

The Bulletin of the Boston Clavichord Society Number 36, Spring, 2014

# Appreciating the Music of C.P.E. Bach Today Miklós Spányi

A few months ago, my ensemble played a trio sonata by C.P.E. Bach as the first piece in a concert. To our great surprise, the audience did not applaud following the very energetic *Presto* final movement. Just some twenty minutes later, a Quantz trio sonata was an immediate and great success.

What was the difference between these two compositions and their reception? What was the problem, if any, with the C.P.E. Bach sonata?

One possibility is that we did not play the C.P.E. Bach sonata well enough to offer it in an easily understandable manner to the audience as an opening number. On the other hand, we may suspect that some features of Bach's music are too difficult or complex for an inexperienced audience to follow. The Quantz sonata, also an excellent composition, was the direct opposite with its eloquent simplicity and elegance.

What might make CPEB's music seem more complicated than that of many other composers to the ears of today's listeners? First, the stylistic orientation may be difficult. The sonata we performed was one of the early trio sonatas, although Bach revised it radically in his later years. It contains many elements of baroque style, or more precisely, elements we associate with baroque music. But take note that it also features melodic and harmonic turns belonging to the later galant idiom. All of this is combined, especially in the middle movement, with a highly subjective dramatic element, neither baroque nor galant, but based in an empfindsam style that awakens in many listeners associations with 19th century romantic music. In many of CPEB's compositions the predominating stylistic element may change from movement to movement or even from

one bar to the next, or several elements may be present simultaneously.

This may produce confusion in the listener's mind, given the strict categories we have been taught and our strongly conditioned listening habits. Once our ear associates something with "baroque," it waits for additional similar elements. When instead it receives new elements that it associates with other (real or imagined) "styles," it becomes disoriented and loses track of the flow of the music. In many of CPEB's early works the opening is very baroque, but the rest is not, often building up to a real confrontation of styles. In other works, the galant element may dominate. We often associate the galant style with the "Viennese" classical idiom. When Bach mingles it with slightly more baroque patterns the mind becomes confused again.

An additional stylistic layer in CPEB's music is contributed by elements of a more personal character, typically found only in his music. We could collect his most typical melodic and harmonic turns and create a "C.P.E. Bach vocabulary." These melodic and harmonic patterns often differ from what is found in the styles most familiar to us, but are frequently used by Bach, and are often intermingled with elements reminiscent of other styles.

Once we accept the presence of such a variety of stylistic elements, we can become accustomed to their combinations within one piece or even within a single musical phrase. This can lead to the realization that incorporating these elements of seemingly different origin into a logically coherent whole results in a new style, a style particular to C.P.E. Bach. For Bach, they constitute a very personal musical language, which he spoke perfectly, but which is far less well understood today. Once we realize this, we have made a big step forward towards a deeper understanding of Bach's style and music.

Another interesting feature of C.P.E. Bach's music is the organization and "placement" of the various stylistic elements in the flow of time. Even if certain stylistic features are associated with styles with which we are familiar, they may seem different due to their use at a point when we would not expect them. In general, Bach's music is rooted in the same harmonic-tonal system as the music of other 18th century (Continued on p.4)

# A Tour of Clavichords

Beverly Woodward and Peter Sykes Photos by Peter Sykes unless otherwise noted

In late May and early June keyboardist Peter Sykes performed on the clavichord in half a dozen European cities. What does a clavichordist do when on tour? In this case, at the request of the editor, he took photographs of many of the notable instruments which he encountered. The first performance took place at the mansion in



The mansion at Hatchlands Park

Hatchlands Park in England, home of the Cobbe Collection, "Europe's largest collection of keyboard instruments associated with famous composers."



Clavichord by Christian Gotthelf Hoffmann, Ronneburg, 1784, Five octaves, FF-f'', unfretted, part of the Cobbe Collection at Hatchlands Park, England.

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# Celebrating C.P.E. Bach BCS Concerts in March

Editor's Note

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach was born on March 8, 1714. Since this year is the tercentenary of his birth, many concerts and other events are taking place to honor the occasion and to celebrate the music that Bach composed. The Boston Clavichord Society offered two events in late March. On Saturday, March 29, we presented a concert of chamber music. The next day, in collaboration with Houghton Library at Harvard University, we presented a program of works for the clavichord. The event took place in the same room as an exhibition of documents pertaining to Bach's life and music. (See p.3) This concert, performed by Tom Beghin of McGill University, is reviewed by David Schulenberg (p. 3). The program of the March 29 concert appears below.

Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788) Friends Meeting House, Cambridge, MA, March 29, 2014, 8pm.

# Dana Maiben, violin and Peter Sykes, clavichord

Sonata in B minor, Wq 76
Allegromoderato—Poco and ante—Allegretto siciliano
Sonata VI in G major, Wq 55/6
Allegretto moderato—And ante—Allegro di molto
Fantasia in F-sharp minor, Wq 80

### Julia Cavallaro, mezzo soprano and Sylvia Berry, fortepiano

Auf den Geburtstag eines Freundes, Wq 200/17 Nonnelied, Wq 200/3 Der Entschluss (Phyllis), Wq 202/C/2

Die Güte Gottes, Wq 194/34 Abendlied, Wq 194/32 Wider den Übermut, Wq 194/49

Bevelise und Lysidor, Wq 200/7 An die Liebe, Wq 202/C/3 Dorinde, Wq 199/7

Passionslied, Wq 197/2 Über die Finsternis kurz vor dem Tode Jesu, Wq 197/29 Der Frühling, Wq 197/14

Der Frühling, Wq 202/A



# Lebedinsky to Offer Workshop at AGO Convention

Henry Lebedinsky will present a workshop at the AGO Convention in Boston entitled *The Clavichord: The Organ Teacher You Wish You Had.* Lebedinsky, who has performed on the clavichord several times for the Boston Clavichord Society, is based in St. Paul, Minnesota. He currently performs with Consortium Carissimi, The Minnesota Bach Ensemble, The Vivaldi Project, Quince, and several other groups. The workshop will take place on June 24, Marriott Copley Place, C&D Salon, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, 9:45-10:45 am. It is sponsored by the Greater Hartford Chapter of the AGO. A description follows.

"Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, claimed the clavichord was Bach's favorite keyboard instrument. Certainly his sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann were well trained on the instrument, and composed extensively for it. It is an ideal practice instrument, a revelatory teaching instrument, and an exquisite performance instrument. This workshop, in the format of a lecture-recital, demonstrates the versatility of the clavichord, using an instrument of two manuals and pedal. The program features organ works, including Bach's Trio Sonatas, works of the generation after Bach, and yes, even the Widor Toccata."  $\Omega$ 

# The Music of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach

New Book Out in September 2014

Few readers of *Tangents* need to be reminded that the year 2014 marks the 300th birthday of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. C. P. E. Bach, the second son of Johann Sebastian Bach, wrote hundreds of keyboard works, nearly all of which, as well as most of his songs and many chamber works, are playable on the clavichord. Not surprisingly, 2014 has seen many events honoring C. P. E. Bach, as well as new publications. Among the latter is a book by **David Schulenberg** that surveys the composer's complete output while providing an overview of his career. Coming out in September from the University of Rochester Press, *The Music of Carl* 

## A N G E N T S

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Philipp Emanuel Bach is available to Friends of the BCS at a 25% discount from the list price of \$120 (40% off if ordered by July 31). Orders may be sent to the publisher at 668 Mount Hope Ave., Rochester, NY 14620 (email boydell@ boydellusa.net) or through their website (urpress.com). Be sure to mention author, title, and promotion code \$14060 (until July 31) or \$14076 (until Dec. 31, 2014). A companion website for the book, including extensive supplementary text and numerous musical examples, is available free online (http://faculty.wagner.edu/ david-schulenberg/the-music-of-carlphilipp-emanuel-bach/).

# Tom Beghin at Houghton Library

David Schulenberg

The BCS, together with Houghton Library of Harvard University, was the sponsor on March 30 of a recital by Belgian clavichordist Tom Beghin. The performance of works by C.P.E. Bach took place in the library's Edison and Newman Room, simultaneously the site of an exhibition relating to the composer.

Beghin, who teaches at McGill University, performed on the same unfretted clavichord by Joris Potvlieghe on which he recorded twenty-four *Pièces de caractère* by C. P. E. Bach (Eufoda, 2003). The instrument sounded well, positioned among display cases showing rare books, manuscripts, and artworks relating to the composer. These were a reminder that Bach often played for visitors in a room of his house furnished with his famous collection of portraits.

One of several events commemorating the composer's birth three hundred years ago, the program comprised relatively familiar works, all but one from the latter part of the composer's Berlin period (1738–68). Beghin began, however, with the Rondo in E minor (Wq 66) composed at Hamburg in 1781 when Bach sold his famous Silbermann clavichord to an admirer. This was followed by the A-major sonata (Wq 55/4) published in the first of the composer's Hamburg volumes for Kenner und Liebhaber (connoisseurs and music-lovers). This work, composed at Potsdam in 1765, is in nearly classical style; all three movements are unusually lengthy and by turns equally grand and expressive, as in several other Potsdam works of the period. Yet it ends with a quiet surprise characteristic of the composer: an unassuming little closing phrase that Beghin played with understated eloquence, having caught the brilliance of the preceding music.

Seven character pieces followed, including the famous if puzzling Aly Rupalich (Wq 117/27) as well as La Gleim (Wq 117/19), named for a literary friend of the composer and the closest CPEB ever came to writing in the old French harpsichord style (whose character pieces were favored in Gleim's circle). These are not harpsichord pieces, however, and Beghin demonstrated their

special suitability to the clavichord in highly nuanced performances. The other character pieces were: La Stahl (Wq 117/25), L'Irresolue (Wq 117/31), La Journalière (Wq 117/32), La Böhmer (Wq 117/26), and La Xenophon et la Sybille (Wq 117/29. In this last piece and elsewhere, Beghin offered



Tom Beghin

elegant variations of the repeated sections

The program closed with the final sonata (Wq 63/6) from the Probestücke ("practice pieces") that accompanied volume 1 of the Versuch, the composer's famous keyboard treatise. Here Beghin demonstrated sostenuto playing in the A-flat-major Adagio, as challenging in its own way as the concluding "Hamlet" fantasia, although Beghin played both in exemplary fashion. His distinctive style of rubato was particularly evident in the first movement, sometimes pushing ahead, sometimes falling behind (as the composer urges one to do), never rushing either ornaments or the sudden leaps of one hand over the other. Some might describe such playing as rhetorical; others might term it merely patient, allowing each gesture to take its own time. In any case it suits this music perfectly.

As an encore, Beghin played the concluding minuet and trio from Haydn's sonata in C-sharp minor (Hob. XVI:36). As Beghin noted, this seems to be the only pair of pieces, other than La Xenophon et la Sybille, that alternate between that tonality and the even more remote C-sharp major. Played somewhat more slowly and expressively than usual, this brought the recital to a thoughtful conclusion. Afterwards, this writer rushed home to try playing some of these same pieces with the same attention to timing and expression that prevailed  $\Omega$ 

## C.P.E. Bach at Harvard

The following information has been taken from an announcement by Houghton Library.

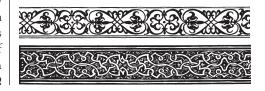
'wo exhibitions at Harvard, January 13-April 5, 2014, celebrated the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of C.P.E. Bach's birth. Drawing on a wealth of materials at Harvard, with a selection of important items lent by other institutions and individuals, Houghton Library and the Loeb Music Library mounted complementary exhibitions. The Houghton exhibition explored Bach's intellectual and musical background by documenting the Bach family heritage, his service in the court of Frederick the Great, his interactions with authors, his keyboard treatise, his reputation in his lifetime, his standing with his contemporaries, his later career in Hamburg, and his musical legacy.



Detail above entry, Houghton Library, William Mercer, photographer.

The Loeb Library exhibition focused on the editorial challenges and current editorial practices behind the ongoing publication of Bach's complete works by the Packard Humanities Institute (in cooperation with the Bach-Archiv Leipzig, the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, and Harvard University).

A detailed report on these exhibitions along with other material relating to C.P.E. Bach was published in the *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. 24, no. 3 (Fall, 2013). Copies can be obtained, while they last, by sending a check for \$15 made out to *Harvard Library Bulletin* to Monique Duhaime, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.



(C.P.E. Bach, Continued from P. 1)

composers. Roughly, this implies that the same harmonies and scales are used, resulting to some extent in similar harmonic and melodic progressions. However, harmonies and the notes of a melodic line can be organized in many different ways. CPEB's music is often very personal and, therefore, radically different from that of other composers who seemingly work with the same material.

It is typical, for example, for Bach not to add a harmony to a melody at a time when we would expect it. Another typical feature involves the structure and placement of cadences. I have been working with some students on improvisation exercises in the galant style, or more specifically in what I will call the CPEB style. Due to their association of the galant style with classicism, the students often include very classical cadences in their improvisations, distorting the otherwise successfully imitated CPEB style. In CPEB's music the cadence is often more concise than in the classical style and is therefore included at a somewhat later phase within a musical phrase. An understanding of this may help us to comprehend the way he organized harmonic progressions in general. His harmonic rhythm and logic often differ radically from those of his contemporaries, even though the differences in terms of music theory may often seem to be just tiny details.

Returning to the Quantz sonata that was so successful in our concert, we note that its melodic lines and harmonic turns are for the most part very close to Italian models. This makes it easy for the listener to recognize its resemblances to music like that of Vivaldi and to follow and understand it easily—despite the fact that Quantz' music is never a copy of high baroque, but is a personal and convincing derivative of that and other stylistic elements. However, unlike the music of C.P.E. Bach, the music of Quantz lacks radically new ways of organizing the harmonic or melodic progress.

Perhaps this means that we can (and should) perform more compositions by Quantz. Given the easily understandable qualities of his music, Quantz can be ranked among the most successful, albeit little-known, composers.

Quantz' music is logical, but generally (and I think intentionally) not very complex. C.P.E. Bach's music is also very logical, but in its basic character generally much more complex. Indeed, in my opinion

it can be ranked among the structurally most complex creations in the history of music. Manifold stylistic elements, seemingly extreme formal solutions, and melodic lines that appear strange on first sight, are all organized in a most logical way. Comprehending this omnipresent logic and coherence can guide us in understanding the deepest and often hidden features of the music. In this respect, there is no difference between understanding C.P.E. Bach or his father, or, for example, understanding the structurally very organic and strictly organized works of Beethoven.

How to achieve a general appreciation and acceptance of the music of C.P.E. Bach by the general public is a very difficult problem. His style is highly personal and can be associated with other styles only in its elements, not in its entirety. This new style needs to be learned both by players and listeners. Players who want to understand it have to play as much of his music as possible and must accommodate themselves to this "new" musical language—a process similar to learning and practicing 20th century or contemporary compositions which do not fit in any known musical style.

From our audiences we cannot expect similar efforts. The only way to educate the listener is to include C.P.E. Bach's music more often in our concerts and to perform his most central compositions repeatedly. Were these compositions performed more often, listeners would become accustomed to his musical language and become able to follow this music more easily. In their times, the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, Beethoven and Wagner were all considered very complicated, strange, and impossible to comprehend. As a result of widespread and frequent performances in the last 150 years, few listeners today would find them weird. Such a process with respect to the music of C.P.E. Bach is still ahead of us. This should be the central task of all musicians who care about this composer and who would like to bring his music closer to contemporary listeners. Once this is done, at least to some extent, we can test again to see whether the audience applauds loudly after a C.P.E. Bach sonata.



# New CDs of Note

nna Maria McElwain has released a CD entitled Hours Well Spent that seemingly accomplishes the impossible - to wit, to play Beethoven, Chopin, Saint-Saëns, Webern, and Ligeti (as well as Gabrieli, Byrd, Bach, and Lithander) on an original eighteenth-century Swedish clavichord. It's not unimaginable that piano music was played on clavichords into the 19th century, especially in remote locales. The results are surprising and entertaining, and constitute an unusual advocacy for the clavichord as an instrument to explore almost any keyboard music.

On a new CD issued by Toccata Classics of London, Norbert Meyn, tenor, and Terence Charlston, clavichord, have teamed up to record C.P.E. Bach: Spiritual Songs. Included are songs with poetic texts by Christian Gellert and Christoph Sturm, and a very interesting reading of the famous last *Probestück*, the C minor Fantasia, with a sung accompaniment of Hamlet's soliloquy written by poet Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, and published without Bach's consent by Carl Friedrich Cramer in 1787. Full of sensitivity and insight, these performances (many of which are the first-ever complete recordings of these pieces) offer a rare opportunity to hear seldom-performed repertoire performed with an unusual combination of musical forces. The result sounds perfectly balanced, nuanced, and persuasive; included is an interview of the performers by Peter Bavington, maker of the clavichord used on the disc.

For ordering information, see the discography on the BCS website.  $\Omega$ 

#### Corrections

Issue #34 (Spring, 2013) of *Tangents* stated that the attribution of the Friederici at the *Musée de la Musique* in Paris is currently in question. The editor has been informed that this is not the case. The instrument was built in1773, not 1779.

Issue #35 (Fall, 2013) of *Tangents* noted incorrectly the compass of the clavichords at the Bremen Hochschule in Germany. The actual compass of the manual clavichords there is C-e3. The compass of the pedal clavichord is C-d1. (None of these instruments go down to CC, as incorrectly stated.)  $\Omega$ 

#### The tour continued to Bath, England; Beverwijk, The Netherlands; Pierre Buffière, France; Berlin, Germany; and Reims, France.



Panorama of Bath, England



The Akerendam, a concert site in Beverwijk, The Netherlands



Goble clavichord, played in Bath, England, private owner. Five plus octaves, FF-g", unfretted

Patterned after Hass models, this instrument nonetheless lacks the 4' strings in the bass often found in Hass clavichords. The instrument has a big silky tone and is well balanced, but not easy to play by any means. It is a twin to an instrument made for Howard Schott in 1972, now owned by Peter Sykes.



In 1637 the Amsterdam shipbuilder Jan Bikker bought a piece of land in Beverwijk and had Akerendam built, including beautiful gardens with orchards, vegetable patches, a summer house and a dovecote.



Clavichord by Koen Vermeij, played in Beverwijk, Hubert style, five octaves, FF-f'', double fretted

This clavichord is an extremely practical design, being a five-octave fretted instrument, which is rare today. It has a very flexible singing sound with a wide dynamic range. This instrument has just joined the Sykes clavichord collection.



Conservatoire national de musique et de danse de Paris ©Ferrante Ferranti



Workshop of Renée Geoffrion, clavichord builder, Pierre-Buffière, France





Clavichord after Friederici (1773), original is at the Musée de la Musique in Paris, FF-f", unfretted, by Emile Jobin, Boissy l'Aillerie, 2000-2001. Instrument owned by the Conservatoire national de musique et de danse de Paris.

One of two fine instruments in the collection of the Conservatoire, this clavichord offers students an example of late unfretted clavichord design, suitable for repertoire from Bach on through Mozart and Haydn.



Clavichord by Joris Potvlieghe, Tollembeek, No. 37, 2010, FF-f", unfretted, played in Reims, France. (See p.8)

This fine large instrument displays beautifully precise woodwork and veneering, and has a forthright and well-balanced sound that projects well. The long keylevers with a forward balance point offer the player some challenge in producing a consistent tone, but the rewards are great in a wide dynamic range and variety of color possibilities.

Clavichord by Renée Geoffrion, Hubert style, played in Pierre-Buffière, BB-f'', double fretted

This clavichord is the latest in an evolving design of Renée Geoffrion's adaptations of a Hubert model. In each batch of instruments slight alterations are tried to improve various elements of touch and sound; the result here is a very well balanced instrument.



Berlin



Hinge and keyhole of the J.H. Silbermann clavichord



The rose of the J.H. Silbermann clavichord



Clavichord by Andreas Hermert, 2009, after an anonymous clavichord of about 1700 in the Berlin Musical Instrument Museum, No. 2160, C/D-c''', double fretted, played in Berlin

Exquisite craftsmanship distinguishes this instrument, as well as meticulous historical observation. An unusual fretting pattern, slightly different in each octave, keeps the player on his toes in avoiding clashes.





Clavichord attributed to J. H. Silbermann, 1775?, FF-f", unfretted. Musical Instrument Museum in Berlin, catalog number 598

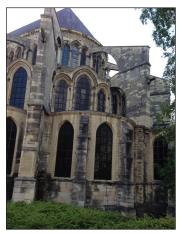


Clavichord by Johann Gottlob Horn, Nickern bei Dresden, 1793, FF-g''', unfretted, Musical Instrument Museum in Berlin, catalog number 5568

The Horn clavichord is a large instrument with an extremely clear, focused sound, well balanced from bass to treble, with a wide dynamic range. This instrument speaks well and conveys nuance and articulation very well.

Clavichord by Schmahl, played in Berlin, Regensburg, 1790, C-f'", fretted

This compact instrument confounds the assumption that all clavichords of a date this late are likely to be unfretted. Owned by Dr. Dr. Claus Köppel, a devotee and player of early keyboard instruments, it is housed in the multipurpose room of a Berlin geriatric clinic of which he is director. Here he presents concerts for clinic patients and others.



St. Remi Basilica in Reims, France.



The inside of the basilica showing the set-up for the clavichord concert. Clavichord by Potvlieghe. See p. 6

# Clavichord Instruction in Scotland, Italy, Spain and Portugal

Tangents continues to receive information regarding clavichord instruction in various countries.

#### **SCOTLAND**

Peter Bavington, editor of *The British Clavichord Society Newsletter* sends word that there is the possibility of postgraduate studies in early keyboard performance, including the clavichord, at the **Reid School of Music, Edinburgh University**, the teacher being **John Kitchen**.

#### **ITALY**

Enrico Baiano writes that "it is true that not many Italian keyboard players are interested in the clavichord, but it is nevertheless taught and played by a small but enthusiastic motley crew (very seldom in concerts, though). Clavichord instruction is expected to be part of the program of the degree in "Harpsichord and historical keyboards," but not all Conservatories own one. I teach at Avellino's Conservatory (Conservatorio di Musica di Avellino) and I try to teach the clavichord as well, but it's difficult because the instrument we have is very mediocre. So far the administration hasn't been able to purchase a new one. I know it is taught at several other conservatories - Milano, Como and other places in northern Italy, and I'm sure there are others I am not aware of. Italy's economic situation of these last 20 years does not help: people have become poorer and it's already very hard for students to be able to buy a small harpsichord or a spinet, let alone a clavichord...

#### **SPAIN**

Luisa Morales writes that the International Centre for the Study of Spanish keyboard music, CEMF, a branch of FIMTE (International Festival of Spanish Keyboard Music) offers clavichord as well as harpsichord and piano instruction, specializing in Spanish music of Almeria (Andalousia). CEMF also has a special program to introduce children to the clavichord and harpsichord.

CEMF owns a clavichord that is a copy of the Grabalos instrument, c. 1800, in the *Museu de la Musica*, Barcelona. Morales is the clavichord teacher at CEMF. Further information is available from FIMTE at fimteinfo@gmail.com or from FIMTE, Apdo. 212, Garrucha 04630, Ameria, Spain.

Luca Guglielmi teaches harpsichord and continuo at the ESMuC (Escola Superior de Musica de Catalunya), in Barcelona (Spain). Its website is at http:// www.esmuc.cat. He writes "I usually give my students some lessons on fortepiano (we have many: Stein, Walter, Schantz, Erard) and on the clavichord. The school owns a clavichord by a local builder, Joan Marti, after J.H. Silbermann, 1775, FFf", unfretted. It is possible to obtain a master's degree in clavichord (one year of clavichord studies plus a final recital and a written thesis). For a more advanced degree ("Grado") the clavichord can be part of the program of studies, together with harpsichord and fortepiano."

#### **PORTUGAL**

**Cristiano Holtz** writes "Officially I teach the harpsichord at the *Instituto Gregoriano de Lisboa*. Nevertheless, a clavichord is always present in the class. Following the advice of Emanuel Bach, we play both instruments interchangeably. I believe that at the moment our class is the only one in Portugal that regards the clavichord as an essential instrument for the study of historical keyboard praxis. We have a copy of a J. H. Silbermann, five octaves, unfretted, built by Klinkhamer. There is a possibility that the **Academia da Graça** (Lisbon) and I will start a clavichord course there beginning in September."  $\Omega$ 



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www.bostonclavichord.org