

18th Century Pedagogical Keyboard Music from Nordic Manuscripts: An introduction to a new repertoire of attractive & practical pieces for clavichord

Henry Lebedinsky

For the past nineteen years I have been a teacher of both modern piano and historical keyboards to children and adults of varying abilities and levels of dedication. Since 2000, I have introduced almost every one of my students to the clavichord and the world of technical precision and expressive rhetoric that our soft-voiced friend has to offer, and shown them how to apply those skills to other keyboard instruments. I am constantly looking for new music that can challenge and captivate my students while providing their teacher with some change of pace from the usual suspects in the beginning keyboard canon. Whether from my interest in historical pedagogy or simply out of dread of hearing yet another pair of hands attempting the ubiquitous minuets from the *Anna Magdalena Bach* notebook, I have found looking farther afield for teaching pieces rewarding for teacher and student alike.

In the course of recent researches into the keyboard music of 18th century Russia and Scandinavia, I have come across several notebooks and manuscripts from the collection found in the Simananniemi Manor¹ in the Liperi region of Finland, now held in the library of the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Dating from the late 18th to the turn of the 19th century, they include a number of pieces by native Scandinavian composers, including Johan Ramstedt and Thomas Byström, others by German composers, and a number of anonymous works. All of these pieces are quite well suited to the clavichord, and considering the proximity to Stockholm, one of the major centers of clavichord building in
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Klavechord in Primetime: A Two-Part Belgian Clavichord Festival

Guy Tops is a retired professor of English and linguistics, an avid lover of music and an amateur musician. He regularly translates texts about music. Below, he reports on a two-part clavichord festival held in Antwerp, March 9-12, and in Leuven, March 14 and 16-18.

Guy A.J. Tops

A seven-day festival devoted to the clavichord would be a remarkable event anywhere. In Flanders, it is only just this side of a miracle. “Klavechord in Primetime” took the combined efforts of three musical and two cultural organizations to pull it off.

The highly informative booklet published by the festival contained a description of the various activities, CVs of the artists, an article by Sofie Taes (a young Flemish musicologist) on the history of the clavichord, and an interview, also by Taes, with the noted clavichord builder Joris Potvlieghe.

Antwerp

Amuz (short for Augustinus Muziekcentrum) is based in a secularized renaissance and baroque church, the splendid venue of the Antwerp half of the festival. Saint Augustine’s, built by Wenceslas Cobergher (1560-1634), has been converted into a concert hall—restored and adapted to its new function. During the festival the nave served as the exhibition hall, and the choir, narrower by two side aisles but quite high-vaulted, as the concert “hall,” seating up to 168 listeners. Amazingly, the acoustics of this “hall” were good.

Friday, March 9

The first event was a guided tour by Joris Potvlieghe (<http://www.jorispotvlieghe.be>) of a collection of Saxon-style unfretted clavichords built by him (plus one built by his father, Ghislain). Many of these were played in the course of the festival, in Leuven as well as in Antwerp. In a very real sense Potvlieghe was the star of the festival.

Part of Potvlieghe’s talk went well above the heads of the technically unsophisticated members of his audience. But even they hung upon his every word, because of his touching descriptions of the loving care with which he selects his trees and converts their wood into his instruments, and of his search for balance: between science and intuition, between technical demands and esthetics, and between his own experience and the wishes of his musician customers.

A recital devoted to the music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach followed. Miklós

Spányi (<http://miklosspanyi.de>) had selected three sonatas (Wq. 51/2, 3 & 5) and two rondos (Wq. 56/1 & 3)—except for the more lyrical Wq. 51/3, all dramatic works, in my view definitely *Sturm und Drang*. To be

sure, Daniel Hertz (s.v. *Empfindsamkeit* in the 1980 *Grove*) would reject this label, on account of C.P.E. Bach’s “reluctance to indulge in theatrics beyond the scope of his keyboard.” But Hertz underestimates the expressive possibilities of the clavichord. For all its softness, the clavichord is suitable to express even C.P.E. Bach’s wildly shifting *Sturm und Drang* emotions, as Spányi demonstrated convincingly.

Saturday, March 10

In the afternoon Spányi shared his expertise in master classes that the public could attend. In the evening, the concert by Kris Verhelst¹ was preceded by an interview of the “klavierist” (keyboardist), as Verhelst likes to style herself. The interviewer was
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Inside the Saint Augustine Church

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the later 18th century, it is certainly conceivable that much of this music was written, practiced, and performed on that instrument.

In 1780, Maria Furuhjelm (1765-1805), the daughter of a wealthy military man from Viborg ennobled in 1762, compiled a notebook containing 32 anonymous works as well as three pieces attributed to Georg Christoph Wagenseil (1717-1777). The anonymous works include some attractive polonaises, arias, and minuets that are as technically demanding as some of the easier Telemann fantasies or selections from Hüssler's *Clavier-und Singstücke*. The *Polonoise* in G minor (example 1) is typical of contemporary Scandinavian settings of this popular dance movement, often set as a binary form with no *trio*. The attention to detail with regard to articulation and dynamics make pieces like this especially rewarding as teaching material.

Less recommended are the numerous *Murky* or *Mourqui*, popular from the 1730s to 1790s, in which the left hand plays extended passages of alternating octaves. The *Musette* from the Anna Magdalena Bach collection is one of the more bearable examples. C.P.E. Bach writes of this dance, "To begin their studies, pupils are racked with vapid *Murkeys*...in which the left hand, its role reduced to a mere thumping, is rendered useless for its true employment."² It is quite possible that the fifteen-year-old Maria may have written some of the pieces herself or with the help of a teacher, although at least one of the anonymous pieces does appear in another notebook from the Simananniemi collection. Regardless of attribution, the Furuhjelm pieces are fairly simple, melodic, and well suited to young fingers at the clavichord or piano, offering a rare and personal glimpse into the musical pedagogy of the Scandinavian nobility.

Another source of interesting repertoire comes from a notebook compiled by several different hands. It includes a handwritten copy of the first chapter of David Kellner's *Trogen underrättelse uti General Basen*, a Swedish translation of his 1732 treatise on figured bass. The book also includes a large collection of exercises in chorale harmonization signed by Pehr Rostedt and dated 1764. At the end are 30 short pieces, mostly anonymous, with one attributed to "Kelleri" (Fortunato Chelleri (1690-1757), who worked in Stockholm between 1732 and

1734). The most interesting pieces, including some attractive and well-constructed minuets and polonaises, are found toward the end of the book.

More experienced students as well as adult amateurs would enjoy some of the sonatas, polonaises and variation sets contained in a ca. 1800 manuscript book belonging to Henrik Ervastin, containing keyboard pieces, songs, and keyboard transcriptions of orchestral pieces. In addition to anonymous works, the book contains pieces by Bohemian composers Dussek, Cramer, and Josef Küffner (1776-1856) and polonaises by Ukrainian Osip Kozlovsky (1757-1831) and Swede Johan Ramstedt. The Ramstedt is quite an enjoyable piece, bringing to mind the charming and sentimental polonaises of Oginski – music more or less unknown in the United States but standard teaching repertoire in Russia. Ramstedt's trio section is particularly fine, featuring a tender melody played in the bass by the right hand crossing over the left. The Simananniemi manuscripts contain a number of other looseleaf keyboard works, including an anonymous *Allegro* in the *empfindsamer stil*, full of surprising chord progressions and sudden changes of affect, and an anonymous *Minuet* in A minor (example 2) with 37 variations – a virtuosic *tour de force* that pushes the boundaries of clavichord technique without exceeding them.

The library of the Sibelius Academy has been digitizing the Simananniemi Manor manuscripts and is making them and their entire public domain manuscript collection available online. My modern editions of selected works from the Simananniemi collection will be available this summer through my website (www.henrylebedinsky.com). Hopefully, these pieces will help shed some light on music and musical pedagogy in 18th century Finland and Sweden and will enlarge the teaching repertoire available to modern musicians. Ω

¹The Simananniemi Manor collection is part of the Public Domain Manuscripts collection, accessible in Finnish and English at <http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/38071>.

²Bach, C.P.E., *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*. Trans. William J. Mitchell. New York: W.W. Norton, 1949, p. 31.

TANGENTS

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Members of the Boston Clavichord Society may place notices in the bulletin without charge regarding clavichords for sale or clavichord events in their locality. Such notices may include a related small high-resolution photograph.

Polonoise

Arcorymnus
(Missa Fuxalpeter Notsteinak, 1780)

The musical score is presented in seven systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 1, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 are clearly marked. The piece includes various musical ornaments and slurs, particularly in the right-hand part.

1) Original: eighth note. 2) Original: eighth note.

Menuet

Variation 18. *Andante*

Anonymous

Musical score for Variation 18, *Andante*. The score is written for grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and includes dynamic markings (*p*, *f*) and measure numbers (5, 10, 15).

Variation 30. *Allegretto Grazioso*

Musical score for Variation 30, *Allegretto Grazioso*. The score is written for grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and includes measure numbers (5, 10, 15).

BCS Recital: Andrus Madsen

Margaret Irwin-Brandon

Can four *Fantasies*, two *Fantasias*, three *Fugues* (plus an improvised sonata and a set of 3 *Polonaises*) offer enough variety to support an entire program of clavichord music? Fortunately, when conceived and performed by Andrus Madsen, it can.

To open his recital at Gore Place in Waltham, Andrus improvised a *Fantasia*—a display of skill and invention that set forth a promise for the entire evening. His *Fantasia*, like those of Georg Philipp Telemann that followed (TWV 33:8,9,13) was predominantly in two parts, with the soprano pushing out her melody with its own harmonic surprises, and its bursts of embroidery and fancy. Two of the Telemann fantasias were paired with fugues (TWV 30:21, 22), giving them a large and familiar form.

It is not suggesting too much to suppose that the Telemann fantasias lead directly to those of the sons of J.S. Bach—more, indeed, than do the compositional styles of the father. This was evidenced in the keen programming of this recital, even in the gigantic leap from Telemann's *Fantasia in A major*, TWV 33:9 to Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *Fantasia in F-sharp minor*, Wq. 67, a key suggesting doom and

darkness. This fantasia was introduced by Julia Steinbok, who sang a song by CPE which presents the unfolding tale. The *Fantasia* is a *Memento Mori*, a meditation on (his own) death, and in it Madsen



Andrus Madsen

employed the full resources of the (1908) Dolmetsch /Chickering 5-octave clavichord, from barely breathing *ppp* to crashing harmonic *fff* clusters.

Madsen's improvised sonata in three movements, which he introduced as "Fast, Slow, Fast," might have been described as "Furious, Suave, Fitful." Madsen's rubato and fluid ornamentation illuminated the musical expression with excitement, just as in the composed literature

After a brief pause, the program concluded with works by CPE and Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. CPE's *Fugue in G minor*, Wq. 112/19 is an "in your face"

piece of driving, forward motion, absent the unique halts, outbursts, and quirky harmonic twists one generally associates with his music. However, there was a surprise ending!

Our attention was drawn once again to the connections between these half-brothers in the final works. Three polonaises, selected from Friedemann's *12 Polonaises*, F. 12, were full of affective variety and well chosen to provide a panoply of his invention: D major, bold and cheeky, D minor, impetuous and uncertain, and E major, tuneful and meandering. Each was presented with understanding and communicated with the intensity and passion necessary for a satisfactory performance, and without which this music can seem chaotic and senseless.

Taking a final trip—to unknown worlds and back—the program concluded with C.P.E. Bach's *Fantasia in B-flat major*, Wq. 61/3. Perhaps composed as homage to Wilhelm Friedemann, this piece by itself demonstrated why the clavichord is known to be (potentially) the most expressive of all the keyboard instruments. Ω

Extraordinary Clavichord Sounds

The 25th Anniversary Jubilee Symposium of the Nederlands Clavichord Genootschap

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Dutch Clavichord Society, founded in September 1987, a public, international symposium will take place in Leiden, Friday, September 25-Sunday, September 30, 2012.

The theme of the symposium is expressed in its title above. The historical clavichord appeared with an amazing variety of shapes, sizes, and features. Since the early 20th century, the clavichord revival has led to further developments in building and playing. Some of the questions that will be addressed are: What motives did people have that led to the construction of such different types of clavichords? What kind of music was played on them? What was the status of the clavichord (including the pedal clavichord) prior to the 19th century in comparison with that of other keyboard

instruments, such as the organ, the harpsichord, and finally the piano? What attraction and interest can the various types of clavichord have for us now?

The society is collaborating with Menno van Delft¹ in the organization of the symposium. The program consists of concerts, talks (in English), a workshop, and a clavichord exhibition. The symposium will take place in the historical center of Leiden, with excellent train connections to the Amsterdam airport (only twenty minutes), and such attractive cities as Amsterdam, Haarlem and Delft.

The clavichord concerts will take place, in accordance with the following schedule, in a church, *Lokhorstkerk* (Pieterskerkstraat 1). Sept. 28, 8 pm: the duo *Der prallende Doppelschlag*, Menno van Delft and Siebe Henstra, play 17th and 18th century music

for two keyboard instruments on the appropriate types of clavichords. Sept. 29, 8:15 pm: Christian Brembeck plays a unique type of clavichord, the cembal d'amour (G. Silbermann, 1721). Jan Raas continues the concert with striking modern clavichord compositions and improvisations. Sept. 30, 2:15 pm: Concert on a pedal clavichord by Pieter van Dijk playing works of Buxtehude, Boehm, and Bach.

The other activities will take place in a nearby 17th-century building, *Ars Aemula Naturae* (Pieterskerkgracht 9a). Sept. 28, 1:30-5:30 pm: *Preludium*, a workshop on the pedal clavichord, using instruments of the 17th- and 18th-century types, led by Pieter van Dijk and Erik van Bruggen. Sept. 29, 10 am-12:30 pm & 2-5:30 pm: Talks by Eva Helenius and Gregory
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Nicole Van Opstal, a musicologist who works for the Flemish classical radio channel Klara. Verhelst argued that as much as 85% of 18th-century keyboard music was not written for a specific keyboard and could in principle be played on any keyboard instrument. Intending to give a concert of 18th-century Flemish music, she went through a pile of this literature, selecting works she judged would sound good on a clavichord. She came up with two divertimenti (#4 in C & #6 in A) by Matthias Vanden Gheyn (1721-1785), the *Divertimento sesto* in F by François Krafft (1733-after 1783) and a *Suite in F*, op. 2, no.2, by Natalis Chrétien Vander Borgh (1729-1785). All this is music meant to entertain—"salon music," Verhelst called it. She played it with conviction, making the most of the charm of this music. But frankly, a concert of over an hour devoted only to salon music leaves me hungry for meatier fare. I'd get my fill the next day.

Sunday, March 11

On Sunday, March 11, Davidsfonds Universiteit Vrije Tijd organized for its members "Klavechord in Context," a course comprising two lectures, Potvlieghe's guided "tour" (see above) and two concerts that were open to the general public.

In the first lecture, organist and musicologist Yves Senden (<http://www.yvessenden.be>) introduced the music of the concert that was to follow. Taking the "in context" aspect of the day's title seriously, he discussed the stylistic influence of Buxtehude on Bach, the Renaissance origin of the suite and Froberger's role in its development, the 18th-century use of words like *Clavier* and *Flügel* as umbrella terms meaning "(any) keyboard instrument," program music, and problems of tuning and temperament.

In the concert Menno van Delft (<http://www.mennovandelft.com>) played three instruments, a fretted one by Andreas Hemert and two unfretted Potvlieghe's. His brief comments on the pieces he played often dovetailed neatly with Senden's lecture. His program was rich and varied: a Buxtehude suite, BuxWV 227, and canzonetta, BuxWV 171, a J.S. Bach sonata, BWV 967, and prelude and fugue, BWV 868, Kuhnau's *Der todtkranke und*

wieder gesunde Hiskias, various pieces by Kirnberger (which van Delft had assembled into a kind of suite), the presto movement of a sonata in D major by Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (famous for the eponymous variations), and a Bach toccata, BWV 910. I was most impressed by the very last piece. Toccatas are supposed to be showpieces, and performing them on a quiet clavichord seems a bad idea a priori. But on the king-size clavichord van Delft used, it sounded



Joris Potvlieghe

perfect. I note also that the largely unknown piece by Goldberg is a composition whose virtuoso fireworks are fully justified by its musical substance.

Van Delft skipped his lunch to give a lecture on the history of the clavichord from its monochordal origins to its final flowering in large 19th-century Swedish instruments. Members of the audience were given several opportunities to ask questions; as van Delft is a fine teacher, they learned a lot.

The final concert of the Antwerp festival was to have been given by Gustav Leonhardt. This event was turned into a concert in his memory, as he had died on January 16, 2012. Kris Verhelst played Böhm's *Praeludium, Fuge und Postludium in G minor* and his *Suite in E-flat major*, works beloved by Leonhardt. The suite's allemande, Verhelst said, could be considered

a tombeau—Leonhardt's tombeau. Menno van Delft played Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* and the adagio movement of Mozart's sonata, KV 576, the last work that van Delft played for Leonhardt, his teacher, a short while before Leonhardt died. Finally, Miklós Spányi played a toccata he had composed in memory of Leonhardt and, from *The Art of Fugue*, contrapunctus 1, 10, and 15, the last the unfinished one. It was a fitting end to a concert in memory

of an artist who loved Bach above all others. In between these performances, Nicole Van Opstal read a number of texts she had written to introduce the various items on the program, but above all to recall the great musician, teacher and human being.

Leuven

The venue of the Leuven events was Alamire's "Huis van de Polyfonie," in particular the concert hall (108 seats) in Saint Mary's Gate of the Premonstratensian Park Abbey in Heverlee, a Leuven suburb. Its acoustics are just about ideal for the clavichord.

Wednesday, March 14

As on Sunday, March 11, Davidsfonds Universiteit Vrije Tijd organized a course around the concert. Menno van Delft expanded on his lecture on the history of the clavichord by playing short pieces from the different periods he discussed.

Participants were then guided around the abbey, the oldest Premonstratensian Abbey in Belgium. There is still a small Premonstratensian community in the abbey, but the City of Leuven leases part of the buildings, including Saint Mary's Gate, which it has restored beautifully.

In the evening, Jos van Immerseel (website under construction at http://animaeterna.be/category/t/jos_van_immerseel) gave an all-Haydn concert featuring three sonatas (in D, B and E-flat major: Hob. XVI/19, 32 & 52) and the G major capriccio, *Acht Sauschneider müssen seyn*. In his short introduction, he discussed how to play music written for an instrument of wider tonal range than the available instrument, a problem he faced in the capriccio. His interpretations of the Haydn works were highly personal as well as free and refined, and the audience listened most attentively. So attentively that it seemed they only

heard the fabulous inherent quality of the music, but not its down-to-earth humor. Even during the capriccio (“It takes eight men to castrate a pig”!) there was nary a smile to be seen from where I sat.

Friday, March 16

Friday’s program was the most unexpected: Beethoven sonatas (in F major, op. 10:2, in C minor, the “Pathétique,” op. 13, and in E-flat major, op. 27:1) on a clavichord? **Wim Winters** (<http://www.wimwinters.be>) argued for considering the composer of these works, dating from 1796-1797 and 1800-1801, an 18th-century composer, for whom the word *Klavier* denoted first and foremost a clavichord. He also noted that Beethoven owned a clavichord, of which he spoke highly, and that all of this music can be played on a five-octave unfretted clavichord without changing notes or dynamic markings. He stressed in particular that these relatively early sonatas never require the use of the pedal. They may well have been composed on a clavichord.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and this listener thought them pretty convincing on the clavichord. Contrary to what one might expect, given the small size and sound of the instrument, Winters played them remarkably slowly. But he did not drag them, and he managed to bring

out the dramatic contrasts Beethoven’s music calls for. Listeners who were unwilling or unable to “forget” performances on concert grands doubtless will have been disappointed. However, one listens with one’s mind as well as one’s ears and if the mind is unprejudiced about the small scale of the clavichord, one hears that everything Beethoven wrote is there.

Saturday, March 17

Saturday brought another C.P.E. Bach program by Miklós Spányi. On this occasion he played the three other sonatas of Wq. 51 (1, 4, & 6) as well as a rondo in C minor (Wq. 59/4) and a fantasia in C major (Wq. 59/6). This program was somewhat less dramatic than the one in Antwerp. But that was compensated for—not that compensation was needed—by a multitude of rhythmic surprises, especially in Wq. 51/6 and Wq. 59/6. The latter is an amazing work that manages to combine the nature of a real fantasia with solid structure. No one in the audience could doubt why BIS Records chose Spányi to record all of C.P.E. Bach’s keyboard works.

Sunday, March 18

The festival was concluded by another concert in memory of Gustav Leonhardt, performed by the three musicians who had given concerts in Leuven. Van Immerseel played Froberger’s *Suite in D*

major, whose first movement, *Meditation faite sur ma mort future*, served as a tombeau for Leonhardt, and C.P.E. Bach’s very mournful rondo *Abschied vom Silbermannschen Clavier* (Wq. 66). Winters played Bach’s *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue*, striking a very different balance between freedom and rhythmic drive from Menno van Delft’s performance in Antwerp. Spányi’s contribution to this concert was the same as that of the previous week, as was van Opstal’s, except where she had to adapt her text to the program changes.

In Conclusion

Before I attended this festival I had heard just two formal clavichord concerts, one of which was so bad that Christian charity commands me not to reveal the performer’s name. This festival, with its fine to great performances, made me understand why Bach considered the clavichord the best instrument for study and *zu musikalischer Privatunterhaltung*. As usual, Bach was right. Ω

¹Verhelst does not have a website. A short English-language biography can be found at (<http://www.ruckersgenootschap.be/TEA.php#kris>).



(Symposium, Continued from p.5)

Crowell on exceptional variations in clavichord building in Europe and in America; also two sessions of clavichord presentations by their makers, moderated by Koen Vermeij. Sept. 30, 9:30 am-12:30 pm: After a guided one-hour walk in the city, Huw Rees will demonstrate “The Funky Clavinet,” an electric clavichord! Sheet music from the *Jubilee Anthology* by Kees Rosenhart will be available to try out on the available clavichords.

Tickets: Participants will pay 70 euros and students 50 euros for a passe-partout. (Tickets for single events are also available.) For the *Preludium* workshop on the pedal clavichord, participants with a passe-partout will pay an additional 30 euros (20 euros for students). Clavichord makers with an instrument at the exhibition will receive a free passe-partout, but are kindly asked to pay 50 euros as a contribution

towards the rent of the building. Further details about the program, application forms for participants and clavichord



The interior of the Lokhorstkerk, the symposium location for the concerts.

builders, and suggestions for accommodation can be found on the NCG website, www.clavichordgenootschap.nl, or can be requested from the secretary, Tom Brockmeier, Van Breestraat 38, NL- 1071

ZR, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (tom.brockmeier@gmail.com)

As a *Postludium* to the symposium, on Sunday, Sept. 30, 4:15 pm, a second workshop is planned by Orgelstad Leiden: *Pedal keyboard playing from Sweelinck to Bach*. The aim is to highlight the link between pedal clavichord playing and organ playing in earlier times. The workshop will be led by Leo van Doeselaar using the Van Hagerbeer organ (1643) in the nearby *Pieterskerk*. This instrument is the largest extant church organ from the Dutch Golden Age that is tuned in meantone temperament. Further information will become available in July on the NCG website and at www.stichtingorgelstadleiden.nl/kerken-en-orgels. Ω

¹Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg



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