

SOUNDING BOARD

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Please keep sending your contributions to editor@harpsichord.org.uk .

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 4th issue of Sounding Board which I am delighted to have been involved with, and have immensely enjoyed putting together. The last 3 issues have produced a fascinatingly varied collection of articles and it is good to reflect that the harpsichord and related topics continue to intrigue and stimulate a wide range of enthusiasts from all over the world. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the authors of this Issue, not only for their enthusiasm in their chosen topics but also for their cooperation and professionalism. Like the previous editors, this is my first experience at editing, and having worked for the last 15 years principally for Early Music Today and Music Teacher magazines, I am well aware that editors need reliable contributors, so my thanks go to all those involved for their splendid effort.

The focus of this issue as it has unfolded, is on people and how the harpsichord has helped to shape their lives. My own contribution is a collection of musical memories from Jill Severs, one of my teachers who has been an important influence in my life. I would like to thank her for being so willing for me to probe into her fascinating musical life and for being so helpful. I feel privileged to know her. We celebrate the 100th birthday of a very special lady, Virginia Pleasants who has inspired and encouraged many harpsichord players, literally over the century! We also pay tribute to the maker Trevor Beckerleg who helped transport harpsichordists back to the 17th and 18th centuries from his home in Uruguay. Further articles announcing a new edition, delving into the origins of Scarlatti Sonatas, news of a sister organization, the Flemish Harpsichord Society, a very different type of harpsichord, finishing with a selection of your enquiries, all make for some interesting and varied reading. I hope there is something here for everyone!

Katharine May

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN INSPIRING TEACHER

Many teachers in the early music world today are primarily performers with busy recording and concert schedules. While teaching may indeed form an important part of their lives, the career teacher is much rarer. The often unsung role that they play in inspiring and developing today`s performers is hugely important so I would like to take this opportunity to redress the balance a little in their favour. I have been fortunate enough to have had some wonderful teachers whose inspiration and encouragement has now helped make teaching an integral part of my own life. One of them, who for a long time has dedicated herself solely to teaching, was mentioned by BHS President Barry Ife in Sounding Board Issue No. 3. Her musical experiences to date are a fascinating recollection of the very early days of the harpsichord revival as I discovered when I went to catch up with her.....

Jill Severs first encountered a harpsichord when she was taken as a schoolgirl to hear Susi Jeans at her home in Surrey. Wife of the Astronomer Royal, Austrian-born organist, musicologist and teacher Lady Jeans (1911-1993) was one of few people interested in the harpsichord at that time, and had a pedal harpsichord by Maendler-Schramm of Munich on which she gave many broadcasts.

From 1948-52, Jill studied at the Royal Academy of Music where she remembers “there were no harpsichords available for me to play- just one decrepit Dolmetsch in the Principal`s room and a rickety spinet in a tiny waiting room but they weren`t in playing order”. With no harpsichord lessons on offer, she studied the piano with Max Pirani (1898-1975) who had joined the RAM teaching staff in 1926. “Pirani was a very cosmopolitan musician with wide-ranging interests and I studied everything with him, from Bach, Haydn and Beethoven to Bartok and Stravinsky. He was also very happy for me to play harpsichord music on the piano, including Scarlatti and Couperin, which was rather unusual in those days. Scarlatti for me was a hugely important composer, especially when Kirkpatrick published his two books and catalogue, plus a wonderful biography in the 50s”. Jill also studied the viola and took great interest in composition, writing a number of keyboard pieces and a motet. During her second year at the RAM, Jill was a regular visitor to the Benton Fletcher Collection of keyboard instruments, housed at that time in Cheyne Walk in

Hampstead, where she would practice for hours. It was also while she was at the Academy that she first met Sir William Glock who would become a very influential cultural figure in her life, and with whom she formed a lasting friendship, together with his second wife Anne. An Olympian figure, William Glock (1908-2000) had been a student of Artur Schnabel, and was the first music critic of the Daily Telegraph and Observer. From 1959-72 he was the BBC Controller of Music and Controller of the Proms. In 1953 he founded the Bryanston School (which later moved to Dartington), and it was through Glock that Jill heard the Amadeus Quartet play Mozart, Beethoven and Bartok, and learnt much about the second Viennese school, which was his particular interest. Many years later she went to Dartington to hear her own students play including Maggie Cole and Helena Brown, when Kenneth Gilbert was taking the classes there.

In 1953 Jill visited her sculptor sister in Italy to look at among other things, the mosaics in Ravenna and the 14th and 15th century paintings in Siena. It was while they were in Siena that Jill had her first experience of the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, having heard about the music courses there from an American singer on the opera course in Rome. The Accademia Musicale was founded by Count Guido Chigi Saracini. Born in Siena in 1880, he began promoting musical activities there, helping to restore the beautiful 14th century Saracens palace after the First World War and adapting it



Jill Severs (with Katharine May, right) revisiting the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena, in July 1993

for music. The Ballroom was turned into a concert hall and appropriately, was inaugurated on St Cecilia's Day, November 22nd 1923. In 1932 Count Guido founded the international centre for advanced musical studies which over the decades has brought, and continues to bring many world renowned musicians to lecture and teach. The festival *Settimana Musicale Senese* which Count Chigi started in 1939 still thrives today.

Count Chigi (left) and guitarist Alirio Diaz at the Accademia Chigiana, 8th September, 1958



Jill recalls from her initial visit that “the Accademia was officially closed at the time but we were invited in and immediately introduced to Olga Rudge who showed us round the rather grand *palazzo* with its labyrinth of elegant rooms”. A concert violinist, Olga Rudge (1895- 1996) was Count Chigi’s personal assistant and friend, and a key figure in the revival of Vivaldi’s music, discovering and publishing 309 of his concertos. In 1936 she instigated the Concerti Tigulliani programme which was devoted to Vivaldi’s music and in 1938 founded the Centro di Studi Vivaldiana at the Accademia Chigiana. Her article for Grove’s Dictionary did much to establish Vivaldi’s popularity. She was also a champion of the poetry and prose of Ezra Pound with whom she lived in Rapallo and Venice. “When I mentioned my interest in the harpsichord to Miss Rudge she encouraged me to return and play to Ruggero Gerlin to see if he would accept me into his class.” Gerlin (1899-1983) studied with Wanda Landowska in Paris from 1920 and continued to work with her after 1940 often in partnership, performing music for two keyboards. Latterly, Landowska would only accept students to study with her if they had trained with him first. “Although I hadn’t heard of him, when she told me that he was Wanda Landowska’s assistant, I was immediately interested. I remember having heard an old record of her Italian Concerto and her personality just leapt out at me. Auditions were being held in three weeks, so although I had no money and no music, I stayed on in Siena and duly went to play to him. I was auditioned by Gerlin, and the Italian pianist and teacher Guido Agosti (1901-1989) who had studied with Busoni and who was appointed as piano professor at the Accademia Chigiana in 1947. I played from memory. Gerlin was very formal but I later discovered that he’d accepted me into the class, awarding me a full scholarship (which I was awarded each subsequent year). I lived on 1000 lira a day! Courses lasted 2 months from July to September, with classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9-12 without a break. The classes were quite small and everyone began by playing the Inventions and Little Preludes of Bach. Then, if Gerlin liked what you did, you could move on the Partitas and other suites”.



Ruggero Gerlin performing at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, September 1956

“Initially we played on a large, very old harpsichord with no sound. Later we moved to a smaller harpsichord in a whole room of unrestored harpsichords. Gerlin himself was a very private man and he didn't socialize with us. He was not at all easy going and never called his students by their Christian name- it was always Signorina Severs. He was a very exacting, demanding teacher both technically and musically, hence the Landowska exercises which she, as a virtuoso pianist practised on the harpsichord and which he expected us to study, which we did.” Many pages of hand-written out exercises include practising the C major scale fingering in all keys, trill exercises and exercises for moving between two manuals.



Ruggero Gerlin's harpsichord exercises, based on those used by Wanda Landowska

Extrait de "La Technique du Claveciniste", I^{er} Partie, par Ruggero Gerlin

The image shows a handwritten musical score for harpsichord, consisting of six systems. Each system includes a treble and bass staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and ornaments. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes. Some systems are labeled 'M.D.' (Mantova) or 'M.G.' (Gallarate). The score is written in a clear, legible hand.

He expected us to have a very secure, fluent, flawless technique and a very particular touch combined with a truly acute musical awareness and sensitivity. He was interested in all sorts of music though he was particularly keen on Bach, and 17th century Italian composers”.

THE ITALIAN INSTITUTE
39 Belgrave Square London SW1

Tuesday November 24th 1953
at 8.30 p.m.

**THE HARPSICHORD
IN ITALY**

IN THE XVII AND XVIII CENTURIES

RECITAL AND LECTURE
RUGGERO GERLIN
harpsichord

CESARE VALABREGA
lecturer in the History of Music in the "Conservatorio
S. Pietro a Majella," of Naples

Members only

PROGRAMME

GAETANO GRIECO (1660?-1728)	Balletto di Mantova
GIROLAMO FRESCOBALDI (1583-1643)	Aria e Corrente
GIOVANNI PICHİ (17th century)	Balletto ongaro
BERNARDO PASQUINI (1637-1710)	Toccata con lo Scherzo del "Cucco"
ALESSANDRO POGLIETTI (?-1683)	Canzone sopra il grido delle galline e dei galli
ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI (1660-1725)	Parite sopra "La Folia" di Spagna
Interval	
BERNARDINO A. DELLA CIAJA (1671-1755)	Toccata
BALDASSARE GALUPPI (1706-1785)	Sonata in D Adagio-Allegro-Largo-Presto
FRANCESCO DURANTE (1684-1755)	Toccata
BENEDETTO MARCELLO (1686-1739)	Sonata in C minor Allegro-Larghetto-Allegro
DOMENICO SCARLATTI (1685-1757)	Three Sonatas

Programme of Concert given by Gerlin, London, November 1953

During her time in Siena, Jill met and became friends with many musicians, particularly the students on the guitar course. These included Alirio Diaz who became Segovia's assistant and who eventually took over the class, and also a very young John Williams who came with his mother. "I heard many eminent musicians including George Enescu, Alfred Cortot, André Navarra, Cassado and Casals. Contemporaries in the harpsichord class included Hugnette Dreyfus and Blandine Verlet". Then in 1954, a young Canadian student joined the class. "I remember hearing him play for the first time- it was the Prelude from Bach's A minor English Suite, and from the moment I heard him, I knew that here was someone special. His name was Kenneth Gilbert. Jill didn't form a close friendship with him in Siena but some time later when she was living just behind Fenton House, Hampstead, and married to harpsichord tuner Maurice Cochrane, he rang her asking if she could show him around the Benton Fletcher Collection. "It was shortly before his debut recital at the Wigmore Hall and I remember driving him around London in our MG. Kenneth was very interested in who was making what at that time and he visited us again in 1963. I recall us having a picnic with my children in Epping Forest after he'd been to see Virginia Black's harpsichord built by Bob Davis". And so began a life-long friendship. "My own harpsichord at that time was a Goble with pedals which I had bought for £1000. It must have been 1967/68 when Kenneth lent me his Dowd, a 2-manual Taskin copy on which he had given many concerts and made a number of recordings. I had that

instrument for 10 years and I confess that once it arrived, I closed the lid of my Goble forever. Of course, more recent Goble harpsichords are now among the best in the world."

Jill Severs was playing a lot at this time, in particular with cellist Jacqueline du Pré. "We were invited by `Jim` Ede to give a candlelit concert at his home, Kettles Yard, in Cambridge where we played the second and third Bach gamba sonatas and we also gave a number of other recitals together including at Magdalene College, Cambridge and in Corsham Court at the

BATH ACADEMY OF ART, CORSHAM COURT
16th December, 1964

Jacqueline du Pré Cello * Antonio Vivaldi (1680-1743) J. S. Bach (1685-1750) Jacques Champion de Chaubonnières (1602-1672) J. Ph. Rameau (1683-1764) D. Scarlatti (1685-1757) J. S. Bach * Realisation - Jill Severs	PROGRAMME Sonata No. 5 in E Minor cello and continuo Largo - Allegro - Largo - Allegro Sonata No. 2 in D Major cello and harpsichord Adagio - Allegro - Andante - Allegro Interval Chaconne La Triosphante Le Lardon Sonata in E Major (L23) Sonata in G Major (L28) Harpsichord Sonata No. 3 in G Minor cello and harpsichord Vivace - Adagio - Allegro	Jill Severs Harpsichord
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Jacqueline du Pré and Jill Severs first played together when they gave a recital in the first series of National Trust Concerts at Fenton House, Hampstead. Recently they gave a Bach recital in Magdalene College Hall, Cambridge.

Jacqueline du Pré was born in 1945. From the age of six she studied at the London Cello School until she was ten. She continued her studies for the next seven years with William Pleeth followed by a six months period at the Paris Conservatoire with Tortelier. She has given concerts in five European cities and has appeared at the Royal Festival Hall, the Promenade Concerts and at Festivals at Bath and Edinburgh.

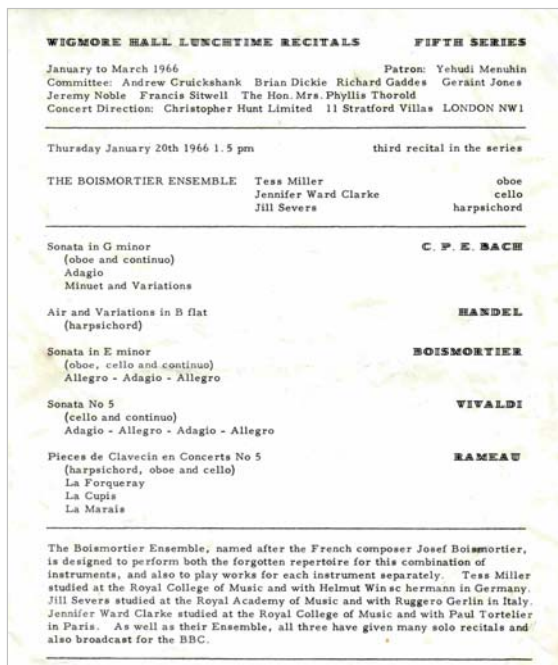
Her cello, dated 1673, is one of the earliest made by Stradivarius.

Jill Severs studied at the Royal Academy of Music and then at the Accademia Chigiana, Siena, Italy. There she played the harpsichord in master classes held by the distinguished Italian harpsichordist Ruggero Gerlin who was for many years Vanda Landowska's assistant teacher at her school near Paris.

She has played and broadcast in England, Italy, Holland and Switzerland and uses a modern harpsichord built for her in 1959 by Robert Goble of Oxford.

Concert programme from December 1964

Bath Academy of Art. `We also gave a recital at Fenton House in 1962, playing a Vivaldi sonata, the Bach D major gamba sonata and I played a group of solo pieces by Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau. She was a natural musician, very lively, completely unspoilt and charming. She was very popular in our family.”



Jill also formed the Boismortier Ensemble with oboist Tess Miller and Jennifer Ward Clarke on cello. `We played on modern instruments and performed a wide repertoire including Telemann, Bach, Couperin`s Concert Royaux, C. P. E. Bach, and Rameau`s Pieces de clavecin en concerts. I remember giving a live lunchtime broadcast for the BBC at Broadcasting House and we also broadcast from Maida Vale, and gave many other concerts outside London.”

The Boismortier Ensemble at the Wigmore Hall, January, 1966

Teaching has always been an important part of Jill`s life. “I like to find that little bit of gold that is in everyone” she added, and indeed she has helped uncover a treasure trove of `gold` with past pupils including Maggie Cole, Carole Cerasi, James Johnstone, Laurence Cummings and David Shemer to name but a few. Teaching positions have included the Menuhin School where she taught from 1986-1995 and also the Guildhall and the RAM where she has returned more recently. Living now in Wiltshire in a charming thatched cottage, she has the same abundance of enthusiasm and vitality that I remember when I first went to her for lessons in her Highgate home in the late 1980s. It was at her suggestion, following in her footsteps, that I made my own intrepid way to Siena to study with Kenneth Gilbert at the Accademia Chigiana. She has always taken great personal interest in her pupils and it is for this and for her encouragement and commitment that I myself am particularly grateful.

Katharine May

April 2011

Pamela Nash, editor of Sounding Board Issue No 1 has worked closely with composer Stephen Dodgson for many years and has recently edited a new edition of his **Duo Concertante**. She writes:

CADENZA announces the new edition of 'DUO CONCERTANTE for Harpsichord and Guitar' by Stephen Dodgson

I first encountered Stephen Dodgson whilst attending college in London in the late 70's. Valda Aveling, my teacher at the time, was a long- time friend and advocate of his music, and like most of her generation, was not historically exclusive in her approach to the harpsichord. Consequently, my own emerging interest in 20th century music was encouraged and I was introduced to Dodgson's Inventions for solo harpsichord. Immediately struck by what a radical departure this writing was from the pastiche language of previous modern harpsichord repertoire, I resolved to explore it further and it soon came to occupy a special place in my musical affections. The compelling rhythmic energy and profusion of melodic gestures which had so absorbed my interest was somehow amplified with the Duo Concertante for Harpsichord and Guitar. I became transfixed by a recording by Rafael Puyana and John Williams and remember wearing down the LP and stylus from the endless playings over many weeks. I finally found a guitarist willing to tackle it and he also quickly fell under the Duo`s spell.

A second collaboration with guitarist Nicola Culf involved a coaching session from the composer prior to a concert, along with an entire weekend of total immersion in the piece- testament to another shared admiration for this work. My third guitar partnership was with Craig Ogden, with whom I recorded Duo Concertante on Champion records (details below). The arrival of the forthcoming edition will I hope promote the ongoing interest this piece deserves.

This new volume of *Duo Concertante* replaces the 1972 edition by Max Eschig and contains some editorial amendments as well as minor revisions by the composer. *Duo Concertante* remains the cornerstone work in the guitar and harpsichord repertoire. When John Williams and Rafael Puyana approached Stephen Dodgson in 1968 to write a piece for these instruments, the composer was sceptical about how it could work, despite his predilection for unusual sonorities and their particular challenges. That he subsequently produced the most substantial and arguably most important work to date for this combination is a testament, not only to the composer's particular and prolific gift in writing for both instruments individually, but also to the extraordinary musical alchemy which results when they are combined.



The rich timbral complexity of this pairing is due largely to the fact that both types of plucked strings are at once similar and different. Dodgson's object with the Duo was indeed to point up both their affinity and their polarity; to make them homogeneous here, separated there; to off-set them soloistically and by contrast to create dialogues that bring out different facets in the relationship. Control of texture in accentuating pulse and creating rhythmic accent is as evident here as in Dodgson's solo harpsichord writing. So too are the other considerations of voicing, spacing, figuration, and the juxtaposition of dense harmonies with spare unisons and open fifths, indeed all as central to guitar idiom as to that of the harpsichord, and thereby crucial to a successful synthesis.

The harpsichord's comparatively strident tonal character, potentially problematic in terms of balance, is here an asset. The immediacy and explosiveness of the harpsichord pluck gives great impact in places where pungent tonal contrast is needed and whilst the guitar's greater lyricism and dynamic freedom are given space in no small measure, the role of the harpsichord as an equal musical force is never in question. Even in the guitar's melodic and sustained interlude-like phrases, the harpsichord is an impetuous challenger, whether responding with a new thematic statement or else resting briefly before setting the pace again as leader of a new movement. It is when the two instruments appear to struggle for the upper hand (for example in the more contrapuntal music), that the virtuoso element of their partnership comes to life, and where the greatest rhythmical energy is released.

Characteristically for the composer, a sense of drama prevails throughout the Duo, defined not only by the dramatic tension between the guitar and harpsichord but by the expansive and episodic structure of sharply-contrasting sections punctuated by returns of the intense opening dialogue, the final statement of which serves as a prelude to an extensive finale. It is here where the full impact of the tutti is heard, empowered by the ever-increasing use of the guitar's D tuning and the insistent D pedal, and by the gravitational pull towards tonality in the compellingly massive ending.

Players will find much musical substance and satisfaction in the exploration and performance of *Duo Concertante*. Although the main challenge of the work lies more in the technical demands of the individual parts than in the ensemble itself, the busier and more densely voiced passages require careful listening, perhaps more so from the guitarist, since rhythmic accentuations will be less apparent from the harpsichord. Therefore it is essential that the harpsichordist plays as metrically as possible. Optimum harpsichord registration and the use (ideally) of two manuals will realise the composer's dynamic intentions as far as possible.

NB A transposing harpsichord is necessary, as the work is at A440 pitch.

Pamela Nash

Printed score available from www.cadenza-music.com , the music can be heard on the CD- "High Barbaree" - The Music of Stephen Dodgson.- Campion Cameo 2032 (all but one track involves harpsichord and also includes the solo Inventions, Set 3)

Retired management consultant, trainer, university lecturer and lutenist **Anthony Hart** is a member of various musicological societies for whom he has presented several papers. He is currently researching into the life, times and work of a previously unknown 18th century Sicilian priest, Antonino Reggio. Also a harpsichordist, cellist and composer, Reggio has now been linked with the Scarlatti Manuscripts in the Santini Collection in Münster, as Anthony Hart explains:

New Findings on the possible origins of the Scarlatti sonatas in Münster: the role of Antonino Reggio.

The following is an overview of two articles published earlier this year; *New Findings On The Possible Copyists And Owners Of The Scarlatti Sonatas In Münster: The Role Of Antonino Reggio*, in *Early Music* Volume 39, issue 1(February 2011); and *A Re-evaluation of the Manuscripts of the Keyboard Sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti in the Santini Collection in Münster*, in *Studi Musicali* (Rome, 2011). The second article is an expansion of the *Early Music* essay.

Further details on the life and works of Antonino Reggio can be found in my article, *Monsignor Reggio, cembalista e compositore del Settecento* in *Fonti Musicali Italiane*, 15/10 (Rome, 2010).

In his 1970, unpublished dissertation Professor Joel Sheveloff identified four major collections of the keyboard sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, two Spanish and two Italian in origin. Since there are no known autograph copies of Scarlatti's works the two copies that originated in Spain have been accepted as the definitive source of these works. These are identified by the name of the place where they currently reside, Parma and Venice. No autograph manuscripts exist of Scarlatti's keyboard works, and the surviving Spanish manuscripts are regarded as the prime source for Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas.

The two Italian manuscripts, one in the Santini collection in the Diözesanbibliothek Münster and another, held in the Bibliothek der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna, have been identified as being important sources due to their relative completeness. Both of these sets were originally owned by the Roman bibliophile Fortunato Santini. (1778-1861). My investigations are centred on the Münster set. Sheveloff identifies nine hands in the compilation of the five volumes of the Münster set. The most significant he calls M1, who copied the first three volumes, and M2, who copied the fourth volume and a significant part of volume five. The fourth and the fifth volumes contain works not included in the first three.

Until recently the scribes of the Münster manuscripts had not been identified. During the cataloguing of the Santini collection, Klaus Kindler had identified the handwriting in some of the sonatas from a collection of original manuscripts attributed to an A. Reggio. He concluded that one of the hands in the Scarlatti Manuscripts in the Santini Collection in Münster was that of this A. Reggio. Further examination of these manuscripts indicates that Reggio's hand appears in one complete volume of the five and a major proportion of another. It can be concluded that Reggio at one time was in possession of all the five volumes. Reggio has been identified as Sheveloff's M1.

There is no reference to an A. Reggio in any contemporary or modern musicological source. However, during my recent researches I have been able to identify him as Monsignor Antonino Reggio, born in Aci Catena, a commune in the region of Catania in

Sicily, in 1725 and died, possibly in Rome in the first quarter of the 1800's. Unfortunately the date of his demise has yet to be established. He was a priest, later a Monsignor in Rome and a member of a cadet branch of the Sicilian noble family, the Principi di Campofiorito.

In 1753 Reggio was assigned to the Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal. His duties were as courier to the Nuncio and he was based in Rome. In 1763 Reggio relinquished his status of Abate with the monastery of Sant'Angelo di Brolo, a '*benefici ecclesiastici*' in the region of Messina in Sicily, probably due to his appointment to monsignor.

Whilst in Rome he was visited several times by Dr Charles Burney who described him as 'likewise a pretty good composer and performer on the harpsichord and violoncello' and in a summing up of his visit he mentions Reggio again; 'I am indebted for some curious compositions, and for the conversations of several persons in Rome, eminent for their skill in the art, and learning in the science of sound; among whom ...Monsignor Reggio.'

Reggio is also mentioned by the Roman poet and writer Giovanni Gherardo De Rossi (1754 – 1827). De Rossi describes Reggio as 'a man of great intellect, erudite, and very deep in music.'

The majority of Reggio's original works are held in the Santini Collection in the Diözensanbibliothek, Münster. It is possible that Santini acquired Reggio's library on Reggio's death. These consist of sixteen manuscripts comprising some 180 individual works, which date between 1745 and 1774. His early works range from sacred works, such as masses, oratorios and sacred songs, to aria settings of texts by Metastasio. His later works, from about 1770, consist of 72 sonatas for cembalo, works for two violoncelli and sonatas for lute and bass. The majority of Reggio's works, found to date, are in manuscript form. It does however, appear that six of the keyboard sonatas were published, which are listed in Breitkopf's Thematic catalogue (published supplement dated 1772).



First page of Sonata per Cembalo in C minor by A. Reggio

Not very much is known about Reggio apart from his surviving manuscripts. It would, however, appear that he was well known and influential in cultural circles at the time he was in Rome. His association with the Scarlatti manuscripts is interesting. There are some annotations contained in Münster IV which are unique to these manuscripts. There is also the possibility that these were not copied from the 'Spanish' manuscripts on their return to Italy as has been widely accepted, but could well have been compiled in Spain. My own analysis of the order of the sonatas of the three sets casts doubt that the Münster set was actually copied from one of the Spanish sets. It is still uncertain of the exact source. Also, there appears to be many discrepancies in the readings of some of the sonatas as well as differences in tempi.



First page of Scarlatti Sonata (K380) in Reggio's hand

It may also be possible that the Santini Copies may provide a closer connection to the Spanish originals. One reason for suggesting this is that Reggio's uncle, Luigi Reggio, was ambassador at the Spanish court from 1713 to 1740. He was viceroy of Valencia from 1721 to 1737 and was ambassador in Venice from 1737 to 1740. From 1740 to 1746 he was ambassador for Spain in Paris. Stefano Reggio, son of Luigi, succeeded him as ambassador in Valencia from 1743 to 1759.

Both father and son were resident in Spain at the time of Scarlatti and Farinelli and undoubtedly would have been acquainted with them. Luigi was very much involved with music, there are references to performances being held in the 'casa di Reggio'. Luigi Reggio maintained Francesco Corradini as maestro di cappella when he was in Spain and had several works dedicated to him. Also I have recently found evidence that Antonino Reggio himself was in Spain at the time of the copying of the Scarlatti sonatas. Further research is being carried out into the relationship of Reggio and these sonatas.

Anthony Hart

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Many readers will know and remember with great affection keyboard player **Virginia Pleasants** who this year celebrates her 100th birthday- a remarkable achievement for an amazing lady. I'm sure BHS members would like to join me in wishing her a very Happy Birthday! Dr Joyce Lindorff, President of the Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society and Professor of Keyboard Studies at the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University, USA, sent these photographs of Virginia, accompanied by the following extract from the current Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society's Newsletter, and has kindly given permission for the BHS to reproduce them here:

Honouring Virginia Pleasants on her Centenary!



Virginia performing in Spring 2006



Addressing her audience

MACON MEETING TAKES THEME FROM OUR LATEST ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Virginia Pleasants, the newest member of the SEHKS Advisory Board, will be honored for her contributions to the historical keyboard world at the upcoming Macon meeting, which is taking its theme from her championing of the music of late 18th-century English keyboard music. A native of Ohio, Virginia attended Wittenberg University and received her bachelor of music degree from the College of Music of Cincinnati (now the College-Conservatory of the University of Cincinnati) in piano. Further private study in New York in accompanying and chamber music led to First Prize in the MacDowell Competition for Chamber Music.

She married Henry Pleasants, then music critic of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, and joined him at the end of the second World War, living in Austria, Switzerland and Germany until 1967. During that postwar period she was active in the Amerika Haus of Austria and Germany. This consular library program has been called the "Marshall Plan of Ideas," a U.S. diplomacy initiative that set a standard for later programs around the globe, including the Fulbright Program.

In 1967 Virginia moved to London, where Henry was the American music critic of the International Herald Tribune. He died in 2000. During her time in Europe she had developed her life-long interest in early keyboard instruments. In England she taught as adjunct lecturer at the University of Cambridge for 20 years, and was a co-founder of the British Clavichord Society. She often performed on her own 1797 Broadwood square piano. Virginia's recordings include four sonata discs for the Haydn Society under H. C. Robbins Landon, as well as a performance of Quincy Porter's Harpsichord Concerto (composed in 1959) for CRI. She has written extensively on historical keyboard topics, including her 1985 Early Music article, "The Early Piano in Britain (c1760-1800)." In January 2004 Virginia returned to the US and now lives in Philadelphia, where she gave two fortepiano recitals in recent years. She continues to inspire colleagues and encourage students of the early keyboard with her pioneering knowledge, experience and example.



Virginia and 'Hubert'

2010 Birthday with Willard Martin, Joyce Lindorff and harpsichord students Katelyn Bouska, Carlos Ramirez, and Abigail LaVecchia



Born in London, **Ludmila Tschakalova** studied the piano and harpsichord at the Royal College of Music, and later with Kenneth Gilbert and Jos Van Immerseel. She has performed several times for the BHS at Handel House and lives in Antwerp, Belgium. With her wide teaching experience and involvement in music education at all levels, she has introduced the harpsichord to a wider public, including children, and she has been instrumental in setting up the Flemish Harpsichord Society as she explains:

“De Vlaamse Klavecimbel Vereniging” or “The Flemish Harpsichord Society”

That necessity is the mother of invention is something we know only too well. The Flemish Harpsichord Society was created in order to meet a very serious need for better communication between players (professional and amateur), teachers, makers and aficionados of the instrument in Flanders. This necessity, however, was unthinkable thirty years ago.

But why, you may ask, a Flemish Harpsichord Society, and not a Belgian one? A brief historical sketch of Belgium might help here: the country was “created” in 1830, after many centuries of occupation by different powers (the Spanish, the Austro-Hungarians, the French, and the Dutch). The northern Dutch-speaking part of the country (Flanders) and the southern French-speaking part (Wallonia) joined forces to evict the last occupiers, preferring to create their own country rather than be part of either France or Holland. Since then, many changes have taken place in the geopolitical face of Belgium. It is now a federal state made up of Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking East Cantons. Anyone following the latest political state of affairs will know that the future of “Belgium” is being called into question, but whether the country will continue in its present form or not, the federal states are certainly more autonomous than ever. The creation of a Flemish Harpsichord Society was in no way intended as a political statement. Wallonia has its own counterpart (which has existed far longer than we have!), *Les Amis du Clavecin*.

When I arrived in Antwerp in 1975, harpsichord education only existed officially at higher education level and arts-oriented secondary schools. There was the odd private teacher and a music school or two sponsored by their local borough, but apart from that the instrument was not “acceptable” in music school education (and this in a country where the Ruckers family held sway!). Higher education realized that in order to be kept supplied with students, something needed to be done at the base of music education! Finally, in 1987, the Ministry of Education gave the green light for harpsichord courses to be given in music schools (which offer education for children after school hours and adult amateurs). I seized this opportunity, starting up courses in three schools. Young colleagues did the same, and if you could count the number of harpsichord courses in Flanders around 1990 on the fingers of one hand, twenty years later, the fingers of two hands no longer suffice! Thanks to the enthusiasm of young players/teachers, and an amazingly continuous interest by children and adults to learn the instrument, courses have mushroomed.

In the 1990s I organized, single-handed, a few extra one-day courses, each time highlighting a different topic (François Couperin, rhetoric in music, the dance) for music school students. For various reasons they came to a halt, but by 2002 there was a clamour for more! I was beginning to feel that I didn't want to continue organizing these things on my own, and quite by chance, after a concert, a couple of young colleagues and myself found ourselves together, and I put the ball in their court: let's join forces and try to get the whole harpsichord-playing and teaching community in Flanders better in touch with one another.

And let's stimulate harpsichord builders, who had also grown in number since 1975 (when there were only three serious makers of instruments in the whole of Belgium).

Our first step was locating all schools where harpsichord was taught, arranging yearly meetings for the teachers where we could discuss the usual problems: instruments and didactic literature.

In 2009 we held our first Flemish Harpsichord Day, which was a huge success. We organized workshops, a competition for amateurs (the young and less young!), an exhibition and an evening concert. We followed this in 2010 with a master class on Italian music given by Menno Van Delft.

Our second Flemish Harpsichord Day was held on March 19th this year. We have decided to hold this biannually, alternating it with a master class for the year in between. Preparation for all these activities, and the great response from the public, made it clear that we needed to set up a website, and this became a reality in the autumn of 2010. Anyone interested may take a look, although it is in Dutch! See: www.vlaamseklavecimbelvereniging.be. We have, among others, sections for instruments for sale, CD's for sale, general announcements, articles and any interesting harpsichord news. Any queries about posting something on the site may always be addressed to me in English of course! Ludmilla.Tschakalova@telenet.be

Compared to the British Harpsichord Society, ours is very much a fledgling. But there has already been a great deal of interest expressed in our activities from outside Flanders, including Wallonia, Brussels, Holland and Germany. Our hope and intention is to grow, stimulating interest in the instrument and its literature, and contact between all who are inspired by it. Perhaps, in time, contact between the various harpsichord societies in Europe could lead to even bigger things!

Suggestions, anyone? **Ludmila Tschakalova**, January 2011

Ludmila then sent the following report of their second Harpsichord Day which seems to have been highly successful:

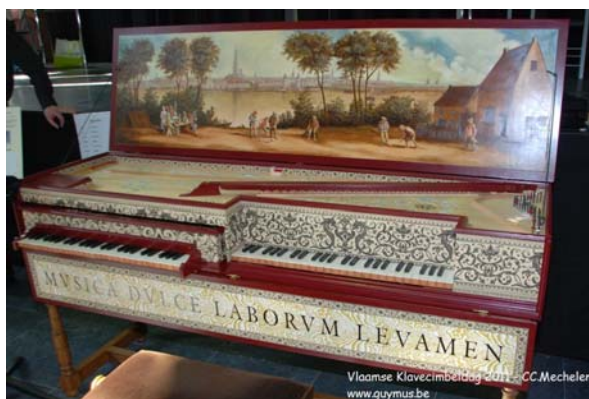
Flemish Harpsichord Day, Mechelen (Malines), March 19th, 2011

As co-organizer of this bi-annual event (I was too busy making sure there were no serious derailments!), I am not perhaps the best person to give an account of the Flemish Harpsichord Day, but I know from the response we had, and are still getting, that it was a huge success, with an international flavour!

This was our second edition, and as with the previous harpsichord day, we were fortunate to be offered free accommodation by the Mechelen (Malines) Conservatory of Music and adjoining Cultural Centre. The buildings run seamlessly together, so we were able to take full advantage of the space we very much needed. As the day was aimed at music school and amateur players, we did our best to tailor our activities to their needs:



-The harpsichord exhibition attracted many builders from Flanders and abroad. We had asked them to bear in mind that our public would be particularly interested in good-quality study instruments. Ducornet of Paris had an especially nice sounding single-manual instrument, costing around 6000€, still quite a sum but sounding as though it costs much more! There were also instruments for professional players and a great range of types, from Van Zwolle to mid-18th century models. I had virtually no time to try the instruments, but each time I passed through the exhibition hall there was constant music making, a good sign.



‘Mother and child virginals’, a copy by Flemish builder Jef Van Boven of an amalgamation of two Hans Ruckers instruments, a Johannes Couchet virginal and a child’s virginal by Andreas Ruckers.

A copy of a Roberto and Federigo Cresci, (Livorno, Italy 1778), now in Nürnberg, played by it’s Flemish builder, Danny Bormans, who also did the decoration.



-The workshops were dedicated to renaissance and baroque dance. As such a large amount of harpsichord literature is made up of dances, it is invaluable for players to actually see and feel the movements. We invited Sigrid T'Hooft to give the course. Sigrid is an internationally renowned dancer, choreographer and director, having worked with several European opera houses in their productions of baroque operas. About sixty people, of all ages, enrolled for our course. It was made up of three parts: a power-point lecture, initiation into dancing the minuet, courante and sarabande (and most of those enrolled got to their feet without embarrassment!) and a final part where I coached harpsichordists in accompanying Sigrid while she danced.

-Small children (5 to 8 year olds) were also given the chance to dance; another baroque dancer, Johan Goessens dressed himself in a Harlequine costume and had the little ones dancing in time! Amazing! We also had a make-up artist, so the children could get themselves looking very pretty indeed, before going off to dance! 8 to 12 year olds were also offered the possibility of making a little harp, a very short but enlightening introduction to instrument making.



A young enthusiast.....and learning to prepare a string

-The competition was open to two age categories: 8-15 years (category A) and 16 years+ (category B). Higher education students and professionals are not permitted to take part. The programme had to include one dance (or more if they wished). Playing time was restricted to 5 minutes for the first category and 8 minutes for the second. There were 10 competitors for A and 6 for B, where a couple of incredibly courageous 50 and 60-plussers took part! We were very pleased to be able to get an international jury to come: Menno van Delft from Holland, Anne Galowich from Luxembourg, and Frédéric Haas (who is French but has been living in Belgium for many years). The standard was very high indeed; the jury had a hard task. But they performed their duty admirably and pronounced a first, second and third winner in both categories. We also provided the public with the opportunity of casting votes, thus providing a fourth prize for each category.



Vlaamse Klavecimbeldag 2011 - CC.Mechelen
www.guymus.be

1st prize winner of category A, applauded by organiser Ludmila (and two colleagues), with Bart Jacobs, the director of the Mechelen Conservatory, and jury members Menno van Delft, Frédérick Haas and Anne Galowich.

-The evening recital was given by Gustav Leonhardt. This *éminence grise* stunned – among others, but especially - my 14 year old pupils! Mr.Leonhardt was most obliging in making up a programme especially for our harpsichord day, one in which the dance took pride of place. Apart from two grounds by Purcell in the middle of the programme, he played dances for us by Frescobaldi, Byrd, Gibbons (the heart-rending Pavan nr.16), Henri Dumont, Le Roux, Weckman, Ritter (another deeply moving piece, the Allemande composed upon the death of Charles XI of Sweden), Krieger, and to finish, a rousing Chaconne in G by Böhm. Gustav Leonhardt's playing was inspiring, full of feeling, colour and rhythmical life (which is not the same thing as playing in time!). A large part of the public gave him a standing ovation. A most heart-warming apotheosis to an inspiring and rewarding day..... which we plan to repeat, with a different theme, in 2013!

Perhaps this little report could stimulate someone to organize something similar in the UK?

Ludmila Tschakalova,
Antwerp, Belgium, March 2011

The BHS were shocked and saddened to hear of the death of harpsichord maker **Trevor Beckerleg**, tragically killed at his home in Montevideo, Uruguay in January 2010 at the age of 68. William Mitchell, editor of Sounding Board Issue No 2 has sent the following recollections of Trevor, both memorable for completely different reasons:

Trevor Beckerleg, Esqre.

Tall and thin with an 'arty' beard and rich, mellow voice, there was a tranquillity about Trevor that made him instantly likeable. I first encountered him at one of the Bruges Festival of Flanders harpsichord exhibitions in 1983. He was positioned in the main entrance hall of the Provinciaal Hof and I remarked that we had a common interest by way of our connection with Michael Thomas.

He had brought two instruments that were typical of his innovative flair: one was a 'duet' harpsichord – that is to say, two double manual instruments sliced together and held in a large, rectangular case with the keyboards at each end; the other, an attractive spinet. They were tonally pleasing to the ear, but what captured everyone's attention was the decorative theme of each.

The 'double double' contained a series of portholes placed equidistantly around the casing sides and featured portraits of several of his favourite male friends. For some reason, the enormous lid was closed and after enquiring why this should be, Trevor said that the painting subject was 'rather special'. I was intrigued and asked him whether I might be allowed to look inside. As he slowly lifted it, I realised why he was being a little coy: inside was an oil painting of two men; one white, one black, lying side by side in bed on their backs. They were completely naked and their privy parts on full display. The actual style of painting was a little too graphic for my taste, but, nevertheless, quite accomplished.

I wondered why he had not left the lid up from the start and he replied that he was waiting for the big moment when the Provinciaal Hof would be full of people later in the day – 'then WHOOSH ! I'm going to flash it straight down the entrance hall'.

As the day wore on, more and more people began to come in and many seemed attracted to the curious instrument with the portholes with men staring out from within. At some point, Trevor decided that the timing was right and abruptly lifted the lid. There was quite a crowd around it at that moment and the reaction was a little similar to scenes created by that hilarious social cartoonist of the 20s and 30s, H.M. Bateman. I was grateful to have been warned in advance since it was fascinating to have the chance to study some of the facial expressions. After initial blankness, they turned to a real mixture of shock, amusement and disgust. Trevor didn't turn a hair and calmly sat down and played some Purcell.

About an hour later, someone from the Festival Secretariat appeared. There was a laconic exchange of words and Trevor slowly and reluctantly removed the prop and lowered the lid. It transpired that one of the British exhibitors (politeness prevents me from naming him) objected in the strongest possible terms to the nature of the painting and demanded that it should be removed from view and it did, indeed, continue so for the remainder of the week-long exhibition. Upon learning the identity of the maker in question, Trevor coolly remarked: 'I really should like to meet this gentleman and

discover the exact reason for his displeasure and why a wholly natural image of the human form should cause him such distress...'. At a later date the instrument was used at London's Horticultural Hall for a recital by Michael Thomas and his girlfriend, Pauline and for some reason nobody felt compelled to comment on it.

The other instrument on display was a spinet that was decorated with crocodiles as the main theme. There were crocodiles all over the soundboard and the casing and the jack rail was a solid piece of wood (walnut?) carved into the shape of a crocodile. On the name board appeared not Trevor Beckerleg, but Betty Crocoleg !!

I saw Trevor from time to time during the week, to chat and have lunch with him. I found his approach to harpsichord making and life in general very refreshing and down to earth. He was a genial person: good company and humorous.



Trevor in his workshop.

Photo by kind permission of Cambridge News

Our paths crossed again in 1984. This time I had journeyed to the Holland Festival of Oude Muziek at Utrecht and was exhibiting in the new Muziekcentrum Vredenburg. Before leaving England, Trevor had written to ask me whether I could bring back a harpsichord in my van. He had lent a rather beautiful double manual instrument veneered in walnut to some friends who lived in Nachtegaal Straat and his letter contained the phrase 'you will receive a handsome commission, my dear fellow!' Now, the reason for this statement was that, at the time, the movement of harpsichords and other items of considerable value between the U.K. and Europe was not as straightforward as it is today and involved the use of agents, formal documents such as carnets and considerable expense. The simplest solution would be to pop it in the back of the van and hope that nobody would notice.

I went through the controls at the Dutch / Belgian border and Belgian/ French border and Calais without any difficulty and arrived at Dover at about 10.00pm. As I came off the ferry, I passed through immigration without delay; it was only when I came to the Customs Hall that an officer singled me out and indicated that both myself and the vehicle be searched. What followed is something that I shall always remember as a gravely distressing and costly mistake.

‘What’s this?’ asked the officer, pointing to the harpsichord.

‘It’s a harpsichord’, I said.

‘What’s that?’ he enquired.

I took a few moments to explain how it worked and in what capacity and opened the lid. Trevor’s beautiful workmanship triggered the officer’s imagination and his eyes began to fill with pound notes.

‘It must be of some value’; ‘Does it belong to you?’

If I said ‘Yes’, I’d be lying, so I played safe by saying ‘No’.

‘Who does it belong to?’

Part of me wanted to correct him for ending with a preposition, but I thought better of it. ‘My friend, Trevor Beckerleg’, I whispered.

‘Where does he live?’ queried the officer.

‘In Cambridge’, I explained.

‘Well, we have to have a special form completed which is signed by him to say that he is the owner and only then can we let it go’.

By this time it was past 10.30pm and I thought that if I have to go all the way to Cambridge, it’s going to be about dawn before I arrive back.

I walked around the port and went to a café to think about it. I then did a most remarkably stupid thing: it occurred to me that half of the nation’s industry would not function efficiently unless someone signed boring documents on behalf of somebody else, so I scribbled what I thought Trevor’s signature might look like and duly reported back to the Customs Office.

I shall never forget the name of that officer: Mr. Difonzo. He stared at the signature and said ‘Are you a student?’

I felt mildly flattered by that because I was getting on for 37.

‘No, I’m a harpsichord maker’.

The balloon really went up after that statement. I was marched off to an interrogation room and questioned until 3.00am. I cannot recall, verbatim, the precise details, except that two uniformed officers were also present and my mouth began to feel drier and drier. During the questioning, they searched my case, found my diary and neatly tucked inside was the letter from Trevor. From that point, the balloon went into outer space.

Coming up to 4.00am, I pleaded with Mr. Difonzo to have a word with him alone. He acquiesced and asked the others to leave. I then lay my cards completely on the table

and hoped he would understand that I was only trying to help a friend, not make any money out of it.

Emotive stuff like this is practically useless when you're dealing with people who have the words 'I'm pragmatical' virtually tattooed on their foreheads.

The end result was that a very senior officer was summoned (out of bed?) and he offered me a choice: either I was dealt with by them or a magistrate the following day. He mentioned that if it were the latter, the chances were that I should have a black mark on my record for the rest of my days. I chose the former.

He then said that I would be fined £650 there and then and the harpsichord impounded. That amount in 1984 was a considerable sum, but I had absolutely no option but to raise it. I felt physically sick to think that Trevor may never see his harpsichord ever again.

I drove home and arrived at about 10.00am in a terrible state: tired, annoyed with myself for having behaved so stupidly and dreading the thought of having to pick up the telephone and tell Trevor the news.

It is when events such as these occur does it really matter to you how people react and Trevor's response was the epitome of kind and courteous acceptance of the whole incident. It was striking that he immediately insisted on paying the fine himself and then assured me that he would be in direct contact with Dover straight away.

The outcome was not what anyone imagined. After some weeks of correspondence – a period during which Trevor maintained that 'they are placing me in a position just where they want me...' – the harpsichord was released. Then, about two weeks later, I had a call from Trevor to say that they had even returned the whole of the fine!

Whenever I think of Trevor, I always recall a highly intelligent person of compassion, kindness and sensitive to the plights of others. I hope his soul has found a place much to his liking.

William Mitchell, April 2011

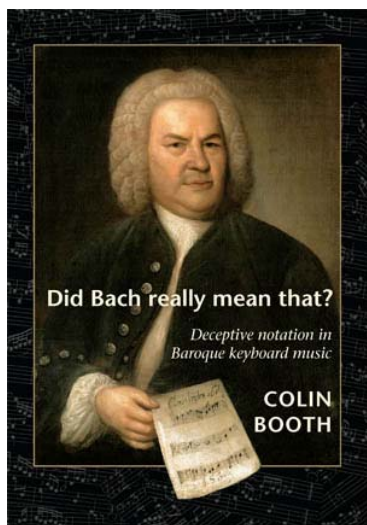
Penelope Cave, the editor of *Sounding Board* Issue No. 3, has found **Colin Booth's** new book exploring baroque notation, a fascinating read. Here is her review:

Booth, Colin. Did Bach really mean that?

Wells: Mark Argent & Soundboard, 2010. ISBN 978-0-9547488-1-4 .

"Did Bach really mean that?" It is a catchy title. The subtitle is 'Deceptive Notation in Baroque Keyboard Music.' What Colin Booth is writing about, is note-lengths. He is exploring the relevance of this subject to the music we play and the area of this study is thus both wider and narrower than its title suggests.

It is an extensive investigation and commentary on the meaning behind the written conventions that a composer employs to convey the lengths of notes; via symbols upon the page, the player alchemically communicates music. A difficult enough task at any time, and one that has promoted some innovative experiments in notation in the twentieth century involving intricate, graphic scores, but Colin Booth has set out to extrapolate the meanings behind notation as it was used nearly 3 centuries ago. He writes in his introduction, "...just as the meanings of many words and phrases (particularly in the spoken word) change over time, in the same way a different cultural context has altered the meanings, or removed the underlying significance of, some musical notation."



This book does not aim to discuss what Bach later corrected or might have corrected either melodically or harmonically, what Bach might have meant, had he finished the Art of Fugue, or to convey his pedagogical, numerical or evangelistic zeal and his deepest philosophical or sentimental intentions. The strength of this very practical book lies in its focus. He is looking for elegant solutions to possibly awkward rhythmic notation in the musical works of this period, with an emphasis on Bach, but he also relates it to the intentions of composers of other periods.

Colin Booth's knowledge of actual keyboard music is considerable and it is evidenced in the wealth of musical examples he supplies; this very breadth would allow the book to be useful for reference when meeting with

rhythmic challenges. His appendices cover some relevant passages translated from Couperin, Frescobaldi, Saint Lambert, and Quantz and look in more depth at some of the notational problems within the Goldberg Variations and the Allemandes of the Six Partitas.

I have long been teaching my students to use *inégalité* but, having taken his ideas on board, I think, without looking for 'reds under the bed', we shall all be a bit braver about reading between the hard edges of the ink on our musical scores. Inevitably there are overlaps between the chapters but the parts build to a convincing whole and, in addition to 'swing', he covers different triplet notations, overture-style, and bravely tackles inconsistency and ornamentation, including the single note ornament.

The nearly fifty musical examples illustrate his desire to encourage the player to become more flexible and, in fact, more musical. Here he has the enormous advantage of being a harpsichordist worth listening to on the concert platform, and therefore one who literally practises what he preaches; for this reason, I would encourage the reader to buy some of his recordings as well as his book.

Penelope Cave

For details of contents see <http://www.didbach.co.uk/>

Book available from <http://www.soundboard-records.co.uk/item.php?catno=DBRMT>

For the technically minded, here is something completely different. Oboist **Malcolm Messiter** studied at the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal College of Music. He has been principal oboist with the BBC Concert Orchestra and London Mozart Players, and also played for many years with the Amadeus Quartet. He has performed as soloist in more than 55 countries and is currently working on a new edition of Zelenka trio sonatas. Finding the harpsichord a perfect accompaniment to the oboe, because unlike the piano it is never overpowering, Malcolm has put his inventive mind to intriguing use, creating a unique type of harpsichord.

The Harpsichord U.A.V.

This is the story of my automation of a Goble harpsichord.



The Goble with U.A.V. removed and ready for normal playing.



The U.A.V. with lid opened so that the solenoids can be seen moving.

The idea came to my mind about a year ago, when I bought a harpsichord made by Robert Deegan in 1988. I bought it for our monthly chamber music concerts series in Barnet, where we really needed a good harpsichord, as we had been occasionally making do with a rather unconvincing electronic device. (Please see www.messiter.com for more details of these concerts).

Almost immediately, I wanted to automate it so that I could use it as a robot harpsichord accompanist for my oboe practice. But people warned me that it might be vandalism to modify in any way such a lovely instrument. I agreed, and had it fully restored instead.

Then one evening I saw an e-mail from a friend drawing my attention to a 1970 ex Royal College of Music Goble which was being auctioned on eBay. I suspected the e-mail was intended more as a joke than anything else but I looked at the advertisement and could not resist placing a bid.

To my surprise, mine was the highest bid. So a few days later we went to collect the instrument. The Goble was in reasonably good condition, bearing in mind it was 40 years old and that much of that time it had no doubt endured dozens of youthful students unpacking their violin cases and

dumping heaven knows what else onto the lid almost every day. The case was a little bit knocked about and some of the jacks did not always work. But I was optimistic that it could be sorted out.

By an extraordinary coincidence, one of those students had been me. While I was an oboe student at the RCM, I had played in concerts where this very harpsichord was used. It's marvellous to be reunited with it after all this time.

Originally, the plastic 'spring' for each tongue had been an integral part of each moulded plastic jack. But after 40 years, the elastic properties of the plastic had gone almost entirely. So I was a little alarmed when I discovered that replacements for such jacks are not now obtainable anywhere. Fortunately, Andreas Goble offered to replace all these springs with bits of bristle, and I gladly accepted his offer.

Three weeks later, after adjusting, polishing and tuning, the instrument looked lovely and played almost perfectly – far better even than I'd dared to hope. Even now, I've still not had to replace even one string or plectrum.

I'd bought this Goble thinking it would not matter if I drilled holes and fitted an automation system. But now that it looked so nice and played so well, *again* it seemed somehow wrong to drill holes in it. So I decided that the best answer might be to make some sort of device, which could sit over the keyboards, pressing the keys much as fingers do, but which would also be entirely removable, leaving not even a mark on the harpsichord.

I started on it immediately, even though I had almost none of the needed skills.

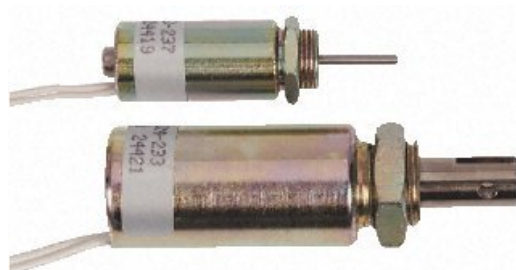
I found a local cabinet maker after just 5 minutes' internet research. He came round, drank tea, listened, measured and drew pictures. A few days later he returned with a splendid wooden thing, which fitted very precisely over the keyboards. His work was done. Mine was about to begin.

Inside this wooden thing, there are two shelves about half an inch thick made of transparent plastic. One shelf sits above each of the two keyboards. I'd asked for these to be transparent so that the position of each key could be seen and marked for drilling.

I had to decide what might be the best way to press keys down. For me this was no small challenge. With more internet research, I discovered *solenoids*. They were new to me. A solenoid, I discovered, is a simple device. It's an electromagnet surrounding a movable and thick ferrous core which is connected to a much thinner push rod. When a current passes through the magnet's coil, the metal core is pulled inwards, pushing the thinner rod out. I hoped that one of these might press a key, and that when the current was turned off, allow it to rise again.

I measured the amount of force required to press a key – about 300 grams. I measured the stroke: (the distance between the top position of the key and its lowest position) – about 7.5 millimetres.

I bought three different solenoids and tried these out when they arrived by attaching a 12 volt battery. I quickly discovered whether they had what it takes to press a key and play a note.

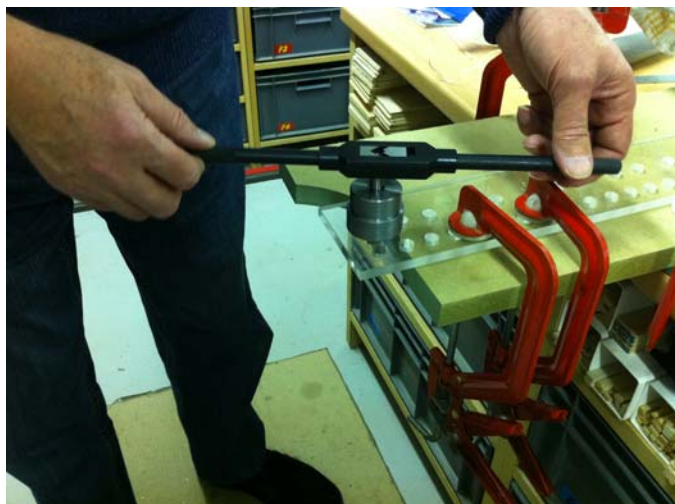


Solenoids

One of these test solenoids turned out to be too big, one too small, and one was *just right!* So I ordered 65 more of that type. The harpsichord has 61 keys and I thought I might keep a few spares.

Mounting these solenoids in the transparent plastic shelf called for precise drilling of holes and tapping of threads. For this I asked my friend Pete to help. He has a great workshop in which such precision tasks can be undertaken.

My friend Pete cutting threads in a plastic shelf



Each solenoid has a thin metal pushrod with which it can push a key. I thought it necessary to devise some sort of pad or foot to fit over these pushrods, to allow them to push a key without noise or damage.

The push rod clearly is going to need a foot of some sort

In the same workshop my friend made about 65 little delrin (plastic) feet on a lathe. Before fitting these feet onto the push rods, I glued onto each one a small felt disc to reduce noise. I did try little rubber 'O' rings, but felt turned out to be better.

A solenoid with foot attached

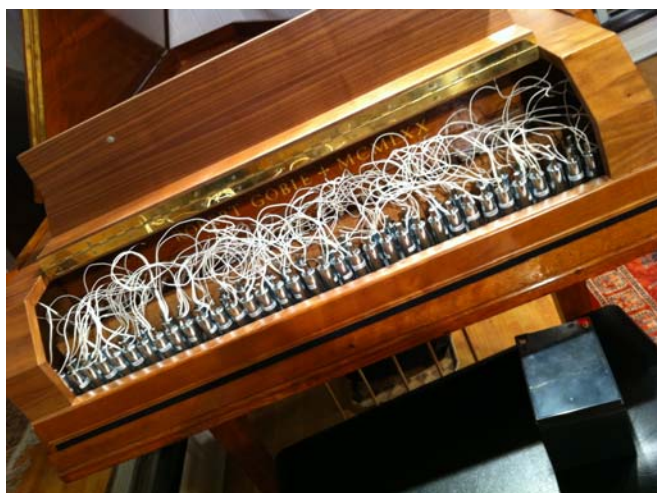


The length of each foot and the height of each solenoid above the key turned out to be critical, to say the least. I needed to set things up such that each key would hit the bottom of its travel while its solenoid was still about half a millimetre short of the bottom of *its* travel. If the solenoid were

to get all the way to the end of its travel, a metal-to-metal clicking noise would be heard. Yet it was necessary to allow the solenoids to get as close as possible to the end of their travel, because the magnetic force they produce, at a given voltage, is roughly inversely proportional to the square of the distance from their fully closed position. Hence the force a few millimetres further up is a lot weaker, and might prove insufficient to pluck a string, or three.

I installed every solenoid and tested each by connecting a 12 volt battery. They all worked perfectly even on the first test. That surprised me a lot.

With three solenoids in place, the project becomes increasingly exciting



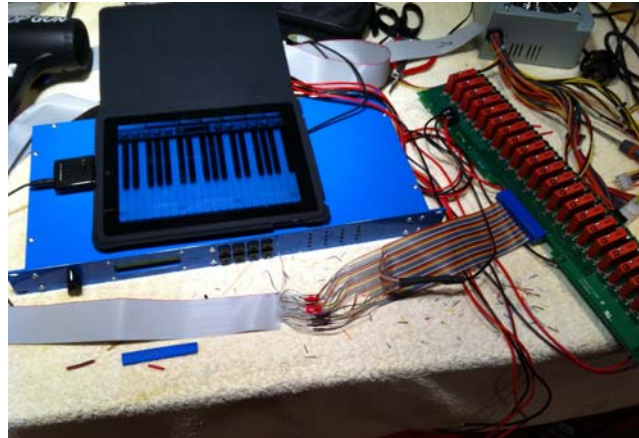
All solenoids in place and tested



*Here's a view from below –
Showing all those felt covered feet*

Once the mechanical aspects of the device had been built and tested, I then had to connect electronics to drive the solenoids so that they could play music stored in MIDI files. “MIDI” stands for “**M**usical **I**nstrument **D**igital **I**nterface”. MIDI files are the electronic equivalent of “piano rolls” – those old rolls of paper with holes punched in them that indicated which note should be played, when, and for how long. MIDI files are logically the same, but far more convenient, and a great deal easier to edit.

More research on the internet revealed several devices which decode MIDI data. Eventually I decided to buy a device from a company in Seattle with a website called <http://www.miditool.com>. The device has proved to be excellent, but its output is insufficient to drive a solenoid. So instead, each of its outputs triggers a solid state relay. The relays are connected to the solenoids such that when triggered by the decoder, send a current through a solenoid and play a note. It took me nearly a week of head scratching and soldering to get all the connections correct and the whole thing working, because several ribbon cables had to be interconnected – one tiny wire at a time – to just the right tiny wire on a completely different ribbon cable. Although simple in theory, it began to seem a bit more complex as I tried to get it right 122 times with an increasingly tired brain.

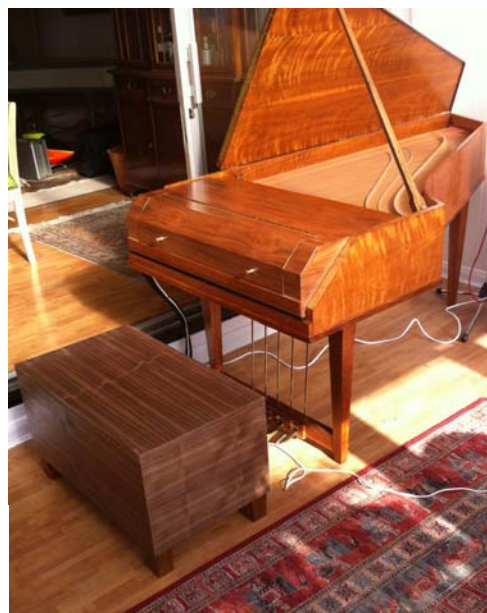


The wiring was an interesting moment



Here are the components that sit on the floor. Eventually they will be hidden in a new custom built stool

This is the custom built box that hides all the wires. Now that it's done, I think it probably will remain a simple box after all, kept under the harpsichord. It's too large to be a convenient stool.



MIDI files to play this automated harpsichord exist in some profusion all over the internet, and can usually be freely downloaded. A few are very good, but most are imperfect. I find it better to create or at least edit the MIDI files myself. This can be quite time consuming, but it's worth the effort as the result plays the harpsichord just as I would, if only I could.

Oh – and I nearly forgot: U.A.V., in this context, stands for **Unmanned Awesome Virtuoso**.

Malcolm Messiter, January 2011

Coda

I wrote the above text in January this year. It's now the end of March, as I add this little coda.

During these intervening two and half months, I have had the extraordinary experience of living with the U.A.V., and playing with it a lot.

In fact I have been almost unable to leave it alone. I've played my oboe with it for an hour or two almost every day. It's been hugely, and I must admit unexpectedly, successful. It's never gone wrong. It just works every time. I use it as an accompanist for practice of baroque sonatas. Bach especially sounds fabulous, to me at least, when played at a relentlessly constant tempo, with perfect rhythm and zero mistakes – not unlike Glenn Gould I thought.

We have held chamber music rehearsals here even when the harpsichord player was not able to come. His part was played automatically! We did have to listen hard and follow well of course.

I have discovered that it's occasionally necessary to edit the MIDI data in order to allow the solenoids time to rise again before repeating a note. A synth can repeat a note immediately after the preceding MIDI "note-off" message, but my U.A.V. cannot repeat a note until the solenoid has risen again, and this does not happen infinitely quickly. I expect this is the case with all mechanical devices, not least real human fingers. At first I added lots of staccato dots into my Sibelius files to achieve this, but that was crude and tedious work. So I commissioned a new *plug-in* for Sibelius 6.2, which looks for repeated notes and adds in an extra MIDI note-off message just before the repetition, in order that it does not merely sound like a *hesitation*, or come to that, a *deviation*! (I hope you enjoy my father's BBC Radio Four show 'Just A Minute' as much as I do.....) The plug-in was written and emailed to me by a splendid chap in New York. It solves that issue perfectly.

I have just transcribed five of Bach's six trio sonatas for organ (BWV 525 – 530) for oboe and harpsichord. I'll post these onto www.messiter.com in a few days' time. They are simply wonderful. To play them with the automatic harpsichord is surely excellent practice for any oboe player. Moreover it's so intensely enjoyable that it is in effect a habit-forming self-indulgence – so much more fun than a metronome.

No musician's home should be without a U.A.V.

Malcolm Messiter, March 2011

Check out this link to Youtube to hear and see the U.A.V. in action:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vq9h_4m1PYw&feature=youtube_gdata_player

Italian harpsichordist and organist **Dr. Claudio Di Veroli** has researched extensively into French Baroque interpretation, and is currently director of Bray Baroque near Dublin in Ireland. His complete article, Taskin's Scalings and Stringing Revisited was unfortunately too long to include in Sounding Board in its entirety so he has kindly written an outline of its contents, and has included a link to the full essay for those interested.

TASKIN'S SCALINGS AND STRINGINGS REVISITED

This article scrutinises in detail the scaling and original stringing of Taskin's harpsichords. A first conclusion is that there seems to be no evidence for the purported grouping of Taskin's instruments in "low pitch" and "high pitch": a first analysis of sizes and scalings yields no less than five groups. Adding to the analysis the string tensions from extant stringing lists yields a continuum of pitches in the approximate range A=400Hz to A=420Hz.

A further careful scrutiny of scalings, pitches and stringings shows that there is no direct correlation between Taskin's scalings and pitch. There is a trend towards smaller instruments, but he did not mean the wide-ranging pitch changes that this seems to imply. Taskin carefully maintained similar tension curves by subtly and consistently increasing the string sizes.

A third conclusion is that the purported inconsistency of Taskin's stringing lists is also a myth: with reasonable pitch assumptions, his tension curves show great similarity, being also similar to those calculated for other 18th century French instruments.

These conclusions are relevant for the harpsichord maker, and the article also provides reliable and accurate guidelines for the calculation of stringing lists for modern instruments based in 18th century French originals. An improvement over Wraight's "Nuremberg Synthesis" gauge conversion is also included. Finally, a detailed guide is provided for the optimal selection of the Taskin original to be copied by the present-day makers, based on the desired pitch, or set of pitches for transposing instruments.

The full article can be freely accessed from the webpage

http://harps.braybaroque.ie/Taskin_stringing.htm .

Claudio Di Veroli, Bray, Ireland 2010

LETTERS

It's always good to receive your letters and comments. In Sounding Board Issue No. 3, harpsichord maker Paul Y. Irvin mused on the quest for the harpsichord, like other instruments to simulate a good singer. The many historical questions he posed prompted the following thought-provoking response from Ludmila Tschakalova, from the Flemish Harpsichord Society.

Dear Paul Irvin,

As a professional harpsichordist I am very glad you have asked these questions. Unfortunately I can supply you with virtually no definitive answers! But here are some reflections, many of which I am sure you have had from other people:

"The vocal ideal" is a valuable premise but opens up a whole new area: just as we cannot be completely sure how historical instruments sounded, can we be sure about the human voice? And didn't the vocal ideal change, in time and place? We may also not forget that a large amount of instrumental music was dance music, and that Italian sources, for example, suggest that harpsichord players may change their touch according to the circumstances (a more

aggressive and articulated touch for the dances, a more gentle one for pieces based on vocal music.)

Also, there are, here and there, some extremely well-restored harpsichords which give us a very good idea of how they originally sounded. The single-manual Johannes Dulcken in the Vleeshuis, Antwerp, is one, the instrument having been restored to a lower pitch.

I would also like to say that all the European contemporary harpsichord “copies” I know of, as well as restored instruments, are strung with “soft” strings. There are also North American builders who only use historically made strings. I am aware, however, that some builders use modern strings. Also, both the instruments I possess (strung with soft wire) – one is a German type, the other a copy of the “Versailles Ruckers” – were made by builders whose sound ideal is certainly that their instruments should sing. Also, the front 8’ is stronger, more present, than the back 8’. Recently, makers have begun to suggest that double-manual instruments originated by starting from the front 8’. In other words, the lower manual, – the back 8’ – was added to the upper manual, and not the other way round.

Having played most of the French literature, I would like to make a few comments on François Couperin:

1) His remarks on disengaging the upper manual and removing the 4’ have always intrigued me. As you do, I initially took this to mean that this was not the normal disposition of the instrument, and that, as you say, the normal registration was $2 \times 8' + 4'$. But if this was the case, why did the French introduce the very easy shove coupler and a 4’ that could be disengaged, if they had not intended to make other registrations possible?

2) There are also examples of 4’ solo registration (Dandrieu), with both hands on the lower manual, or with the right hand playing the solo 4’ on the lower manual and the left playing on the upper manual (front 8’). I doubt whether Dandrieu was being innovative. There are many occasions in François Couperin when neither “plein jeu” nor the single front 8’ alone fits the piece. As we well know by now, Couperin was the master of “character” depiction, and with an oeuvre so psychologically rich, it is hard to believe that he would have limited himself solely to either “plein jeu” or upper manual. Couperin is also fond of saying things which may be good for a certain moment, a certain pupil, or a certain instrument, but these remarks surely cannot be applied all the time and everywhere. Sometimes one feels he’s saying the over-obvious for the dummies amongst us! (And they certainly abounded in his day; Corrette complained that hardly any harpsichord owners could tune their own instruments!)

3) Not to be ignored is the French organ repertoire, which abounds with registration directives, making for very colourful performances. Would organ players have adopted a completely different sound aesthetic when playing the harpsichord?

4) Then there’s the question of the harpsichord lid: it has been suggested that harpsichords were often played with the lid closed. This is not applicable to all types however; some lids were made in one piece, and you had to open the lid in order to play the instrument. Most French instruments had lids of two pieces however, but perhaps the instruments were not always fully opened. In that case, playing with all the registers on was a necessity, otherwise hardly anything could be heard! But would one then play a Couperin pièce croisée according to his directives?

Lastly, I would like to take the opportunity of expressing my personal opinion that harpsichords today are sometimes being pushed in directions for which they were not intended: they are being forced to meet the criteria of modern concert halls. Over-intonation is often the case, where sheer loudness (and difficulty for some players, who are not prepared to

bash the instrument!) takes precedence over beauty of sound. So many decades of research, trial and error, and the production of fine instruments, often seems to ignore the fact that historical instruments were – apart from church use - intended for much more intimate use and intimate spaces. Nearly all solo harpsichord recordings these days are made in spacious, over resonant chapels and halls, or very large rooms which are virtually empty. In the 17th and 18th centuries, anyone who could afford a harpsichord owned a painting or two, a tapestry or two, and certainly carpets and curtains to keep out the cold! And we know what effect these have on sound!

Ludmila Tschakalova

Another letter came from Dr. Claudio Di Veroli in response to Penelope Cave's article in Sounding Board Issue No 3 'Reading between the lines':

First and foremost, let me compliment you for the excellent article in Sounding Board No.3: "Reading between the Lines: Couperin's instructions for playing the Eight Preludes from L'ART DE TOUCHER LE CLAVECIN". It is important that students realise the importance of these important and often-neglected pieces.

I understand that the emphasis of the article lay elsewhere but let me comment on two particular aspects of Couperin's treatise that are relevant for the harpsichordist. One is the fundamental importance of *L'Art de Toucher* in allowing us to recreate the High Baroque harpsichord fingering technique. Even if many other ancient sources exemplified some "finger movements", including a few not covered by Couperin, his was by far the most complete and coherent account. Fully consistent with most contemporary sources, including many non-French ones, *L'Art* is the kernel upon which present-day reconstruction of Baroque fingering technique is necessarily based.

Another important aspect that I rarely if ever see mentioned is the unique importance of *L'Art de Toucher* for the interpretation of *notes inégales*. In his "On re-reading Couperin's *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*" (Early Music, vol 4 no 1, 1976) Kirkpatrick wrote that Couperin's "exposition of the doctrine of *inégales* is probably one of the most obscure and incomplete of those in the many French treatises ..." Kirkpatrick failed to realise how in his treatise Couperin gave invaluable information on the performance of *inégalité* on the keyboard, not with words, but with fingerings! For pairs of *inégales*, the finger-crossings prescribed by Couperin mostly happen (as expected and most natural) during the longer transition from the strong-and-long note to the weak-and-short note. This has implications for both rhythm and articulation, and is unique evidence that keyboard fingering and *inégalité* were closely intertwined in Baroque France.

Kind regards,

Dr. Claudio Di Veroli, Bray, Ireland <http://harps.braybaroque.ie/>

Penelope Cave replied saying that Claudio Di Veroli's "points are valid but, as he admits, the emphasis of my piece lay elsewhere. However, I think the two quotations below from my article prove that I did briefly cover his points":

"In half the preludes, numbers 1, 6, 7 and 8 (Couperin) suggested that his notation should be more strictly adhered to, by the marking, *mesuré*. It is important to consider, I think, how this can be achieved without precluding *rubato* and *inégalité* and, indeed, how freely it is possible to interpret the given rhythmic restrictions in the other four.

....Much of Couperin's practical fingering guidance appertains to the pieces he had published in the first two books of *Ordres* and it is valuable for an insight into legato and for the scale-fingerings of his day as well as for specific details of articulation."

She added that Colin Booth's new book *Did Bach really mean that?* was not available when she wrote her article, but it offers much that is useful on *inégalité*.

(Colin Booth's book is now available & Penelope Cave's review can be read on p25)

Enquiries addressed to info@harpsichord.org.uk , Nov 2010- April 2011

BHS continue to receive a steady stream of your questions and queries, some of which are included here. Members` email addresses are not disclosed, so it`s one of the jobs of our very reliable and dedicated secretary Edna to deal with the many diverse and interesting requests which she receives, always consulting when required the experts on our Committee and on our Advisory panel.

Tuners:

- ❖ **A school in Sonning, Berkshire, were struggling to find someone to tune a harpsichord for their forthcoming concert.** *The names and contact details of local tuners were forwarded.*

Supply of Parts:

- ❖ **A reader from Ohio was interested in advertising some bone harpsichord keytops.** *`We do not accept commercial advertisements on our Sale and Wanted Pages, however as your product could be of interest to those of our members making or restoring instruments, we are prepared to add a brief product description and a link, in the section `Building a Harpsichord` on our `Acquiring a Harpsichord` page. A small donation for this service would be much appreciated`. £40 was duly received.*

Advice on buying:

- ❖ **A new member from Darlington wrote in: `My wife has just decided to take her retirement/pension and lump sum early, and has offered to buy me a harpsichord. I have absolutely no idea where to start or what to do next. How do you pick one? I guess the budget is a few/several thousand but where do I go? (The Early Music Shop in Saltaire is nearest) Help please!`**

Some words of encouragement were sent with a few pointers to get him started on the search-

- *Try as many as you can, visit makers if you can, and send off for their catalogues*
- *There is a fair bit of information on our Website under `Acquiring a Harpsichord`*
- *Always choose a harpsichord based on historic instruments both in style and construction*

- o *Decide which style you like, French, Italian, German and Flemish- they all have different characteristics*
- o *One or two manuals? Two is a bit of a luxury but marvellous if you can afford it, if only one manual, it is good to have 2/8` registers rather than 8` and 4`*
- o *New or second-hand? Do look on our `Sale and Wanted` page*
- o *Do not be tempted by` revival` instruments made in 60`s and 70`s- they are heavily built and more akin to pianos in construction than harpsichords, they often have lots of pedals and tend to be temptingly inexpensive- beware!*
- o *If you buy second-hand, it is advisable to get it looked at by an expert before you buy. I can always give you the name of someone in your area who, for a fee would advise you.*

Learning:

- ❖ **A reader from USA finds there are very few tutors in her city and was interested in some help in self-instruction.** *`You may find Maria Boxall`s book `Harpsichord Technique` useful, it is published by Schott. Do look on our Website, on the `Learning` page under the paragraph headed `Technique`. You will find various articles on technique as well as details of another helpful book by Nancy Metzger`.*

Miscellaneous:

- ❖ **BHS received the following letter from Dr Keith Bennett: `I'm writing in my capacity as the articles editor of the NEMA Yearbook. Each year we have an article on an early music society. Could you write something on the British Harpsichord Society for the Yearbook 2012 - history/current/future plans etc? It would need to be c.1000 words and submitted by the beginning of August 2011 (publication is October)`.**
Having consulted all the BHS committee members, Edna replied that we would be delighted and has suggested that we all contribute a short paragraph which will then be collated into one article- `Seems very appropriate to be featured in the NEMA Yearbook in our 10th birthday year.`

And finally, those of us on the BHS committee find the pangs of hunger during a 3 hour meeting are kept satisfyingly at bay by one or two slices of this rather delicious fruit cake, the recipe of which it was decided was too good to keep to ourselves, so here it is. Our thanks go to Michael Ackerman for sharing it with us, and for his excellent baking!

BHS Committee Cake

1 lb mixed fruit
3 eggs
1 teaspoon mixed spice
12 oz sugar
½ lb butter
12 oz plain flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
booze (something strong: rum, brandy etc)

Cover fruit in saucepan with water and simmer for 5 mins.
Drain off water,
Chop butter into fruit, or melt it in microwave and add it.
Add sugar.
Add eggs one at a time.
Stir/ beat until well mixed.
Fold in flour, spice, baking powder.

Bake on no. 4 for two hours if you`re using an 8 `` circular tin.

When it`s done and cooled, turn upside down, pierce base with skewer and dribble on as much booze as you feel inclined. Let it mature in a tin, it`ll keep a long time.

This quantity does make quite a big cake, useful for BHS committee meetings (about 10/12 people), but obviously you could reduce the quantities proportionately to produce a more modest creation.
