty e-mails), and the capable, patient, and friendly staff at Allegra Print & Imaging in Waltham, headed by Ruth Cretella.



Ben Martinez

Ben offered to do the layout and design work for the bulletin (formerly called The Boston Clavichord Society Newsletter) with the first issue in 1996. This was a great stroke of luck for the society and for all friends of the clavichord. The responses to the questionnaire we circulated recently made clear that the bulletin is widely appreciated. Ben is also the webmaster for the BCS website.

At my request, Ben sent me the following

*"amazing story of my fantastic life (abridged)."*

Ben Martinez graduated from The Cooper Union with a BFA in painting in 1971. A resident of New Bedford, MA for the past thirty years, he maintains a studio there where he paints, mostly landscapes. His recent work is featured in an exhibit at the New Bedford Art Museum through January 2011.

Martinez has taught at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, Boston University, Bristol Community College, and the Swain School of Design. He is the co-author of two textbooks on design, published by Prentice Hall Simon and Schuster, and has illustrated translations of *The Inferno* of Dante Alighieri and *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli, both published by Branden Books.

At the Harpsichord Clearing House in Rehoboth, MA, he works both as a web and graphic designer and as a painter and decorator of keyboards.

Ben has built two clavichords from kits for himself and his family. Both of his daughters took their first keyboard lessons on one of these instruments—a large unfretted instrument made from a Zuckermann kit. One daughter, a graduate of the New England Conservatory, is a violinist. The other daughter is a poet and a doctoral student in South Asian studies. Ω

## Reminiscences from the Midwest

The first clavichord I ever saw, in the early 1970s, was in the workshop of Mr. E. O. Witt of Three Rivers, Michigan. Witt was a maker of harpsichords, clavichords and kit instruments, and had trained with John Challis of Detroit. Witt loved making instruments out of native American woods, and experimented with soundboards made of redwood.

Robert Milne, Michigan

My first exposure to the clavichord was as a child in the 1950s. My uncle, Palmer Cone, in South Bend, IN, not only had a harpsichord—a rare thing in those days in the Midwest—but a Challis clavichord (without the aluminum soundboard). On our annual visits to this uncle's house, after several hours of minutes and sonatas on the harpsichord, I would turn to the clavichord in an alcove in the second floor of their bungalow and soon be engrossed in the sounds of that instrument. Two years ago, I had a chance to revisit that clavichord in my elderly aunt's living room. Although the intervening years have made me aware of the benefits of more historically informed instruments, the chance to play Bach Inventions again on that "first" clavichord was a very rewarding experience.

Nicholas Good, Kansas Ω

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(Sykes, continued from p.1)

*metsch*,” pine case painted black and green with gold bands and motto, range FF–f”’, 61 notes, A-415, unfretted. (In need of restoration.) (3)

In February 1980, one Sunday afternoon, I was reading the want ad pages of the *Boston Globe*. Tucked in among the ads for Hammond organs and spinet pianos was a three line ad reading “CLAVICHORD, Chickering-Dolmetsch, 5 octaves, 2 string unisons.” Knowing that this was in all likelihood an instrument similar to the Chickering clavichord at NEC, I phoned the seller and with a voice filled with *Bebung* purchased it on the spot. (I then put the phone down and looked around my room to see what I could sell in order to have the money to buy it; my eyes rested on the Italian harpsichord I had built from a Zuckermann kit in 1979, and I knew that was the one that would have to go.)

This was the first early keyboard instrument that I purchased, rather than built for myself from a kit. When I traveled to Long Island to pick it up, I was rewarded by seeing an instrument that was indeed similar to the NEC instrument, although its natural cherry wood had been painted green and black. When I started to play it I was very disappointed. It had a tiny, dead sound, even though it was pretty well in tune. The owner told me it hadn’t been played in twenty years, and I consoled myself with the thought that it wasn’t dead, just sleeping, and playing it would wake it up again. This proved to be true, and that instrument became my confidant, my challenger, and my inspiration for the next twenty-five years. It wasn’t until 1984, four years later, however, that I mustered the courage to play it in a public recital. This took place at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge and I entitled it “*Plus fait douceur que violence*” after the motto painted on the lid.

When I acquired the instrument, it had seven giant cracks in the soundboard and the case was incredibly warped and twisted. For a long, long while it stayed like that, and kept in tune, but in 2002 the wrest-plank parted company with the case, and I had to regretfully take down the tension on all the strings. It is in storage now, and awaits restoration.

*Chickering and Sons, Boston, 1908, no. 31, “made under the supervision of Arnold Dolmetsch,” 1908, pine case painted green and vermilion with gold bands and motto, range FF–f”’, 61 notes, A-440, unfretted (4).*

I needed a new clavichord right away, however, and I was by then a true fan of the Dolmetsch/Chickering model, so I turned to Richard Troeger, who probably knows more about those clavichords than anyone else. He had a number of them in his extensive collection, and was willing to sell one of them to me – #31 from 1907/8. (The instrument bears one date on the hitchpin rail and another on the nameboard.) This festively painted instrument has served me for my own practice and teaching and has been used for quite a few concerts sponsored by the Boston Clavichord Society. Probably the most thrilling experience I have had with it was on December 7, 2009, when I played it to an almost-full Jordan Hall audience as part of NEC’s “First Monday” concert series. The Bach C major Prelude from Book One of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* and a fantasia by W.F. Bach were on the program as an opener for a concert devoted to a stunningly eclectic program of keyboard music.

That’s enough clavichords for one person, right? Well, not for me... Over the years, I have collected a number of others, of different types, in order to have examples of both fretted and unfretted clavichords for the use of my students and for my own study and practice. Some of them were commissioned, some were offered to me for sale. Each one holds a unique place in my collection, and is useful and inspiring in its own way. Here is a description of them.

*D. Jacques Way, Stonington, CT, 1992, range C/E–c”’, 45 notes with bass short octave, solid mahogany case, A-466, ‘King of Sweden’ triple-fretted (5).*

This instrument holds the place of the original Carl Fudge fretted clavichord (which I sold to a fellow student when I got married in 1980). It has a bright, clear tone, and of course the usual roadtraps associated with triple-fretting, which make one acutely aware of the necessity for clean articulation. This instrument was built in the Zuckermann shop for me in 1992.

*Robert Goble and Son, 1972, after Hass, mahogany case, flame veneer lid, range FF–g”’, 63 notes, A-392, unfretted (6).*

This instrument was in the collection of Howard Schott. Towards the end of his life he called me to say that he was selling a number of his instruments. Upon visiting him and seeing this instrument, I fell in love with its beautiful veneered casework and its dark-hued tone. In addition, the key action

was completely silent, which pleased me very much. This instrument complements the Chickering quite well, and they face each other on opposite walls in a small room that is part of my studio.

*Clifford Boehmer, Boston, 1983, after 1784 Hubert, solid oak case, marbled paper panels in lid, range C–g”’, 56 notes, A-415 (7).*

This instrument belonged to Beverly Woodward; I first encountered it when she asked me to replace a broken string on it some sixteen years ago. I was impressed by the meticulous craftsmanship and responsive action of the instrument, so when she mentioned an interest in selling it some years later I did not hesitate to buy it. This instrument has been used in several Boston Clavichord Society concerts.

*Charles Wolff, Boston, 2007, after 1776 Gerstenberg, solid oak case, oak stand, bench with leather top, range CCC–D, 27 notes, unfretted (8).*

This instrument is a pedal clavichord, played through a pedalboard on the floor just like the pedals of a pipe organ. It speaks at 16’ pitch, and is meant to have one or two clavichords set on top of it to serve as the “manuals” just as in an organ console. I first met Charles Wolff in the shop of harpsichord builder Eric Herz. Wolff had built a pedal clavichord, and the client had asked him to find someone to play it for a dedication recital in his home. Trying to master that instrument—but with my feet rather than my hands—was, like my first attempts with the Carl Fudge fretted clavichord, a truly humbling experience. I persevered, however, and by the time the recital date approached I felt comfortable at least playing eighth notes on the pedal. Years later, I heard that Wolff had a pedal clavichord newly completed that was for sale, and it seemed like a good idea to get it in order to keep my feet in line. I played it for the Boston Clavichord Society’s concert at the Boston Early Music Festival in 2007, in a program that included Bach’s *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*.

*Gary Blaise, San Francisco, 2002, travel clavichord after 1776 Hubert, solid maple case, range C–f”’, chromatic, 54 notes, A-593.3, double fretted (9).*

I met Gary at a Boston Early Music Festival, probably in 1995 or 1997. I was much taken by his beautiful instruments, and resolved to someday commission him to build one for me. The result of that resolution is this instru-

(Continued on p.7)



# Woodshedding Widor and other practical uses for a clavichord

Henry Lebedinsky

When I mention to other organists that I learned the Toccata from Charles-Marie Widor's *Organ Symphony* #5 on the clavichord, they usually laugh and make some joke about adding *bebung* to the 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Humor aside, I have found the clavichord to be an effective learning—and teaching—tool that addresses a variety of technical issues in a wide range of repertoire.

We have, both from instrument inventories and contemporary accounts, records of clavichords used as home practice instruments during the instrument's heyday in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because of their portability, stability, and relatively inexpensive price, clavichords were the obvious choice for teaching and practice. For organists, the added reality of unheated churches and the need for a person or persons to work the instrument's bellows made an even stronger case. The technical demands imposed by the clavichord on its players was an added bonus.

In 16<sup>th</sup> through early 18<sup>th</sup> century repertoire, the clavichord is ideally suited for reinforcing a light and even touch on scalar passages using paired fingering. The instrument's sensitivity brings out issues of weight transfer and helps develop a keen awareness of the role of the hand, wrist, and arm in creating evenness in both Italian and French/German/English paired fingerings. Practicing the types of passagework abundant in the toccatas of Frescobaldi, Merulo, Sweelinck, and Froberger on a fretted clavichord results in a new appreciation of the articulation necessary to bring these pieces to life on a harpsichord, virginal, or organ. The balance between horizontal and vertical force into the key has to be much more carefully observed on the clavichord, and the awareness of wasted downward force in the use of paired fingering can be developed much quicker and easier than on plucked keyboards. Moreover, the clavichord, more than any other keyboard, asks the player to find a tempo

that gives each 16<sup>th</sup> note enough time to be articulated crisply yet does not allow slower passages to languish without direction. After one has practiced these fingerings on the clavichord, the passages flow considerably more easily on other historical keyboards.

I have found that the clear, lucid textures of mid- to late-18<sup>th</sup> century concerti and solo works, from Handel and Stanley through Haydn and Bixi, ben-



Wilhelm Busch, "The Organist"

efit immensely from being honed on the clavichord. The florid solo passages most often given to the right hand suggest thumb-under fingering that, without resorting to the arrhythmic fingering patterns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century schools of velocity, requires attention to weighting and fluidity of motion that can only benefit from the clavichord's unique touch. Any uneven weight applied to the key from the arm and hand becomes strikingly apparent, flaws that are hidden on the harpsichord or organ keyboard. While similar flaws would be revealed on the keyboard of a modern piano, the gentle action of 18<sup>th</sup> century or 18<sup>th</sup> century-style organ keyboards (whether that of a lightly-voiced and conveniently-located choir division of a larger organ or a small positive organ of the sort most often employed for these types of concerti) is so unlike the feel of the modern piano that the latter instrument can more confuse than inform a player looking to refine his or her technique.

Many issues involved in learning 19<sup>th</sup>

and 20<sup>th</sup> century organ repertoire, especially the *moto perpetuo* toccatas such as Widor's finest, can be addressed on the clavichord before being taken to the organ. First and foremost, the clavichord's light touch lets the player work on issues of evenness and rhythmic security without having to face muscle and tendon fatigue that comes with the deeper and heavier actions on pianos and tracker-action organs. When I was first recovering from a bout of (non-music-induced) tendonitis in my right arm, the clavichord was the only instrument on which I could practice for any length of time. Building the muscle memory required for the finger twisting and wrist stretching patterns of French toccatas is much easier when one need not work so hard to push down the keys. The instrument's gentle sound is also helpful in not overloading the senses during long periods of repetitive pattern work. The clavichord's action is also helpful in developing the balance of wrist tension and relaxation necessary for executing rapid staccato chords, such as those in the opening left hand motive in Widor's toccata. Once the technique for reliable repetition is achieved, playing the music on the organ, whether tracker or electric action, is comparatively easy.

I have consistently recommended to my harpsichord and organ students that they spend at least some time practicing on the clavichord in order to experience some of the points outlined in this article. At least a few of them have ended up purchasing their own instruments. I have also introduced the clavichord to piano students at Davidson College and Appalachian State University, bringing the soft voice of our gentle friend into their musical lives. The more we do to highlight the clavichord as a gateway to improving technique on other keyboard instruments, the more we advance awareness of its benefits in the greater keyboard community. Ω

(Anniversary, continued from p.1)

of our Friends responded. Let it be noted that we would still be pleased to receive responses from those who did not get around to answering promptly. The responses we have received have been very helpful in acquainting us better with our Friends and readers.

Based on the responses received thus far, we can summarize as follows: A large majority of our Friends own a clavichord. A smaller number have built a clavichord—sometimes with difficulty! About half of those who responded are amateur players, while the other half play a keyboard professionally—predominantly the organ—and many of these have performed on the clavichord. A much smaller number have taught the clavichord. Apart from house concerts, the venues of clavichord performances have included meetings of the historical keyboard societies in the U.S. and abroad, churches, and museums. While a large majority of the respondents have attended a clavichord performance, generally this opportunity has been available only occasionally.

The BCS bulletin and website received many compliments. We also received useful suggestions for subject matter for future issues of the bulletin and for new content on the website. We intend to implement these suggestions. Some of the

(Sykes, continued from p.4)

ment, which has traveled with me in a hard-shell flight case all over the country on my concert trips and has been used as a practice instrument in my hotel rooms. It is amazingly versatile, and its tiny but sweet sound is very pleasing. It speaks a fourth higher than normal due to its small size.

Kevin Spindler, Stonington, CT, 2009, after anonymous original in the Hague Gemeentemuseum, solid walnut case, range C–e”, 53 notes, A-440, double fretted (10).

The Boehmer clavichord mentioned above rests atop the pedal clavichord, so I felt the need for a medium-sized fretted clavichord, with a chromatic bass octave for Bach and other mid-18<sup>th</sup> century music. When Kevin showed me the plans for this clavichord I knew I wanted one, so I commissioned this lovely instrument. Its silvery voice is a clear contrast to the other fretted clavichords in my collection.

Renée Geoffrion, Limoges, France, 2011,

clavichord anecdotes we received have been incorporated into this issue. Our readers range from individuals who have just acquired a clavichord to those who have had one or more instruments for many years, from keyboard beginners to professional performers and teachers. This range of experience will continue to require a variety of content in the bulletin.

The lead article in this issue of the bulletin is a description by Peter Sykes, president of the BCS, of his clavichord collection and clavichord-collecting experiences. Descriptions and photos of clavichords owned by BCS Friends is a topic suggested by our readers. Henry Lebedinsky has written an article on the clavichord as a practice instrument for the organ and other keyboards, another topic that was suggested. We shall return to these subjects in future issues of the bulletin.

The clavichord has played varied roles throughout its long history. In their responses to the BCS questionnaire, our readers expressed an acute appreciation of the instrument’s unique musical qualities. It is my hope that such insight will provide the basis for new activities and pedagogical efforts that will continue to enhance the clavichord’s role in our musical life and lives. Ω

modified design of a Hubert clavichord, oak case with a sycamore inlay, range BB–f”, 55 notes, A-425 (can be modified slightly). The lowest note can be tuned down a half or full step (P.1).

One might think that this is truly enough clavichords for one person, but one cannot always control these matters. Very recently, in early November 2010, Renée Geoffrion from Limoges, France, who has presented recitals for the Boston Clavichord Society and is also a noted clavichord builder, brought to my studio a double fretted clavichord after Hubert (based on an earlier model than the Boehmer) that she had made for a colleague and was about to deliver to him. I found it very, very beautiful. In fact, I almost couldn’t stop playing it. I followed my heart and asked her to build one for me, a proposal she joyfully accepted. I hope to receive it sometime in the coming year. Ω

## Tales of the Clavichord

When crossing the border from Canada into the U.S. once with a clavichord in the back seat, I was asked by the border officer to identify what I was transporting. “A clavichord,” said I. “Fretted or unfretted,” said he. “Fretted,” said I. “You may pass,” he said. I’ve often wondered if entry into the U.S. would have been denied had I been transporting an unfretted clavichord!

**Gregory Crowell, Michigan**

One year at the Boston Early Music Festival I heard Hugh Young and Carl Fudge talking about a clavichord with a Challis soundboard made of aluminum. It was fifteen years in an attic and didn’t need to be tuned when it came out. I think something was said about it being taken to South America and floated down a river...but perhaps this is just my fantasy.

**Paul Monsky, Massachusetts**

I used to know John Challis very well. In the 1960s he had moved into an animal shelter in New York City, just days after the dogs in the building had moved out. He and his assistant managed to convert it into his workshop/home. I was a surgical resident at the time, and looked forward to hearing his many stories...

**James Lee, Massachusetts**

Bill Ross, a fantastic builder, told me that it happened once that Gustav Leonhardt was coming to visit Hugh Gough and that Gough made a clavichord practically overnight so that Leonhardt would have one by his bedside during his visit.

**Sandy Hackney, New York**

When my Zuckerman Model IV was first completed, I was very anxious to show it off. At that time I lived in an apartment on Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, so the ambient noise often interfered with the gentle sound of the instrument. I invited a musician friend over to hear it. He played electric guitar in a rock band. When I started playing a Bach Prelude for him, the traffic on the Parkway was quite heavy, so the instrument was difficult to hear. After trying to listen to me for about a minute, he tapped me on the shoulder and asked in all sincerity, “Did you forget to turn it on?”

**Peter Tracton, New York** Ω



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