

The Nordic Historical Keyboard Festival, Kuopio, Finland, August 15-24, 2012

Pekka Vapaavuori

Dr. Pekka Vapaavuori is Director Emeritus of the Sibelius Academy. He wrote his doctoral dissertation at the Academy on the topic of "Variations in Sound and Playability in Reconstructions of the Wählström Clavichord."

In September 2011, Michael Tsalka from Israel (currently based in Sweden) and Anna Maria McElwain from Finland met at the International Clavichord Symposium in Magnano, Italy, where they decided to initiate a Nordic Historical Keyboard Festival in Kuopio, Finland. Both keyboardists play historical instruments in addition to the modern piano. McElwain considers the clavichord her primary instrument. Tsalka keeps a firm grip on his multi-instrumentalist identity and often performs on several historical keyboards and the modern piano at the same concert.

Surprisingly, in less than a year the artistic directors created a high-class festival. Tsalka has a network of professional acquaintances from around the world, who were willing to travel to Kuopio to teach and perform. McElwain, who is from Kuopio, had the local knowledge necessary to set up the challenging practical arrangements for this large-scale event. The students, who received lessons in harpsichord, clavichord, square piano, and fortepiano, hailed from Finland, Sweden, China, Mexico and the U.S.

Kuopio is one of the main centers of music education in the country. The Kuopio Conservatory offers professional training as well as basic music instruction. It is also possible to study music at the associated University
(Continued on p.2)

The Legacy of József Gát

Brandon Bascom

Brandon Bascom is a doctoral candidate in piano performance and pedagogy at the University of Iowa writing a dissertation on József Gát. As part of his research he has had numerous interviews with members of Gát's family.

József Gát (1913-1967) was a Hungarian keyboardist, conductor, author, and teacher. He was a pioneer in music education and in the introduction of early keyboards in Hungary. His life story is remarkable and his achievements have had a lasting impact.

Early Life

József Gát was born on December 13, 1913 in Székesfehérvár, Hungary¹ to Bernát Grosz and Aranka Armut, who were Jewish merchants. József, the youngest of six children, displayed talent for the piano at an early age. His family's finances made it possible

for him to receive a good education and instruction in music and foreign languages. At the age of eighteen he was admitted to the Royal National Hungarian Academy of Music. Gát's last name was originally Grosz, a very common German name. While attending the academy, József changed his name to avoid being confused with another student who had Nazi political leanings. He entered the academy to study trombone with Pál Trebuss and composition with Zoltán Kodály, but had to switch his major from trombone to piano due to a lung disease (believed by his family to be tuberculosis).

Gát's professors, many of whom had a connection to Bartók, were among the most prestigious in Hungary. As a youth, Gát heard a radio recording of Bartók. He said that it "made me crazy. I knew then that I

had to get to Budapest to study with that man."² Gát and Bartók became very close. Many pieces that Bartók composed were first performed in Gát's house. Gát would play the piano with Szigeti (violin) and Keperly (cello), so that Bartók could listen.

Gát studied composition for five years, as well as score reading and orchestration for two years under Zoltán Kodály. He received his university graduation certificate in composition on September 27, 1937 and his certificate in pedagogy on June 15, 1938.

On July 21, 1938, shortly after graduation, Gát married Magda Veszprémi. Given the political situation, they believed they would be safer from the potential capture of Jews by living in the outskirts of Budapest, in Buedakesi. About the time of Gát's graduation, legislation was passed that made it impos-



József Gát

sible for Jews to find work in public institutions, so Gát played the trombone in jazz bands and gave piano lessons. His daughters speak of their father telling them that he had given lessons to an ambassador from Switzerland. Ambassadors could give Jews papers that put them in a category of Jews protected by the government they represented. Gát told his daughters that this ambassador helped save him from going to a concentration camp.

(Continued on p.4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Amherst Workshopp.3
- Alissa Duryeep.3
- Davidsson Recital.p.5

(Finland, Continued from p.1)

of Applied Science, Savonia. The Church Music Department of the Sibelius Academy, also located in Kuopio, added clavichord study to its curriculum in 1985 to supplement the program for organists. Soon after, the use of historical keyboards took fire at the conservatory as well. Consequently, all the necessary instruments—clavichords, harpsichords and fortepianos—were readily available for the festival.

The building of clavichords began in Kuopio in the 1990s.¹ Courses were modeled on those given in Marholmen, Sweden. Over the years, many teachers and students from the Sibelius Academy and the conservatory have built clavichords, mostly after the model of a fretted 1752 instrument by the Swedish builder Anders Wählström. In the courses at Kuopio and Marholmen several instruments were built for the use of the Sibelius Academy's Kuopio department and the Kuopio conservatory.

The music institutions which function within the Music Center of Kuopio have at their disposal three Wählström clavichords plus a pedal clavichord that consists of two ordinary Wählström-type manuals and a 16-foot pedal instrument designed by Pekka Vapaavuori. In addition, there is a copy by Mikko Korhonen of an anonymous fretted clavichord with a split octave in the Music Museum in Stockholm, a five-octave unfretted clavichord designed and built by Hans Erik Svensson after Specken, and a copy of a five-octave Silbermann clavichord built by Pentti Peltó. The instruments used in the concerts included a copy owned and built by Mikko Korhonen of the Stockholm Museum instrument and an instrument owned by Anna Maria McElwain that was built by Stig Lundmark after Svensson's model. Lundmark, who comes from northern Sweden, is a person to keep in mind if one is planning to buy a clavichord.

There was a great range of music in the program of the festival, from the Renaissance to premieres of new works and from the clavichord to the grand piano. The clavichord, however, played a central role. Out of the nineteen concerts on the program, six featured the clavichord exclusively. The performances of five very different clavichordists displayed the diversity of expression of the instrument. Roman Chlada from Austria specializes in keyboard music of the 16th and 17th centuries. In his three recit-

als we heard nuanced performances on the instrument built by Korhonen of music from the Italian and Spanish Renaissance and early Baroque, including music by Merulo, Frescobaldi, Rossi, Bruna and Ximenez. Anna Maria McElwain produced dramatic effects on a Swedish five-octave clavichord in music by Bach and Beethoven. Chopin's "Raindrop" Prelude revealed new dimensions as performed by her on the clavichord. She also performed the world premiere of *Five Affects*, a fine piece composed by Jouni Kuronen from Kuopio, dedicated to the player. In a concert entitled *Nordic Treasures*, McElwain played works by Fredrik Lithander (1777-1823), Joseph Martin Kraus (1756-1792) and Henrik Philip Johnsen (1717-1779).²

Mads Damlund from Denmark proved to be a fine clavichordist in a program of later repertoire, including the sonatas of Danish composers H.O.C. Zink (1746-1832) and C.E.F. Weyse (1774-1842). Michael Tsalka's performance included Mozart's *Variations in F Major*, K. 613 and Schubert's *Impromptu in G-flat major*, D. 899. Joel Speerstra played two concerts with programs of Böhm, J.S. Bach and C.P.E. Bach, including a selection from the *Goldberg Variations*. As I listened, I found myself understanding what C.F.D. Schubart (1739-1791) meant about clavichord playing when he burst out in praise of its richness in nuance and insurmountable spirit.

This new festival in Kuopio was a success, received enthusiastically by its audience. It appears that in the future the focus of the festival will be more clearly on historical keyboard instruments. I eagerly await the follow-up. Ω

¹ Before 1990 there were three professional builders of historical keyboards in Finland: Henk Schevikhoven, Pentti Peltó and his son Arno Peltó. The author began offering building courses for amateur builders in Kuopio in 1994. The students were mostly teachers and students in the Sibelius Academy's Kuopio Department and the Kuopio Conservatory. These courses ended in 2000. About thirty fretted clavichords after the Anders Wählström 1752 model were built.

² Lithander was a Finnish composer, whose father moved in 1769 to Estonia and worked there as a priest. Five of his six sons

TANGENTS

The Bulletin of the Boston Clavichord Society, published by The Boston Clavichord Society, P.O. Box 540484, 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 540484,
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.

Board of Directors:

Peter Sykes, *President*
David Schulenberg, *Vice President*
Beverly Woodward, *Coordinator & Treasurer*
Paul Monsky, *Assistant Treasurer*
Paul Rabin, *Clerk*
Tim Hamilton, *Assistant Clerk*
Sylvia Berry
Paulette Grundeen
David Kim
Ellen Pond
Christa Rakich

moved back to Finland after the death of their parents. Fredrik worked in Turku as a piano teacher. Kraus, born and educated in Germany, moved to Stockholm in 1778. From 1781, he was a court conductor. He is regarded as the most important composer of his time in Sweden. Johnsen, probably born in Germany, moved in 1747 to Stockholm. He was a versatile musician who worked as a court organist and conductor.

A Clavichord Workshop at the Amherst Early Music Festival Connecticut College, New London, CT, July 9-13, 2012,

Maynard Makman

Dr. Maynard Makman is a retired medical researcher who plays multiple keyboards.

For the first time, the Amherst Early Music Festival offered a clavichord workshop, entitled *Sufferer's Solace*, which, according to Alissa Duryee's course listing, would feature fretted and unfretted instruments of various ranges, repertoire from Froberger to the sons of J. S. Bach (and up to Mozart for those so inclined). Keyboard players new to the clavichord as well as non-keyboardists were welcome to join the class. A few clavichords would be available for class and practice.

I signed up for this class primarily because it was to be taught by Duryee, and this turned out to be a most fortunate choice. The five of us who took the class were all "keyboardists," but none of us had any significant background in clavichord playing. There were three instruments available in class and for practice (all three

kept in the same room). Two of the instruments were courtesy of the Harpsichord Clearing House—one built by Robert Duffy (multi-fretted), the other by Hugh Gough (an unfretted instrument with the greatest range of the three). The third instrument (which had the most beautiful sound) was built by Renée Geoffrion and was lent by Peter Sykes.

The five sessions seemed all too brief, but they served very well as an introduction to the clavichord, including technical aspects of sound production, differences between playing fretted and unfretted instruments, adjusting (as a modern player and listener) to the sound levels produced by the clavichord, etc. Of course, each of us had an opportunity to play the instruments, and to improvise brief preludes prior to playing music, assigned by Alissa or chosen by us.

Some time was spent discussing an article by Richard Fuller, *Affekt and Rhetoric*

in the *Clavier Music of C. P. E. Bach and Suggested Applications in the Music of Joseph Haydn*.¹ The article provided a basis for considering the expression of emotion in music from an historical perspective, with a particular emphasis on the contrast between Froberger and C. P. E. Bach.

Overall this was a most exciting mini-course, expertly led by Alissa Duryee. Certainly it would be worthwhile to offer it again. For a clavichord course more analogous to the harpsichord master class to be offered successfully, Amherst Early Music would need to attract players actively working at the clavichord who have instruments available for practice throughout the year. The same would be true for chamber music classes that include the clavichord. Ω

¹*de Clavicornio III: Proceedings of the III International Clavichord Symposium, Magnano 1997, Musica Antica a Magnano, 1997.*

Alissa Duryee

Alissa Duryee is a versatile musician who plays virtually all keyboards. While a student at Vassar College she began playing the clavichord as part of a project to understand the history of the instrument she was studying, the piano. Vassar has a Treasure Room in which historic instruments are conserved. Here she encountered a Dolmetsch/Chickering clavichord. This instrument became part of an independent study project that led to a lecture-recital, which also involved a Broadwood square piano. After graduation and several years of piano study in Paris, Alissa began to miss the clavichord. She decided to build



Alissa Duryee

one and purchased a kit from the Early Music Shop, then in Bradford, England.

The instrument is a copy of an anonymous fretted instrument in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague.

Duryee is currently a tenured teacher at two French conservatories. In addition to teaching, she organizes collaborative projects involving musicians and dancers and multidisciplinary projects. Her website is at: www.duodialogues.com. It includes information about her collaborative recording, "Duo Dialogues," with baroque cellist Jérôme Huille. She will perform a clavichord program for the Boston Clavichord Society in November 2013. Ω

XI International Clavichord Symposium September 3-7, 2013 Call for Papers

The planning committee is now accepting proposals for papers **with a preference for topics on:**

- Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
- The Clavichord, Key to All Other Keyboard Instruments
- Pedagogical Role

Proposals should be addressed to the ICCS Committee no later than 28 February 2013.

Proposals for performances should include a program of thirty minutes of music.

Proposals for the display of instruments should include all pertinent information on the copy or original to be displayed.

e-mail: info@MusicaAnticaMagnano.com

Note to BCS Members

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.

(Gát, *Continued from p.1*)

Gát was sent to work in a forced labor camp in Szentendre, Hungary, and had to wear a yellow star. If you wore a star, you could be stopped. If you did not wear one, you could be shot. One day Gát returned to his home in Buedakesi and found his wife had been taken away, as had most of his family members from Székesfehérvár. When the soldiers came to Buedakesi, Gát was in Budapest and as a result was not captured. Thirty-four members of József Gát's family died in the Auschwitz concentration camp, including his parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and his wife Magda, who died in 1944. Gát spent most of the last part of the war in hiding. He was arrested twice, but he escaped both times because of American bombings. Gát's daughter Judit once asked her father why he wasn't sent to a concentration camp and he replied, "I forgot to get on the train!"

After the Nazis left Hungary, the Communists took over. The Communists created the ÁVO (Államvédelmi Osztalya), the secret police in Hungary. Gát conducted the *Vándor Kórus* (a chorus founded in 1936 by Sándor Vándor) and was later offered the position of first conductor of the ÁVO's Interior Ministries Choir and Orchestra. Gát was afraid to accept this position, but knew that there would be consequences, most likely arrest, if he refused. He knew that in 1945 the Nazis had killed Vándor and that musical activity was not shielded from violent political interference. Gát accepted the position and became a member of the ÁVO. In 1952, Gát's occupation was listed as colonel in the ÁVO on the birth certificate of his son János. Because Gát led a choir of ÁVO border guards, he had to have a higher rank than they did.

Gát married Beatrix Geréb in January 1947. Together they had four children: Eszter, Judit, János, and Peter. From 1947 to 1949, Gát taught at the National Conservatory (a secondary level music school) in Budapest. In the fall of 1947, Gát was offered a position at the Franz Liszt Music Academy. In 1955, József Gát and Beatrix Geréb divorced. In 1956, he married Eszter Halmi. They had one daughter, Anna.

Postwar Life

Gát was very influential in choral conducting and music education. He was a member of the Free Trade Union of Hungarian Educators and a caucus member of

the Musician's Section of the union. At the Franz Liszt Music Academy, Gát headed the program in choir conducting. This program permitted high school graduates with a special music major to enroll in a university course that qualified them to be music teachers in a primary school. Gát also taught solfège, piano pedagogy and piano performance. He taught at the Franz Liszt



Gát's amplification device on a clavichord

Academy for the rest of his life.

In 1966, Gát went on a lecture tour that took him to England and the United States. He was a juror in the 1966 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, along with Lili Kraus, Alicia de Larrocha and fourteen others. Lili Kraus, a student of Gát, was well established in the United States and was working to bring him to the U.S. when he died of a heart attack on July 2, 1967.

Early Keyboard Instrument Pioneer

Gát owned a Steinway model A grand piano, a Blüthner grand piano, an Ammer clavichord, and a "Bach" model Neupert harpsichord which Neupert had given him. Gát's harpsichord is believed to be one of only a few privately owned harpsichords in Hungary at that time. According to the distinguished Hungarian keyboardist, János Sebastyén, two harpsichords were privately owned, but never appeared in concert. The pianist Erzsébet Láng Kecskeméti owned a harpsichord. She moved to the United States before the war and took the instrument with her.

The other harpsichord in the country was a Neupert harpsichord that belonged to the historian Ferenc Brodsky. He showed it privately a couple of times and in the 1950s he allowed János Hammerschlag, who also taught at the Franz Liszt Academy, to use it as he wished. This was the first time that a harpsichord appeared at the academy. Today, this instrument is in the National Museum

in Budapest. Gát's daughter, Eszter Fontana, acquired it from Brodsky for the museum's collection when she worked there in 1975.

Sebastyén recounted the history of a third harpsichord brought to Hungary.³

The only "official" harpsichord came to Hungary in 1944—allegedly brought by the German occupation army in order to accompany the recitatives in Mozart's operas. [Another source claims] the harpsichord had earlier been in the possession of the Hungarian opera. This heavy-duty iron-framed instrument of piano-like touch appeared on the concert stage as the only "state-owned" harpsichord of the mid-fifties.

Sebastyén explains that Gát was only able to purchase a clavichord from eastern Europe, given the unavailability of western currency in Hungary. "As the Ammers built musical instruments in the one-time German Democratic Republic, it was the only way to acquire an early keyboard..." Gát allowed his harpsichord and his clavichord to be taken to the academy for performances.

Gát advocated a correct historical approach to the interpretation of early keyboard music. After World War II, he played few piano concerts, but instead gave clavichord and harpsichord concerts. Gát, along with an engineer, also experimented with the amplification of these instruments, using an amplifier similar to a guitar pickup amplifier in order to avoid the use of a microphone. In these various ways, he was a pioneer advocate for early keyboards and early keyboard music in Hungary.

Editor

Gát edited numerous publications for Editio Musica Budapest, including the complete works of Couperin. He also edited J.S. Bach's *Two Part Inventions*, which were published by the Budapest Music Publishing Company in 1959 (#577) and re-released in 1965 (#2779/A). In the two-page preface Gát includes the facsimile of Bach's ornament table from the *Clavierbüchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach*. Gát emphasizes the importance of understanding the ornamentation table and discusses ornamentation and fingering appropriate for the clavichord as contrasted with the harpsichord. Gát provides fingerings sparingly and says that the student's individual analysis of fingering is most useful. He also includes suggested metronome markings.

(Gát, *Continued on p. 6*)

BCS Recital: Ulrika Davidsson at Gore Place, Waltham

Christa Rakich

On Sunday, April 29, Ulrika Davidsson enthralled listeners with 12 Preludes and Fugues from Book 1 of J.S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. She structured her program so as to walk us up and down the hexachord, from C to A and back, alternating major and minor keys. She used an unfretted clavichord made by Robert Goble & Son of Oxford, England in 1972, loaned by Peter Sykes.

The rapid *moto perpetuo* of the *C minor Prelude*, BWV 847, makes for a dramatic and virtuosic opener. In contrast with the seriousness and depth of its fugue, the prelude immediately presented listeners with a broad framework of possibility, from fireworks to round pear-shapes. The clavichord, in the hands of this master, does not sound just one way.

The *D major Prelude*, BWV 850, tinkled with playfulness. The easy swing – requiring perfect tempo – relents only at the end, for spaced diminished seventh chords. I glanced up then – was that a harp I had just heard? The fugue, in French Overture style, begins with eight 32nd-notes that swirl quickly as if gathering steam before jumping up a sixth to start the familiar dotted rhythm. The evenness of the 32nds, the fortitude of the dotted rhythm each time the subject entered was simply splendid.

This textured playing continued with the *E minor Prelude*, BWV 855. The left hand maintained an even, calm ostinato while the right hand pushed and pulled contrasting gestures. The *E minor Fugue* is the only 2-voiced fugue in the whole 48, and is often played too fast, as if to compensate with speed for the thin voicing. Not so here, and the gentility of the tempo revealed the tension of the chromaticism in the subject as well as the pleading character in the counter-subject. Program notes compared the piece to a 2-part invention. I hear more likeness to the 4 duets of *Clavierübung III*.

Ulrika Davidsson's keen control of trills made a lasting impression at her last concert for the BCS two years ago, an all-Haydn program. Bach's *F major Prelude*, BWV 856, incorporates extended trills in one hand accompanied by arpeggios in the other. At the half-measure, the figures switch hands, each toss-over a treacherous move. Yet to her they seemed as easy as playing with a slinky.

The *G minor Prelude*, BWV 861, also incorporates extended trills, and here again Davidsson evoked the color of instruments not actually present, now the low drum roll that starts softly out of nowhere, then expands to command attention. The 4-voice



Ulrika Davidsson

fugue, with its cross-motif subject, was noble, serious. This is a piece that derives its intense, tragic character from harmony even more than from counterpoint.

The clear delight of the *A major Prelude*, BWV 864, was a relief. The fugue, in 9/8, starts with a poke. That thump – an eighth note followed by 3 eighth rests before the triplet eighths resume the subject – was that a mistake I just heard? No, this player knows how to tell a joke.

The nose-thumbing continued with the *A minor Prelude*, BWV 865. Still in 9/8, sassy sixteenth notes – la-si-la-si-la-si-la – answer the opening statement. We'd reached the keystone of the arch of this program. It is hard to think of the massive *A minor Fugue* as anything but an organ piece, with its long low A pedal point, tied for the last 4½ measures and unreachable with only two hands. Davidsson's work-around was a limited success.

As we walked back down the hexachord, moments of fun were not all behind us. The subject of the *G major Fugue*, BWV 860, is perfectly reasonable, all step-wise motion but for two displaced octaves in its second half. Turn that upside-down, though, and the displaced octaves fall rather than rise. It becomes necessary to stifle a giggle.

The *F minor Prelude*, BWV 857, is all tenderness. A deceptive cadence, sweet and taut, melts into a long dominant harmony – and another 4½-measure-long tie. The fugue subject is all staid quarter notes, and impossibly chromatic. Davidsson's straightforward approach gave it a plucked

timbre, as on a lute.

The *E major Prelude*, BWV 854, is a Pastorale, though not in the usual key of F. Or could Bach have been toying with a=440? Davidsson's playing of the fugue had a floaty quality, neither stodgy nor pushed. The ethereal sense was shaken only by the clavichord's tendency to allow some bass pitches to flatten as the tangent was released from the string.

The *Prelude in D minor*, BWV 851, is instructive on multiple levels. It appears as an exercise in the *Clavierbüchlein* for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and it also outlines harmonic progressions fundamental to any keyboard improviser. The fugue is remarkable for its incorporation of articulation marks, unusual in Bach scores.

It was a unique stroke of genius to save the sumptuous peace of the very familiar *C major Prelude*, BWV 846, for the end. This is a piece of deceptive difficulty, and Davidsson pulled from the instrument a silvery sustain, a quiet tension. If we had previously heard drum rolls, lutes, harps, now it was time for bowed violins. The fugue marched forward, its subject outlining the hexachord we had just traversed, until its final 'Allein Gott' cadence melted away. One of Davidsson's hallmarks is a lovely tapering-off. Pieces are not merely ended, but exquisitely finished. The audience demanded an encore, and got a sweet one, the opening Allemande from the *French Suite in G major*, BWV 816.

Arriving from a long distance barely a minute before the concert began, I did not get around to reading Davidsson's extensive and thoughtful program notes until the following day. I was surprised at how her printed text paralleled the notes I had jotted down as she played, so successful is she at communicating her musical intent.

After the concert I had the sense that I had just spent a very "feminine" hour. This perception troubled me, as I am leery of gender characterizations. What might "feminine" mean musically speaking? It was only after post-concert conversations that the thought became clearer. Davidsson is never harsh. She never insists. She never fights the instrument, or places demands on it that don't suit it. She elicits, and in so doing she coaxes from the instrument a vast array of delights. Ω

(Gát, *Continued from p.4*)

Gát also edited a volume of four fantasias by C.P.E. Bach as part of the Thesaurus Musicus Series, a 21 volume urtext series published in 1962 and again in 1966 by Editio Musica Budapest (#3512).⁴ This volume includes scholarly remarks by Gát in Hungarian, German and English. Gát provides a brief history of the improvisatory nature of the fantasia and states that it is evident that C.P.E. Bach's fantasias were written for performance on the clavichord, though they could be performed on the piano in good style. Gát quotes from C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* where Bach states in the section on the free fantasia "The best instruments for our purpose are the clavichord and pianoforte."⁵

Gát provides a convincing explanation regarding the placement of particular slur markings and discusses the legato and dynamic shaping possibilities of the clavichord. He goes on to address the proper execution of the *geschnellter Doppelschlag*, a rapid turn beginning with the main note. Again quoting from Bach's treatise, Gát addresses errors in earlier editions of these works with respect to both research and printing, for example, printing a tie rather than the re-execution of the principal note. Gát wrote a more detailed article in Hungarian on these topics in which he notes that the clavichord is more closely related to the piano than to the harpsichord.

Author

Gát authored several articles and books. *The Technique of Piano Playing* was his principal achievement, originally published both in Hungarian and in English in 1958. It was revised and expanded and published again in 1964 with the same title in English, but a new title, *Zongorametodika*, in Hungarian. This book was the first in Hungarian to contain material on the harpsichord and the clavichord. Gát states that starting children out on the clavichord instead of the piano would teach proper handling of the keys and would avoid many later defects.

Gát's *A History of the Pianoforte* was published in Hungarian in 1964. This book is an extensive historical survey of keyboard instruments and has pictures of many unique keyboard instruments. The book is quite detailed and addresses the mechanical actions of different instruments. It includes pictures of the early keyboard instruments

in Hungary at that time, including Gát's Ammer clavichord. A promotional advertisement for the book states:

This book is intended for pianists, teachers, and music lovers interested in the piano. Its aim is to give a broad outline of the instrument's development, from its earliest forms (hurdy-gurdy) through the clavichord and modern harpsichord up to the most modern types of piano.

Recordings

According to his family, Gát was a better pianist than clavichordist or harpsichordist. However, Gát recorded only on the clavichord and harpsichord. He released four solo records on the Qualiton record label. Three of these feature works recorded on the clavichord. The first release, Qualiton 3818, was a seven-inch 45-rpm record with eight works by J.S. Bach and C.P.E. Bach from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook*. These tracks were recorded on Gát's Ammer clavichord. Qualiton released this record on August 15, 1959. It is available as an mp3 download on the Hungaroton Records website, as well as on iTunes. An additional track with C.P.E. Bach's *Marche in D major*, BWV Anhang 122, which was not released on this record is available for download at both sites.

A recording by Gát of pieces for the clavichord by C.P.E. Bach, Qualiton LPX 1305, was released on March 22, 1966. It includes two fantasias and two sonatas.⁶ A third record, Qualiton LPX 1151, has J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* recorded on Gát's Neupert harpsichord and C.P.E. Bach's *Sonata No. 2 in F major*, Wq. 55/2, which was recorded on Gát's clavichord.

In the mid 1960s, Qualiton changed its name to Hungaroton Records.⁷ Two of Gát's recordings were re-released on the Hungaroton label with new album covers, HLX 90032 and Hungaroton 90017. Recently, Hungaroton has re-released on CD as part of its Hungaroton Echo Collection his recording of the first two orders of Couperin, as well as the *Goldberg Variations* and C.P.E. Bach's *Sonata in F major*, Wq. 55/2. These are also available on Hungaroton's website and on iTunes.

József Gát was a Renaissance man, well versed and highly skilled in many areas of music, an innovative teacher and an important influence on choral conducting in Hungary. In spite of suffering great personal

tragedy and the effects of war and political oppression, he had a very creative career in the post World War II period. He taught, wrote, edited, invented and recorded. He contributed to the development of the early music movement as a pioneer in bringing early keyboard instruments to Hungary and introducing them into the conservatory there. In recent years Hungary has produced a number of highly accomplished early keyboardists, among them Miklos Spányi⁸—a student of János Sebestyén, who himself knew and was influenced by Gát. Ω

¹ Fontana, Eszter, *Biography of József Gát*, May 13, 2011

² E. Clyde Whitlock, "Cliburn Juror Speaks, Love of Music Key to Career," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 4, 1966.

³ Sebestyén, Janos, "A Short History of Harpsichord Playing in Hungary," <http://jsebestyén.org/history.html>

⁴ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Négy Fantázia: Zongorár*, edited by József Gát, Budapest, Editio Musica Budapest, 1966.

⁵ Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, translated and edited by William J. Mitchell, W.W. Norton & Co., New York, 1949, p. 431.

⁶ Included are: *Fantasia in C*, Wq. 59/6, *Fantasia in C*, Wq. 61/6, *Sonata in B-flat major*, Wq. 59/3, and *Sonata in G major*, Wq. 55/6. The *Fantasia in C*, Wq. 59/6 and the *Sonata in B-flat major*, Wq. 59/3 can both be heard on the Boston Clavichord Society website: <http://www.bostonclavichord.org> by clicking on "Audio."

⁷ Zsolt Varga, "Hungaroton Music Store: A Brief History of Hungaroton," <http://www.hungarotonmusic.com/cegtortenet.html>

⁸ <http://miklosspanyi.de>



THE BOSTON
CLAVICHORD SOCIETY
P.O. Box 540484,
Waltham MA 02454
www.bostonclavichord.org