

Westfield

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Tilman Skowroneck, Editor



A very warm welcome to the latest issue of the Westfield Newsletter 2013! To begin with, we are happy to announce the participants of the 2013 Westfield Organ Competition. This information is followed by the schedules for the Westfield Organ Academy and the 2013 Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative Festival (EROI), “Spectrum of Sounds: Aspects of Twentieth-century Organ Composition and Performance” all happening together in Ithaca and Rochester, New York, this September. There are still a few places open in the Academy, so please encourage your students and colleagues to apply.

Ji Young Kim contributes with a review of the Westfield Historical Keyboard Salon, which took place on

May 16, 2013 in the Carriage House Café Hayloft in Ithaca. *Andrew Willis* kindly sent us a report from the recent continuo conference in Tacoma. In order to provide for some relaxed summer reading, I have included two interviews in this issue, one with the Israeli harpsichordist and conductor *David Shemer*, and another one with the German clavichord and organ builder *Gregor Bergmann*. Of the various announcements that conclude this newsletter, Barbara and Thomas Wolf’s communication about the sale of Charles Paine Fisher’s collection of keyboard instruments is especially worth mentioning.

– *Tilman Skowroneck*



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THE WESTFIELD INTERNATIONAL ORGAN COMPETITION AND ACADEMY 2013

ROCHESTER AND ITHACA, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 22–29, 2013

We would love to see as many Westfield members and friends as possible at this year's Westfield Competition and Academy, taking place in beautiful upstate New York and timed to coordinate with the annual EROI festival. This bumper event offers an opportunity to hear fabulous playing from young performers and established colleagues, to experience exciting instruments and exemplary teaching, to encounter new music and new ideas, and, once again, to meet old friends and make new ones.

The Competition

Out of thirty-two applicants from all over the world, twelve organists have been selected to compete in the Westfield International Organ Competition, "Cosmopolitan Encounters." The twelve represent seven countries including Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Poland and the US. They are, alphabetically:

- David Bendix-Nielsen (Denmark/Hungary)
- Dexter Kennedy (United States)
- Kristofer Kiesel (Germany)
- Tomoka Kitamura (Japan)
- Ilona Kubiaczyk-Adler (Poland)
- Malcolm Matthews (United States)
- Amanda Mole (United States)
- Joonho Park (South Korea)
- Christopher Petit (United States)
- Atsuko Takano (Japan)
- Simone Vebber (Italy)
- Yukiko Yamada (Japan)

The jury is made up of five eminent musicians from four countries: Bernard Foccroulle (Belgium), Jon Laukvik (Norway), Kimberly Marshall (USA), Jacques van Oortmerssen (The Netherlands), and David Yearsley (USA). It will distribute prize money totaling \$17,500 to the three top winners of the competition. The first place winner will receive recital engagements in the US and Europe and a CD recording with the Loft label.

Competition events in September will begin with a recital by jurors Kimberly Marshall and David Yearsley on Sunday, September 22, at 3pm in Cornell University's Anabel Taylor Chapel. The twelve competitors will compete in the first round in Rochester, September 23 and 24. Six competitors go on to the second round in Ithaca, on September 26. Three finalists will perform in the third and final round in Rochester, at Christ Church,

on September 28 and the winners will play a recital in Ithaca on September 29 at 7pm. For further details, see the full schedule, which is available on our website at: <http://westfield.org/competition/organ2013/>

Participants will perform on three outstanding instruments: the Craighead-Saunders organ at Christ Church, Rochester, modelled on the 1776 Casparini organ in Vilnius, Lithuania; the original 17th/18th-century Italian organ in the Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester; and the organ at Cornell University, based on the 1706 Arp Schnitger organ at Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin [[full instrument details](#)]. The emphasis is on historical performance practice of a repertoire chosen especially for these instruments, reimagining the historical encounters between great keyboard players of the past [[competition repertoire](#)], but it is not confined to music of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the Final round, competitors will imagine how composers (and organists) may have approached old organs in a new age, with a repertoire which will include J. S. Bach, Hindemith, Heiller and their choice of music composed between 1750 and 1800.

Westfield members and their friends are warmly encouraged to come and listen!

The Academy

The Academy is conceived as a learning opportunity both for participants in the concurrent Westfield Organ Competition, and for non-competitors attending the Academy alone; it is designed to compliment the Competition theme, "Cosmopolitan Encounters" and to feed into the 2013 EROI festival which celebrates music of the 20th and 21st centuries. Repertoire for the Academy incorporates some of the Competition repertoire but also emphasizes new chronological and geographical encounters. Academy attendees are automatically admitted to all events in the EROI festival.

This is a rare chance not only to work with a distinguished group of performers and teachers, including Christa Rakich (with whom students will work intensively), Edoardo Bellotti, Jacques van Oortmerssen, Bernard Foccroulle, Jon Laukvik and Peter Planyavsky, but also to play on several landmark historic and historically-informed instruments, including, at Cornell, the Schnitger-style organ and the 1748 Italian organ; and in Rochester, the Craighead-Saunders organ, the Italian

baroque organ, and the 2004 Paul Fritts organ at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The first part of the week will be devoted to a smaller group of Academy-alone students, with Christa Rakich, on the magnificent Schnitger-style organ at Cornell; repertoire for those two days will be J. S. Bach trio sonatas and Schübler chorales; on the Wednesday, competition participants (except for those selected for the second round of the competition) will join the academy, for masterclasses on four different organs in Rochester and a variety of repertoire; towards the end of the week, students will work again with Christa Rakich, with Peter Planyavsky and with Edoardo Bellotti.

The list of pieces academy participants are to prepare is [available online](#).

Academy participants will have the opportunity to

EASTMAN ROCHESTER ORGAN INITIATIVE FESTIVAL 2013 SPECTRUM OF SOUND: ASPECTS OF ORGAN MUSIC SINCE 1940

On behalf of the EROI Working Committee of the Eastman School of Music, we invite you to join us for our twelfth annual EROI Festival. 2013 marks important birthdays for two influential composers: William Bolcom and Anton Heiller. We are pleased to announce William Bolcom will join us in his 75th birthday year to offer master classes and a presentation on his organ music. We also honor Anton Heiller on what would have been his 90th birthday year with presentations and master classes featuring his music and pedagogical legacy. As is the custom with EROI festivals, this year's conference will include formal presentations, workshops, master classes, and performances, all by world-renowned performers and scholars.

The 2013 EROI festival will intersect with two other exciting events, the Westfield International Organ Competition and Academy and the Rochester Fringe Festival. EROI participants will have the opportunity to hear the final round and winners' recital of the Westfield Competition, as well as a critically acclaimed multi-media concert as part of the Fringe Festival.

We hope you will join us in Rochester for what promises to be an exciting, enlightening, and inspiring event!

David Higgs, *Chair and Professor of Organ*
Edoardo Bellotti, *Associate Professor of Organ, Harpsichord, and Improvisation*
Nathan Laube, *Assistant Professor of Organ*
Annie Laver, *EROI Festival Director and Instructor of Organ*

perform in public recitals on the Arp-Schnitger-style organ at Cornell University and on the historic Italian organ at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester as follows:

- Tuesday, September 24, 5pm: Anabel Taylor Chapel, Cornell University
- Thursday, September 26, 1pm: Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester
- Sunday, September 29, 1pm and 3pm: Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester

There are still some spaces left in the Academy: please let us know very soon if you are interested. Deadline for application is September 1 and spaces will be filled on a rolling basis.

<http://westfield.org/competition/organ2013/academy/apply/>



Festival Highlights:

- Performances by Edoardo Bellotti, Hans-Ola Ericsson, Jon Gillock, Martin Herchenröder, David Higgs, Stephen Kennedy, Nathan Laube, Peter Planyavsky, Douglas Reed, Marla Schweppe, Mark Steinbach, Chaowen Ting, and the Eastman Graduate Chamber Orchestra
- *Spirits Within*, a Fringe Festival show of organ improvisation and light projections
- Keynote address by Hans-Ola Ericsson, McGill University
- Papers by Amy Bauer, William Bolcom, Lars Gjerde, Randall Harlow, Peter Planyavsky, and Andrew Shenton
- Five great meals included in the registration fee

Full details, including registration, can be found at: <http://www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi/2013-eroi-festival/>

THE WESTFIELD HISTORICAL KEYBOARD SALON

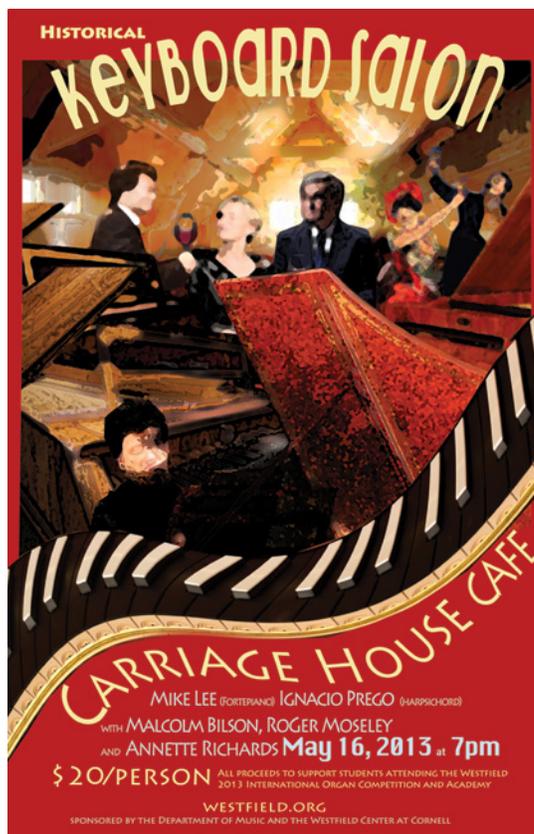
A REVIEW BY JI YOUNG KIM

On May 16, 2013 the Westfield Center's Historical Keyboard Salon featured new and familiar faces. The event aimed to stir up support, monetary or otherwise, for the upcoming Westfield Organ Competition. Yet it turned out to be so much more: marked by a cozy atmosphere (facilitated by much conversation, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and a certain Bacchic potion) and top notch talent and artistry (the performers included Malcolm Bilson, recent winners of Westfield competitions, as well as other distinguished guest artists), the Salon proved to be one of the more memorable musical events of Ithaca's concert season.

Inspired by the salon culture of bygone times, the event took place at the Carriage House Café Hayloft, in a building whose structure dates from the 1850s and has since retained its quaint 19th-century charm. The Hayloft has become a popular performance venue in Ithaca, owing not only to its soft-focus ambience, but also the acoustic experience it affords. This intimate space showed itself to be remarkably sympathetic to the early keyboards featured on the program: Cornell University's William Dowd harpsichord and a Schantz fortepiano copy by Thomas and Barbara Wolf. Though the venue has mostly presented jazz concerts so far, it is poised to become a favored spot for early music as well.

Ignacio Prego, first-prize winner at the 2012 Westfield Harpsichord Competition, opened the evening with a sensitive, measured rendition of Froberger's Toccata No. 2 (FbWV 102) and Partita No. 2 (FbWV 602), both in the key of D minor and from the Libro Secondo. With these works Prego set a contemplative tone, as his pacing conjured a meditative ebb and flow. This alternated with rhythmic vitality in the more dance-like movements effected by careful articulation. Contemplation then intensified to a grand soliloquy as he proceeded to his commanding performance of J. S. Bach's Partita No. 2 in C minor (BWV 826). Throughout, Prego deployed ornamentation judiciously, never drawing excessive attention to itself.

Following Prego's act in the tragic mode, the ever-lively Annette Richards spoke about the Westfield Organ Competition, encouraging members of the audience to take part, not only through financial support, but also by hosting competitors, offering transportation, and, of course, simply attending.



Already a full house by this point, additional latecomers gathered at the back of the loft for the next act: Mozart's Andante and Variations in G major (K. 501) performed by Roger Moseley and Malcolm Bilson. This late variation set might be of relatively modest gestures and proportions, yet its sophisticated voice leading betrays Mozart's mastery of inner parts, which are infused with unusual contrapuntal interest and beauty here. This aspect of the score was expertly conveyed among the alternating hands of the two pianists. The piece went as unassumingly as it had come, its tenderness eliciting smiles from the audience.

The evening culminated with two very special Mozart sonatas for violin and piano, one remarkable for its unbounded lyricism and *Sturm und Drang* passion (G major, K. 279), the other for its concerto-like approach and ambitious, Beethovenian scale (A major, K. 526). Perhaps it is not inappropriate to recall here Scott Burnham's observation that Mozart appears to have stood at the cusp of a Byronic romanticism. These were performed by Mike Lee, whom the Westfield community will remember from the 2011 Westfield Fortepiano

Competition, and Wayne Lee, a New York City-based violinist who has recently joined the acclaimed Formosa String Quartet. Their conception of these sonatas was not lacking in drama, yet their performance featured unexpected fireworks as the violin's E string broke during the first movement, drawing a collective gasp from the stunned audience. Wayne Lee is a trained modern violinist who has been experimenting with gut strings and transitional bows in recent times. Taking a short break, he was able to replace the gut E string with a steel one; it was a testament to his instrumental prowess that he was able to move seamlessly between the two for the remainder of the performance.

CONTINUO: THE ART OF CREATIVE COLLABORATION
TACOMA, WASHINGTON, APRIL 4–6, 2013
A REPORT BY ANDREW WILLIS

Arriving in the Puget Sound area a day before the conference to explore a bit and visit friends, I was treated to a spectacular Wednesday evening sighting of Mt. Rainier aglow in the evening over the streets of downtown Tacoma. It was stunning (so close!), and the only glimpse of the region's broader vistas that was to be revealed in the course of a cool, moist weekend.

On Thursday evening, happy greetings abounded as conference attendees gathered for the opening concert in Pacific Lutheran University's Lagerquist Concert Hall, anchored by the magnificent Gottfried and Mary Fuchs Organ, built by Paul Fritts in 1998 in the tradition of Northern European instruments of the 18th century. Later in the conference, Paul Tegels would generously demonstrate the beauties of this exquisite instrument to an appreciative gathering, but on this evening the focus remained on the hall itself, a high-ceiling shoebox-style space with a transparent, warm acoustic profile ideal for the performance of early music. Into this agreeable setting walked violinist Ingrid Mathews and harpsichordist Byron Schenkman, whose local bona fides include the founding of the Seattle Baroque Orchestra and who individually and as a team enjoy distinguished national profiles in early-music performance. They regaled the audience with creatively realized interpretations of 17th-century sonatas by Dario Castello, Isabella Leonarda, and Heinrich Schmelzer, as well as a richly-hued solo performance by Schenkman of Georg Muffat's *pasacaglia*. This cunningly-fashioned 24-sectioned piece, whose opening period recurs en rondeau at four pivotal

The enthusiastic reception of their performance holds significance beyond this single occasion. While their approach may have been an eclectic hybrid, not centered in a clearly defined performance practice, their conception showed no shortage of conviction. It pointed towards potential still to be tapped when musicians come together well-informed and well-prepared, and allow their playing to be guided by their earnestness, their artistic intuition, and the urge to communicate. That there is still so much terrain to be explored makes this an exciting time indeed to engage with historical keyboards.

moments, came to life beneath the hands of Schenkman, as each new couplet sounded more ravishing than the last, and charming variants kept the recurring rondeau ever-fresh. Mathews for her part delivered an amazingly authoritative performance, presenting all three sonatas from memory with a spontaneity that bore the stamp of naturalness and deep identification with the improvisatory prowess of the seicento.



Intermission at Lagerquist Concert Hall. Photo: Andrew Willis.

Impressive as the opening half of the concert was, a further transcendent experience was in store in the form of Carissimi's *Historia di Jephthe*, presented by the PLU Choir of the West with a chamber orchestra conducted by Richard Nance. The student ensemble achieved a

wholly professional standard under its gifted conductor, delivering a performance of stunning beauty. The soloists displayed a remarkable acumen for tragic characterization, particularly in the leading roles of this proto-opera, sung by John Marzano as Jephthe and Megan McCormick as the Daughter. In keeping with the theme of the conference, the performance was secured and animated by inventive playing from the variegated continuo group, consisting of Nathan Whittaker, cello, Mercedes Paynter, bass, James Brown, baroque guitar, Kathryn Habedank, harpsichord, and Paul Tegels, positiv organ. If the impact of Haydn's *Little Organ Mass* that closed the evening was somewhat diluted after the intense expressivity of Carissimi, it was nonetheless charming to traverse the text of the Mass in under twenty minutes. Tegels capitalized upon the opportunity to shine in the organ obbligato of the Benedictus.

After this auspicious kickoff, the morning brought a chance to roll up sleeves and come to grips with "The Nuts and Bolts of Basso Continuo," under the insistent and cogent guidance of Edward Parmentier. Parmentier's lecture, delivered in deadpan style, repeatedly drilled home such core precepts as bringing the bass to life with the left hand, treating the bass as an independent melody, recognizing the bass as the king melody in the piece, and, rather exhilaratingly, unlistening to the ensemble so as to create the maximum dialogue between the bass and other parts. Could there be any doubt on which part the attention should be focused? In a generous annotated handout Parmentier presented the score of a *Veni Domine* by Viadana and a *Largo* from a Handel flute sonata showing multiple stages of preparation, each illustrating one step in his systematic approach to realizing a basso continuo part. Among the recommended steps: identifying motivic associations with the verbal text if one exists, creating phrasings, articulations and emphases for the bass part, identifying harmonic roots and harmonic rhythm, adding numeric figures, and identifying and classifying cadences. Parmentier's confidence in the process and the clarity of his explication left many eager to try their hands at his method, and in possession of clear instructions for doing so.

Throughout the conference, lectures alternated with sessions of applied music, and thus a Parmentier masterclass ensued after a short break. Four harpsichord students, assisted by various soloists, presented a gavotte from a LeRoux trio sonata, a movement from a Telemann violin sonata, a Handel aria, and a movement from a Handel violin sonata. With each Parmentier

zeroed in on one primary objective, underlining the chosen concept with energy and a wealth of colorful imagery. As soon as each student demonstrated a grasp of the essential point, he or she was congratulated and the class progressed to the next work. This brisk approach to teaching ensured that each student took away something practical and memorable. As throughout the conference, questions from the audience were welcomed and addressed in a spirit of shared inquiry.

After a nicely-catered lunch, Gregory Crowell took the helm for an illuminating talk on "Continuo for Organ." Armed with slides and recorded excerpts, Crowell addressed numerous concerns specific to organ continuo playing, arguing for a bolder, more substantial sonority than is often heard. Adducing evidence drawn from the disposition of various German organs and illustrated by recordings of both problematic and successful organ continuo sonorities, Crowell offered practical advice relating to chordal voicing, the use of embellishment, matching releases to the ensemble sound, and the substitution of sonority for cleverness. No fewer than three modern flutists with their keyboard partners had been assigned to his masterclass, and he encouraged each gently toward realizations that addressed inflection, phrasing, and the awareness of harmonic and rhythmic structure, pointing out that a realization should be neither interesting all the time nor boring all the time. Crowell's reward came in the form of a refined and assured reading of a Biber violin sonata by two experienced professionals, allowing him to offer suggestions at a more sophisticated level. A paper on "Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italian Continuo Improvisation and its Application to Buxtehude's Trio Sonatas Op. 1 and 2" was read by Jeong-Suk Bae to round out the afternoon's activity.

Having fortified themselves at an excellent pizza establishment, conferees reconvened in the Concert Hall at evening for a brilliant chamber concert anchored by the indefatigable Parmentier. Joined in turn by four excellent soloists on each half of the generous program, the harpsichordist became the avatar of the conference's subtitle: "the art of creative collaboration." The amiable flutist Jennifer Rhyne, the gracious violinist Svend Rønning, the vivacious cellist Nathan Whittaker, and the bouncy tenor James Brown assisted him in presenting a wide spectrum of Baroque styles, from Viadana, Caccini, Frescobaldi, and Purcell (Brown), through François Couperin and Hotteterre (Rhyne), and Veracini and Handel (Rønning), to Vivaldi and again Frescobaldi (Whittaker). As a finale all joined forces in the aria, "So

schnell ein rauschend Wasser schiesst,” from J. S. Bach’s Cantata 26. Responsive to each composer’s individuality and supportive of each soloist’s musicianship, Parmentier animated movement after movement with limitless energy and imagination, proving the efficacy of the practice outlined in his morning lecture. His independent, strong, clear bass lines—“argumentative” he might call them—generated and justified freely shaped right-hand parts of the greatest textural, rhythmic, and decorative variety. It was a tour de force by a master who did not disdain to shuttle chairs and stands about the stage between pieces.

Gathering for day three, all gratefully descended upon the beverages and pastries that helped fuel our continued attention. We were rewarded by an informative presentation by Charlotte Mattax Moersch on “The Style of Basso Continuo Accompaniment in France according to Denis Delair.” From Delair’s 1690 treatise, described as “sympathetic to the performer and the beginner,” and thus a good resource for pedagogy, Mattax Moersch extracted much guidance for realization in the French style.



Masterclass with Charlotte Mattax Moersch. Photo: Paul Tegels.

A useful distinction was drawn between science and art, corresponding to rules and style. Rules are fairly universal, reflecting the laws of tonal composition, but styles differ according to time and place. The elements of style that Delair discusses relate to such refinements as ornaments, arpeggiation, alteration of the bass, and added dissonance, leading to a chord treatment not unlike the unmeasured prelude tradition. Mattax Moersch’s playing of examples drawn from the treatise transformed simple exercises into captivating expressive vignettes that eloquently illustrated Delair’s taste in considerable detail,

demonstrating the abundance of practical guidance that may be drawn from this source.

Although none of the works presented in the masterclass that followed was French, Mattax Moersch’s comprehensive grasp of the repertoire generated sage guidance toward the realization of Caccini’s “Amarillia bella,” of an Allegro assai from a Telemann flute sonata, of Purcell’s “The Blessed Virgin’s Expostulation,” and of the Andante from J. S. Bach’s flute sonata in E minor.

Her suggestions immediately proved effective, as in the Purcell, where a highly expressive realization was developed by employing an unobtrusive 1 x 8’ registration, varying the direction and degree of arpeggiation, releasing long basses during recitative, and closely following the singer’s punctuation. When the need for improvised melody arose in the introduction of the Bach sonata movement, a wealth of options involving scale figures, arpeggiation, ornaments, and leaps was proffered. As the conferees repaired to lunch it was clear that the art of creative collaboration would continue to thrive in the hands of many a talented young artist.

After lunch, the eminent lutenist and leader of Pacific MusicWorks, Stephen Stubbs, further refined our appreciation of the art of continuo realization by discussing “The Conceptual Shift between 17th- and 18th-Century Keyboard Continuo.” Tracing the historical context for the development of continuo, Stubbs claimed the chitarrone as “*the* humanistic instrument” during the “humanistic revolution” of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Though they are physically unrelated, the name chitarrone evokes the image of the ancient Greek kithara and reflects its role in support of the fusion of poetry and music during the rise of opera. Its ascendance fostered chordal consciousness, “breaking the stranglehold of polyphony,” and its technique gradually evolved from artistic strumming to include the plucking of individual notes. Of particular interest was the distinction drawn between the 17th-century conception of harmony in confrontation with the melodic parts and the 18th-century conception of harmony as accommodating to them. The succinct 1607 continuo tutor of Agazzari was commended to the attention of all seeking guidance contemporary to this period.

At midafternoon, a splendid harpsichord recital by Ignacio Prego revealed the harpsichord in a different light from that of continuo instrument (though I dare say many were by now extra attentive to the bass lines!). Much was expected of Prego as winner of the 2012 West-

field International Harpsichord Competition, and he did not disappoint, traversing works by Cabezón, Cabanilles, Frescobaldi, Froberger, and J. S. Bach with a masterful intelligence, command, and warmth. Bravo Prego, and bravo Westfield for supporting the future of early keyboard performance in an eminently tangible way.

A gathering for final questions brought together all four presenters with the registrants to clarify, reinforce, and further contemplate many points developed during the conference, and conviviality reigned as all decamped to a delightfully-chosen local restaurant for dinner. Local hosts Paul Tegels and Kathryn Habedank cannot be praised enough for their unflagging attention to the needs and pleasures of the visiting conferees.

Those who have heard Stephen Stubbs may predict that one of the highlights of the conference still lay in store, and indeed, his unobtrusive yet spirited leadership from the continuo section molded a magnificent all-Handel concert by Pacific MusicWorks, a professional ensemble blending virtuosity, beauty of tone, perfect ensemble, and refined historical awareness. Anchoring

the program were two early vocal works, *Apollo e Dafne* (1709) and a *Gloria* (1707). Though oddly described in the program as “A Sacred Oratorio,” *Apollo e Dafne* is in fact a secular cantata that deploys the mythical figures as archetypes in a grand battle of the sexes. Singers Amanda Forsythe and Douglas Williams both possess beautifully resonant instruments and both delivered Handel’s vividly-styled lines with accuracy, agility, and dignity. Even more electrifying, if it were possible, was Forsythe’s coloratura in the *Gloria* that brought the concert to a maddeningly brilliant close. This was a level of historical performance that will long reverberate in the memory. To my regret, I was unable to attend the organ recital played by Greg Crowell on Sunday afternoon.

Through this conference, “Continuo: The Art of Creative Collaboration,” the Westfield Center has once again invigorated America’s historical keyboard culture in a way that is certain to pay dividends through the better-informed and more creative playing and listening of all who participated. May the future continue to smile upon this mission.

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HARPSICHORDIST AND CONDUCTOR *DAVID SHEMER*, JERUSALEM

In July 2012, I joined the Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra as one of the soloists in J. S. Bach’s concerti for three and four harpsichords. The concert was a big event: it drew a full hall and was broadcast live—the enthusiasm of musicians and audience alike was a heart-warming and inspiring experience. This spring, I interviewed JBO’s founder and conductor, the harpsichordist David Shemer, talking about his career, and the state of affairs of early keyboard instruments and early music in Israel.

– Tilman Skowroneck

1) *David, can you tell us how a musical child from Riga became a harpsichord professor in Jerusalem? I have read that the first harpsichord you got to know was a modern one, by de Blaise. What was it in this instrument, and in those that came later, that made you choose to become a performer?*

It is really hard to say. The de Blaise was really not that blazing. Yet, there was something “harpsichordy” in it that must have come across strongly enough to make a lasting impression—to make me want to hear and feel what a ‘real’ harpsichord sounds and feels like. Incidentally, the decision to dedicate my professional life to the harpsichord only crystallized after I had an opportunity



David Shemer. Photo: Dan Porges.

(in London) to play on a number of really good instruments, including some originals.

But at the Jerusalem Academy during my de Blaise days, there definitely was something else. Until then, I'd never felt like a real performer. In my childhood, I was a pretty mediocre violinist. Never practiced enough; never felt quite at home with the violin. I quit at the age of 15 and started specializing in music theory. In the theory department of the E. Darzin music school in Riga we were expected to play the piano on a pretty good level (and it was fun!), but, again, not good enough to be considered "performers." So, when I came to Israel at the age of 20, I wasn't even sure what it was to be a performer, or whether I was cut out to be one—in my own eyes, or in the eyes of others.

And then, there was that old monstrosity with some ten thousand pedals—and right from the beginning people seemed to like what I was doing on it. I was accepted, as an equal, in that exclusive club of "the real performers"! Partly, it was (for them), without doubt, the exoticness of it: hardly anyone played the harpsichord in Israel in those days (that is, the mid-1970s). But there must have been something more than that: for the first time in my life I felt that I was playing an instrument I had very strong feelings for—in spite of the fact that it really was a clumsy beast...

2) It is interesting that one of your early teachers on the harpsichord was Boris Berman, a notable pianist. What did Berman tell you about the instrument?

Boris Berman is a truly exceptional musician. Only a few years my senior, he was in his late 20s and early 30s when I was his student, but even then he seemed to know everything about music, from the Middle Ages till the present day. Moreover, this was profound, active knowledge: at that time, he was the musical director of the prestigious "Spectrum" program at the Tel Aviv Museum. In the concerts of this series one could hear repertoire spanning many centuries of Western—and certainly not only Western!—music, in often surprising, but always coherent combinations and juxtapositions. Most of this music was performed by Boris himself, or with his participation. Whenever the programs included early repertoire, Boris played it on the harpsichord.

His early experience with the harpsichord goes back to the 1960s, when he was a member of "Madrigal," the pioneer Russian early music ensemble. Goodness only knows what kind of East German plucking pianos he

had to play there! Even the huge old bepedalled Goble at the Tel Aviv Museum must have felt like a Rolls Royce to him, in comparison. Indeed, the Goble was far superior to the de Blaise at the Jerusalem Academy.

Having said that, it is even more extraordinary how much Boris Berman actually understood about the harpsichord. Not just about its music—in that, he was second to none—but about the instrument itself. He never really studied it, and all he knew about it was entirely the fruit of his amazing intuition. He was also one of the first people in Israel to order a "historical" harpsichord. It was a Hubbard kit expertly put together by the late Robert Davis. Yet, as Boris was an ardent proponent of the musical avant-garde (the first time I heard Ligeti's Continuum was in one of the "Spectrum" concerts—and I haven't heard it played better since!), he asked to have a registration pedal on this instrument. Very soon, he came to regret this decision—the pedal never worked right. The Davis arrived in the mid-seventies, so I had my lessons on it. What a treat! The first time in my life I played on the real thing!

When I remember those days, I am still amazed by Boris's insights into harpsichord playing—in the touch, in the very nature of the pluck. Still, he didn't feel that the harpsichord was really "his thing"; even with such an enormous talent, intellect, and intuition, there is no substitute for a proper education on an instrument—any instrument. He taught it because there really wasn't anyone else at that time, but a few years after my graduation he went to the United States, where he has lived ever since, and to the best of my knowledge he doesn't play the harpsichord any more. Of course, he is a fantastic pianist, but I cannot help thinking with regret—what a great harpsichordist we have lost in him!

3) How is the situation today? Is there any overlap in interest between pianists and early keyboardists in Israel? Is there a dialogue?

When I was younger, there was hardly any dialogue between these two groups. In fact, there were hardly two groups at all, early keyboardists being few and far between. Like HIP in general, harpsichordists were looked upon mainly with a mixture of condescension and curiosity, if not complete disregard.

Things do change, and in the last decade they have actually changed rapidly. There is a young generation of musicians—among them many pianists—who are returning to Israel after a period of studies abroad. This

younger generation has been increasingly exposed—even in places like Juilliard—to HIP as an important part of current musical life. There are those who even have some experience of playing historical keyboards—mainly the fortepiano. On quite a few occasions, I have had the opportunity to teach harpsichord to piano students at the academy—among them some of the most brilliant pianists we had. Several of them later went to various places abroad for further studies, where they chose to combine the modern piano and historical keyboards.

All this creates a considerably different atmosphere than back in the 1980s, or even 1990s—an atmosphere of mutual respect and interest, and, indeed, a dialogue. Of course, if we had more historical pianos in this country (there are still very few, as opposed to harpsichords, of which there are quite many, even some very good ones), I'm sure that many young professional pianists would try to get some "hands-on" experience with them.

4) You eventually went to England to study early music there. Reading your biography, I come across references to many people who taught you there. Most interesting was for me that you name Jill Severs as one of your strongest influences. How did she influence you?

That's easy: sound. In teaching any instrument, sound production is rightfully a central issue, but with the harpsichord it seems to be different. As if we still keep to the tenets of that old adage "there is no control over the sound of the harpsichord, it is an instrument with no dynamics." (Even if this were true: since when is dynamics the only parameter of sound quality?) In my experience, not many harpsichord teachers talk about sound, and for those who do, it is often like with the weather: many talk about it, nobody does anything about it.

Not so with Jill. Sound production was her main concern, and she was really focused on how the player's body (fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, back) should function so as to facilitate the best and most varied, colorful sound quality. My obsession with the harpsichord sound, my love for and fascination with that special moment of the plectrum meeting the string and the magical thing that happens there, all this certainly goes back to my unforgettable lessons with Jill.

I feel that the harpsichord is still quite an abused instrument, with many players, including very good and even famous ones, banging on it as if it were an old and poorly working TV set, producing a nasty unpleasant noise—something that no one would really get away

with on any other instrument. Since studying with Jill, I really take it personally when I hear that kind of playing.

5) More recently, you also went to Stony Brook for your doctorate, and worked with Arthur Haas. What new impulses did you carry away from that experience?

That was not a very common situation. I am only a few years younger than Arthur, and at the time I came to Stony Brook I had already been a professional harpsichordist for a few decades. All my fellow doctoral students were my children's age. But it all worked surprisingly well, and Arthur and I have remained close friends since. Arthur provided for me the kind of feedback that I've been missing for a long time, working in Israel, where there aren't that many harpsichord players, and quite a few of the existing ones are my former students.

One of Arthur's main points of interest is rhythmical flexibility and freedom—so indispensable in any good music making, but even more so on the harpsichord! Now, I always have been very much into it myself (so I thought), so when Arthur would listen to me play and say "yes, it is very nice, but you know—you really don't need to be that literal," it was pretty sobering. In fact, he very much encouraged me to do what I really believed in myself, and believed that I was already doing—but obviously, not enough. If I am inclined today to take more chances in terms of rubato and rhythmical inflections, it is largely thanks to his input.

6) Let's talk a little about the influence you have on others instead. In another interview you said, "hearing so much wonderful early music in England made me want to bring it back and establish it in Israel." After returning to Israel, you founded the Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra, which, after more than twenty years, is going stronger than ever. So all this went exactly according to plan?

In more general terms—yes, definitely. Specifically, JBO is one of those things that might never have happened had I known how much effort it would take to establish, to develop and to maintain. Good thing I never knew how long it would take, or how hard the process would be!

Of course, we still have a long way to go, in terms of early music. There are not enough good string players, very little brass—not enough of anything, in fact. A regular production of Baroque operas is still just a dream.

And I am not even talking about earlier stuff—Renaissance, the Middle Ages. Yet, there is a steady (albeit too slow, to my liking) progress; early music is played, heard, and appreciated and respected in this country—and this is something!

7) *You are investing an enormous amount of energy in organizing the JBO. Yet, to me, you seem to be a hard-working visionary rather than a workaholic. What vision is it that keeps you going?*

Aren't these two one and the same thing—at least, in some respect?

Well, I think what is happening to me vis-à-vis JBO is similar to how they make—a horse? a reindeer?—run really fast. They tie a carrot to a long stick and let it dangle in front of the animal's eyes, but out of its reach. So the horse/deer thinks that with that little more effort it will finally get the carrot—and, anyway, after all this running and sweating it doesn't really make sense to give up now. Or does it?



David Shemer tuning one (of four) harpsichords before a performance. Photo: Tilman Skowroneck.

8) *Leading the JBO means conducting, too. What does “conducting” a Baroque orchestra mean for you, in this time of democratic and self-led ensembles? How does the leading harpsichordist convey his ideas to the group?*

We are actually pretty democratic. Everyone can have a say—if not so much on the concept (although often that, too), then on details and on the way they should be brought to life. This particularly applies to the more experienced players. Still, of course, a large-ish musical performance body can never be truly democratic, unless there is an unlimited amount of rehearsal time, which is never the case.

As for the conducting—I don't think I can give you a clear-cut answer. In fact, the longer I do it, the more ambiguous my feelings about it seem to become. There are so many factors that need to be taken into account, not least the way I feel about it, in the context of this or that work.

In general, I am coming to the conclusion that for a large-scale piece (choir/soloists, relatively large orchestra) it works best if I only conduct, leaving the keyboard continuo to someone else. This is also the feedback I get from the players. But if the performing body is on the small side, I still prefer to lead from the keyboard.

And then “conducting” becomes a combination of many things. Mainly, just as with any chamber ensemble, it is what we have been working on during the rehearsals. So each player is capable of taking over the task, both assuming complete responsibility of his/her own part and always being aware that he/she is a part of the group. Much of the leading is done by the concertmaster (again, as I said before, based on the general concept, which is, by and large, mine). As for myself, it is the rhythmical impulse provided by the harpsichord, plus quite a bit of waving that I do whenever I feel it is necessary (and often it seems that less is definitely more) and whenever I can do it in a way that will not jeopardize my playing (and who says that I'm always successful with this??), plus quite a bit of conducting with my head and even my eyes. In all honesty, I can't really say what works better (or at all) and what doesn't—or which of all these various methods is responsible for which part of a successful performance (assuming that it is a success...).

9) *Let's return to the harpsichord. Traveling in Israel, I was astonished by how many people not only know about the instrument, but actually own one, and spend energy maintaining it. During a few weeks in your country I have seen more harpsichords in reasonable shape than in all of Sweden in over twenty years. Is this an expression of a general cultural interest in Israel, or is there something more special*

going on? How did the “harpsichord culture” evolve in your country? Where is it heading?

It is rather amazing, isn't it? If there is a simple explanation for this phenomenon, I don't know what it is. Part of it is that there is, indeed, something special in the Israeli musical culture. Having never actually checked the statistics, I am not sure how accurate this assessment would be, but it is very likely that Israel has more professional orchestras per capita than anywhere else in the world. The same seems to be true about the amount of classical music concerts and the numbers of concertgoers in relation to the total population. I cannot explain this phenomenon any better than I can explain the large number of harpsichords.

Music is definitely not a prestigious profession in this country, if remuneration is any indication. When we came to Israel from the then USSR nearly 40 years ago, a very well-known musician and fellow-new-immigrant told me that only in the Soviet Union were musicians paid less than in Israel. Now, 40 years later, music is still among the worst-paid sectors here. And yet, there seems to be no shortage of enthusiastic and talented young people yearning to make music their profession. Not surprisingly, this rubs off, at least to some extent, on the “harpsichord culture.”

I do feel, however, that we are probably over the peak. Fewer harpsichords have been ordered in recent years than 10 or 20 years ago. Moreover, most of the new instruments are ordered by professionals, not so much by amateurs, as it previously used to be. The “middle class” has less money than before, and harpsichords have become more expensive.

There seems to have been a “harpsichord boom” back in the 1980s and 1990s, and that is when most of the instruments you refer to were bought—many of them by professional or even amateur recorder players who wanted to play their Handel, Telemann, etc. accompanied by basso continuo played on a proper instrument. The younger generation can hardly afford this luxury. We also have larger numbers of good professional harpsichordists now than ever before, but the number of harpsichord students at the Academy is not growing—if anything, it declines. But then again, this might very well be just the phase of a wave.

10) How about other historical keyboard instruments: the clavichord, the fortepiano, the organ?

There are many fewer instruments of these kinds around. Unless I am mistaken, there are two or three clavichords in the country (which are not played regularly at all) and there may be five or six fortepianos. As for the organ—for a long time it was frowned upon in this country, as an instrument representing the church; in general, there used to be much less tolerance towards church music than, thankfully, there is today (performing the St. John or St. Matthew Passion would have been unthinkable as recently as 30 years ago; this is no longer so). So, there are now organ concerts in several churches in Jerusalem, in Jaffa and in some other places. There also are several (not many) chamber organs. In general, however, here, too, there is still much to be desired.

11) What place does teaching the harpsichord have in your day?

Not central enough, I'm afraid. It used to be a bit more, but—see my answer to your 9th question.

12) What are the five most important things you want your students to understand?

- That the harpsichord is not a percussion instrument, that it actually can sing.
- That the interaction between the plectrum and the string is an act of love; we have to feel the sensuality of it.
- That the most difficult thing about playing harpsichord is to realize how easy it really is; easy—in terms of the minimal level of muscular effort that is necessary to produce the sound. I find that the harpsichord's light action requires less physical work than just about anything else we do, and for most of us it is really hard to come to terms with such an unusual level of “non-work”; with the understanding of how little is little. If one uses too much muscle-power it is much more difficult to arrive at a truly relaxed, crisp and flexible manner of playing and to avoid clumsiness. The fringe benefit of it seems to be that one should never get physically tired while playing the harpsichord, being thus able to play for unlimited amounts of time. Now, isn't that the true image of paradise (or hell)?
- That in order to achieve what I said in the previous point, one needs to be fully aware of one's body and of any points of tension therein; of course, not only to be aware of the tension, but to learn how to (gently!)

get rid of it, how to relax; to know what part needs to be calm and relaxed (practically the whole body) and what parts should be, not tense, but alert (mainly the fingers).

- That playing the harpsichord is part of the entire culture—musical and general; Baroque opera, trio sonata, etc.—all these are almost as much “harpsichord repertoire” as the solo stuff. Moreover, harpsichord music (and, in fact, any music) needs to be put in its historical-cultural context, in order to be meaningful and relevant. And for that, we need to do our best to learn and understand this context.

13) We don't quite stop being teachers (or at least museum personnel) when playing harpsichord recitals. The audiences want to be eased into their task of listening to our music and our instrument. The way we play and the way we talk to them makes a difference. Would you agree with this statement? How do you address your audience? How do you shape your music in recitals? What are the most important things you want to get across when you play?

The way we play does, of course, make a difference. But isn't this true for any instrument and way of music making? Of course, there are some particularities about the harpsichord and its repertoire, and I'll return to these in a second. But in general, a concert is a concert is a concert; we need to be honest with the music we play (neither Frescobaldi, nor Couperin, or Mozart, or Debussy wrote their music for us to indulge in our little ego-trips!), and find ways to share with the listeners why we find this music exciting, interesting, expressive, and so on. This might also be my best answer to your previous question, about the most important things.

Learning a piece feels to me like a process in which, at some stage, the piece starts to communicate to the player, to tell him or her some very special things about itself, its own “story.” This “story” is told through rhythms, harmony, sonorities, forms, etc. Of course, the player needs to be able to understand that language. But just as with any good story that we read in a book, or see on stage or on screen, it is also the fruit of our own imagination, our own reconstruction of what we don't really hear, read, or see. And it isn't even always possible to draw a clear line between the work's “objective” mes-

sage (is there such a thing at all?) and what the performer reads into it (which is why music needs performers). In effect, the “story” that will be related to the listeners is that unique and evasive alloy of two imaginations: that of the composer and of the player.

So, the most important thing for me is to tell the story. I feel that this is, in the most general terms, what rhetoric is about. Now, do I want to communicate some part of that story to the audience, prior to playing? That very much depends on the circumstances. In general, I like talking to the audience. Even if it doesn't really “explain” much about what is going to happen during the actual performance, it still seems to help create some sort of trust between the listener and the musician, evoke the listener's curiosity about ‘that guy’ and what his story might be like. Rather than creating a distance between the Artist and his audience, it helps to show that both are in it together—because, ideally, they are... It is really the same in any kind of music making, I think, the harpsichord is no exception.

What is special about it, though? Well, although this has been changing over the years, I feel that the harpsichord still suffers from some dubious PR: we still hear about the instrument that “lacks dynamics” and the “two skeletons making love on a tin roof”; the instrument is called esoteric, old-fashioned; some people rehearse phrases such as “if Bach had only known the Steinway...” and similar pearls of prose and thought. If a violin recital is boring, it is the player's fault; if a harpsichord recital is boring, it is often made the fault of the instrument. I feel that a heavier responsibility lies on our shoulders than on those of the other musicians. If a listener doesn't enjoy a piano recital, he or she will probably look for alternative pianists. But if the poor recital was played on a harpsichord, that same listener (unless it is someone already acquainted with harpsichord culture) may be looking for an alternative instrument instead. So, we absolutely cannot afford *not* to tell a fascinating story. But, as previously mentioned, it needs to be a “true” story, not something contrived in order to please the audience. It needs to be a story that the player believes with all his or her soul. To rephrase Couperin, your story can only be believed by others if you believe in it yourself!

David, many thanks for taking the time for this interview!



AN INTERVIEW WITH GREGOR BERGMANN, ORGAN AND CLAVICHORD MAKER

For many years, Gregor Bergmann has been an ever-cheerful presence at the GOArt organ research workshop. Gregor is also known to be a meticulous and excellent craftsman, and many of the outstanding features of GOArt's organs, have, in fact, passed through his hands at some point. He recently set up shop as an independent builder of clavichords and small organs—a good occasion to ask him a few questions.

—Tilman Skowroneck

1) *Gregor, I first met you in the GOArt organ research workshop. Later you had a position at a notable German firm of organ builders. Now we find you back in your own cozy workshop, building, as we can read on your website, “small organs and clavichords” under your own steam. Tell me how this change happened.*

Including my apprenticeship I worked for almost 20 years in various shops, profiting from the skills of the shop's craftsmen. I also benefited from the projects I participated in, some of which were beyond the realm of ordinary organ building. Even though I was lucky enough to work in almost all areas of the building process I missed more and more the challenge of going through the whole process of planning, building and finishing an instrument myself. The desire to do things my own way grew stronger and stronger over time—I guess it was time for me to be my own master.

2) *It is easy to guess that it was your time in Göteborg that infected you with the “clavichord bug.” Was there a specific point in your career when it said “click” somehow?*

The first clavichord I encountered was an array of keys and various parts spread out on a workbench, when an apprentice in the shop where I trained was building a Wählström from scratch using a purchased drawing.

Sadly I never heard it play—it might have said “click” then—but I have a nice picture of him and that happy-looking bench in my mind's eye.

There were two concerts that moved me deeply, both during an Organ Academy in Göteborg about the time I started working there. One was Joel Speerstra playing beautifully on his Gerstenberg pedal clavichord, and the other Harald Vogel playing on a Friederici copy built in the GOArt shop. I was impressed with Joel's intellectual approach to building instruments, and both his and GOArt's clavichord workshop's enthusiasm were contagious!

3) *What part of the making/finishing/having finished the instrument appeals to you the most?*

I'm quite content with all of it but I especially like starting to build the instrument. No mistake to be seen for miles, everything is brilliantly arranged in your head and you cruise along nicely, often thanks to modern equipment. The difficult part comes later in the process when it's almost done. An incredible amount of time seems necessary to get the instrument better and better. Here you need stamina to carry you through, and at some point you need to let go, otherwise you'll never get it done.

To dedicate as much time to each instrument as it needs seems to be one of the great trade secrets. I was surprised to see how much time even experienced organ builders need to get the effect they are looking for.

4) *When I was a student, many people still saw the clavichord as a bit of an oddity of the 18th century: an essential one perhaps, but nevertheless difficult to make sense of in modern musical practice. Nowadays, people play recitals on it (albeit in small venues) and organists have accepted the instrument as a practice tool. From the builder's perspective,*



Gregor Bergmann. Photo: Stefanie Bergmann.



Clavichord after Hubert 1789, detail. Photo: Moo Fricke.

is there a sustainable market? And if so, what kind of clavichords do people want, or need?

Yes, I do think there is a market and I hope that I will find my little corner. As to what people want or need, that seems to vary a lot. Some just fall in love with an instrument you happen to have with you. Others need a specific style or period represented. I wish people would trust their own instincts more and get used to an instrument before judging it. An exhibition with instruments from many different builders is a good place to do that. You will find that the same Silbermann copied by different builders will sound profoundly different. So it is important to find a modern builder that suits you. I refer people to other builders when I sense they will be happier with their style of building.

5) Since you spent a good amount of time during the past decade and a half in a research workshop, I am curious about the building principles you subscribe to, and what instrument types you have built to date.

I think an instrument makes a strong first impression with a blend of sound, feel and appearance. The best way to learn how to achieve the sound and feel you want is by apprenticing with a builder from the Golden Age of instrument making. It can be especially worthwhile to “blindly” copy those little details that you might be tempted to approach in a different way, because information lies hidden in the process of making that can best be recovered by reproducing in that same way.

The appearance of an instrument is of great importance, I think, because of the atmosphere it creates for both the player and the listener. I build and finish my

instruments so they will age appropriately; that is, they will develop a patina very much like what we admire so much in original instruments. So far I have built three fretted clavichords, copying Hubert’s instrument from 1789 in Nuremberg, and rebuilt a Gerstenberg lower manual clavichord, which is unfretted. After finishing those instruments, I started planning and building a chest organ, which will be used with violin and cello.

6) Clavichord builders often seem to be a rather quiet crowd. There may be a connection to the sound their instruments produce—perhaps it is in poor taste to defend the qualities of a clavichord in a vociferous manner. In that world, how do you make yourself heard when starting a new workshop? Can you tell us something about efficient “clavichord networking”?



Clavichord after Hubert 1789. Photo: Moo Fricke.

The crowd has sensitive ears and is rather nicely organized. For instance, the Clavichord Society in Germany has two annual meetings, including an exhibition of instruments. This is a great place to meet people and let them see and evaluate your work. And since our work produces an instrument, the best way people can put trust in you is to see, hear and play it. I built a clavichord and took it with me to exhibitions. I also invited musicians passing through town to come and see it, took it with me on trips and arranged meetings. I have also tried to get local pianists to warm up to the clavichord, but this has proved more difficult. I wonder why pianists tend to see the clavichord as an inferior being; it would suit many rooms and repertoires much better than a piano.

7) Let’s turn to the small organs. They’re tricky to make, because of the limited space inside; also there is quite a lot of

competition in that sector of the market. On the other hand, a nice-sounding continuo organ is rare, and it is a lovely thing to have: it can be a real support for the continuo player and the other musicians. What goals do you have when making such an instrument? What does it take to make an affordable and good continuo organ?

It takes a good concept and many hours of groundwork and experience to make an affordable and good continuo organ. Sadly, any prototype will cost either the maker or the customer. The goals are of course to make it sound nice, look nice, and behave as well in Kiruna as it would in Tennessee. But as you say, because of the



Gregor in contemplation of his present building project.
Photo: Stefanie Bergmann.

limited space this is difficult. For example, open pipes are very sensitive to their surroundings and a pipe that works beautifully outside the organ will not like the rush-hour-tram-like situation inside that organ.

8) Do you have any historical examples for this work?

I follow historical examples in details, such as pipe construction, windchest layout, or the design of the case. This way I can make sure that a time-tested design will be used, and simultaneously learn directly from the old masters by doing as they did. But in the end the instrument is a concoction of the customer's wishes and my solutions. As for continuo organs, I do not think it is necessary to refer to a certain historical instrument since most of them were not used in the way we do these days.

9) What is more essential for this type of instrument: to listen to the wishes of the customer, or to try to convince the customer of a certain concept?

I think for the builder it is both more challenging and more instructive to listen to the wishes of the customer. The customer is an important source of input and feedback for the shop. This tends to improve the result, and the customer will also be happier—which is important for small organs, since they usually are personal instruments. Obviously there is a line that you might not want to cross but in that case you can either discuss it with the customer or recommend another builder who would suit him better.

10) What projects are you working on right now?

I'm at the stamina stage with my chest organ and after that I am looking forward to building a portative. That is turning out to be an interesting project, between a curious customer and a curious builder, due to the revival the portative is experiencing.

Thank you Gregor for this interview.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Ensemble Desmarest

An announcement from the Ensemble Desmarest, directed by Ronan Khalil, finalist and winner of the Audience Prize at the Westfield Center International Harpsichord Competition 2012:

Ensemble Desmarest is pleased to announce its new website, <http://www.ensembledesmarest.com/> as well as its new recording “An Ode on the death of Mr. Henry Purcell” by John Blow, which is available for free at the link below. A special thanks to Camille Frachet for the sound recording.

[Download the complete album: An Ode on the death of Mr. Henry Purcell](#)

Edinburgh Conference on Historical Keyboard Music

Andrew Woolley from the University of Edinburgh informs me that the second International Conference on Historical Keyboard Music will be held in Edinburgh on 19–21 July 2013. For further details, see the website, www.ichkm.music.ed.ac.uk.



CHARLES PAINE FISHER'S COLLECTION OF KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE

Barbara and Thomas Wolf are pleased to offer instruments from the collection of the late noted American scholar, inventor, and collector Charles Paine Fisher. These instruments have been seen by only a handful of musicians and builders in the last forty years.

Among the keyboard instruments is a fine restored 2 x 8' single-manual harpsichord by Jacob Kirckman made in 1770.



A very important grand piano by Johann Schantz, c. 1800 (FF–g^{'''}, moderator on a handstop), is also extremely handsome. There is a Broadwood square, c. 1809, original to Mr. Fisher's historic house.

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Wind offerings include: bassoons by Wood (c. 1800) and Pffretschner (mid-19th century); three early clarinets, including one by Albert; half a dozen flutes, with examples by Palanca, Meyer, and Godfroy (c. 1865); and two piccolos (18th and 19th centuries).

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<http://westfield.org/donate/>

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