

# Westfield

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*Tilman Skowroneck, Editor*



A very warm welcome to the fall edition of the Westfield Newsletter. We open this issue by remembering our colleague and friend, the distinguished harpsichordist, conductor, scholar, and Westfield member, Alan Curtis, who passed away suddenly in Florence on July 15.

Alan was a frequent visitor in the home of my parents, and my memories of this tall, always smiling man who patiently tried to converse with me in German belong to my earliest childhood recollections. Later, Alan became the single most important influence for me when I began searching out the French repertoire for the harpsichord, and we always stayed in friendly contact. I am very grateful to Matthew Dirst for contributing his touching obituary.

In what follows, the Westfield Center's new program coordinator, Kiko Nobusawa, has kindly agreed to introduce herself to our readers. Welcome to the team, Kiko! This newsletter contains two festival reports: my own from Westfield's *Forte/Piano* and Gail Archer's from *The Muse's Voice: A Musforum Conference*. An announcement for our co-sponsored spring event, *Keyboard Networks*, follows as well as information about the Organ Scholarship 2016/17 of the Académie d'Orgue de Fribourg and the International Organ Competition Cavallé-Coll.

—*Tilman Skowroneck*



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## REMEMBERING ALAN CURTIS (1934–2015)

BY MATTHEW DIRST

The recent passing of Alan Stanley Curtis brought a sudden end to a remarkable life, one filled with notable achievement as a harpsichordist, musicologist, and conductor. Alan's career was still in full swing when he collapsed on the morning of July 15, 2015 on his way to a Florence hospital, and though his art endures in various publications and in a number of superb recordings, those whose lives he touched directly—including this former student—will miss his genial nature and professional generosity, his penetrating musical mind and keen criticisms, and those always twinkling eyes.

Known around the world for his work with *Il Complesso Barocco*, a group he founded in 1977, Alan had a great and abiding passion for all things Italian, from great food to Monteverdi operas. His many decades on the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley left an indelible mark on generations of students and engendered an abiding enthusiasm on the West Coast for period instruments. I was fortunate to study with him while working on my PhD at Stanford, which coincided with his final six or seven years in Berkeley, when he generally taught spring semesters only and spent the rest of the year in Europe. Our lessons took place at his Berkeley Hills home, whose grand and airy central room boasted no less than five instruments, each more gorgeous than the last: two double-manual harpsichords (after Dulcken and Mietke) plus a spinet by Martin Skowronek, a Walter fortepiano, and an Italian chamber organ. The large dining table served mostly as repository for Alan's many projects, though in those piles of paper he always knew where to find whatever he needed.

The house in Berkeley, like his homes in Venice and Florence, reflected Alan's particular sensibilities about art, antiques, and instruments. Lessons typically combined professional and personal chatter as well as an ongoing musical conversation. His ability to remember, even in long pieces, exactly how I had delivered individual passages made quite an impression; it seemed uncanny at first, until I learned how to listen closely to the sound I was making on the instrument and react accordingly. His musical imagination, which to an impressionable graduate student seemed boundless, was (and continues to be) an inspiration. Crucially for me during those formative years, Alan demonstrated how to combine first-rate per-



Alan Curtis in 2006 at his home in Florence.  
Photo by Frédéric Raspail.

formance with quietly pioneering scholarship in a model (if unconventional) career.

Alan's success as a performer and scholar owed much to an education that put him in the right place at the right time. Thanks to a Fulbright grant, Alan interrupted his doctoral studies at the University of Illinois to spend two years in Amsterdam studying with Gustav Leonhardt, whose lively studio in the late 1950s already included a few other Americans: James Weaver and Leonard Raver, just to name two. Leonhardt served as a kind of cultural beacon for this lucky first generation of pupils, who piled regularly into the back of his Fiat to visit historic organs, museum collections, and instrument builders—and, of course, to attend many concerts.

Soulima Stravinsky, Alan's principal teacher in Urbana, cultivated a similarly deep sense of cultural engagement among his students. Alan's involvement with the music of Stravinsky père—hardly what one might expect for someone who cut his teeth on Sweelinck and Monteverdi—led to some surprising opportunities: in the 1980s he was engaged by La Fenice to conduct performances of *The Rake's Progress*, though he was replaced on the podium before the run opened. For this storied Venetian house and for other companies around the world, Alan prepared and led productions of dozens of 17th- and 18th-century operas, from Monteverdi and Cavalli through Handel and Gluck. He once confided to me that Jomelli was as late as

he dared go with *Il Complesso Barocco*, but in retrospect he may simply have been hedging his bets.

His first major effort at UC Berkeley was a seminal production in the mid 1960s of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, for which Alan commissioned a new Italian harpsichord with split sharps from William Dowd and the first American-made chitarrone. A subsequent restaging of *Poppea* in Amsterdam, with the collaboration of a gifted Italian stage director and sensational period costumes, confirmed Alan's long association with this work (his edition of it remains essential). His Sweelinck book, based on his Illinois dissertation, is still a great source of information on the keyboard works, while his more recent reconstruction of Vivaldi's *Ercole su'l Termodonte* testifies to his persistence: it took some 30 years to track down virtually all the arias,

reorchestrate many of them, and invent appropriate recitatives from the surviving libretto.

Alan's ability to make useful connections also extended to personal relationships: he practiced the art of cultivation, in the best possible sense of the word. Crucial players on the Curtis "team" included American author and fellow expat Donna Leon and lutenist Pier Luigi (Piero) Ciapparelli, Alan's longtime partner, among other leading artists. He will be profoundly missed by many, especially those who had the good fortune to know and work with him. *Arrivederci, Alan!*

Alan Curtis will be remembered at the Westfield Center's *Keyboard Days* at the Berkeley Early Music Festival, June 10–11, 2016.



### A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: A NEW PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

This past August the Westfield Center welcomed (forte) pianists from all over the world for our conference and festival, *Forte/Piano*, about which Tilman writes in detail below. It was an exciting and memorable event, whose success was due in large part to the extraordinary talents of our program coordinator, the brilliant Damien Mahiet. As Damien now moves on to a job in Boston, we owe him a great debt of thanks for his work for Westfield over the past year. Wonderfully, he has agreed to join our Board of Trustees, so we will still have the benefit of his knowledge of the organisation, and his dedication to its mission, for some years to come.

And it is with real excitement that I can announce that we have been able to hire an extraordinarily well-qualified replacement for Damien in Kiko Nobusawa (about whom more below). Kiko has been my colleague in the Cornell music department for a long time as the director of the

Cornell Concert Series, and she brings to the Westfield office superb energy, imagination, experience, and musical knowledge. We are in good hands. Welcome, Kiko!

Finally, with the arrival of November comes the time to start thinking about the renewal of Westfield memberships for the calendar year 2016. We will be sending out renewal invitations this month, by email, and hope you will find the time to click the appropriate buttons to sign up for the coming year. With all sorts of activities planned for next year and beyond, the Westfield Center relies on all of you not just for financial support, but also for your thoughts, ideas, and participation. This is an extraordinary group of musicians, scholars, builders, thinkers, listeners, and long may it continue to grow.

—Annette Richards

## A FEW WORDS FROM WESTFIELD'S NEW PROGRAM COORDINATOR KIKO NOBUSAWA

Many thanks, first of all, to everyone for welcoming me so warmly to Westfield. It feels like a homecoming of sorts, since I first became aware of historical keyboard study as a student at Oberlin and have—despite various life-and-work detours—always circled back to reengage in some way or another. Now that circumstances allow me to focus fully on this *leitmotif*, I figure it must be fate but happily so!

The keyboard theme also seems to go hand-in-hand with Cornell University for me: upon becoming seriously interested in “period performance practice” (i.e. the fortepiano) during its inception heydays in the United States, I applied to and was accepted for graduate study at Cornell. I chose to go to the University of Chicago instead, however, and therein ensued the first big detour of musicological *drang* and prodigal pianos. Escaping Chicago for the calmer, gentler tides of life in Vermont, whom should I reencounter at the university there but Malcolm Bilson, with leather-hammered instrument in tow?

In short, fast-forward to 2004 and I finally make my uphill way to Cornell—but still on an alternate route for 11 years, during which I managed the university's Concert Series. This one was admittedly quite the grand detour, and I will be forever grateful for the amazing experiences and privilege entrusted to me toward bringing world-class artists to campus. But the most memorable presentations occurred when the Cornell Concert Series



partnered effectively with music department faculty and students and other organizations, such as for Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Tamara Stefanovich's participation in *Environs Messiaen* last spring. Said occasion drove home for me the Westfield mission and its possibilities, and so with Damien Mahiet's continued assistance and Annette Richards's energetic direction, I look forward to taming the office-paper chase here and helping to navigate our future adventures.

Tokiko (Kiko) Nobusawa

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## CONFERENCE REPORT: *FORTE/PIANO, A FESTIVAL CELEBRATING PIANOS IN HISTORY*

AUGUST 5–9, 2015, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

BY TILMAN SKOWRONECK

Dashing in and out of Westfield's conferences on a relatively tight schedule leads to the impression that things just go on while I'm away. “Cornell is truly a place where the piano-playing never stops,” I thought while listening (slightly out of breath—conquering Libe Slope in haste is also part of the Cornell experience) to the half-missed first part of *Forte/Piano's* opening concert. The concert was, incidentally, one of two recitals on the festival's first day—a joint recital of three pianists, with repertoire spanning from Beethoven's early middle period (the “Eroica Variations,” op. 35) to Schumann (*Carnaval*, op. 9).

Westfield's *Forte/Piano* festival was the brainchild of

Elizabeth and Malcolm Bilson. The organizing committee included Annette Richards, Tom Beghin, Roger Moseley, Andrew Willis, David Breitman, and Penelope Crawford. Practical matters were admirably taken care of by the indefatigable program coordinator, Damien Mahiet, and his team.

Of course, the by-any-standards exceptional event soon unofficially turned into a celebration of the Bilsons themselves, their unwavering enthusiasm for historical pianos, their eager support of generation upon generation of students, and Malcolm's musicianship. This appreciation and gratitude was the matter of former students'





The fortepianos are behind this door!  
Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

recollections during conversations between events; the festival itself will be remembered as a key event in the history of the fortepiano's revival.

The festival opened on Wednesday with a workshop for young pianists given by Blaise Bryski, followed by the aforementioned joint recital and an evening solo recital. Each of its three full days included lectures, three concerts (including two "keynote" evening recitals), and a "Builders & Performers" lecture-demonstration. Kristian Bezuidenhout and Alexei Lubimov each taught a master class. For the concluding Sunday, two lectures, a panel discussion, and two concerts were scheduled.

The concerts, lectures, and master classes featured pianos from the instrument's entire history, from the early Florentine piano to new music performed on concert grands aided by various kinds of electronic equipment. Most of the concerts were devoted to an impressive collection of "brown pianos" (as they were lovingly called) from the Classical and Romantic periods and their repertoire. Very many pianists were not only present but actually performed, thanks to the three-pianist recital format. Most strikingly, the quality of the playing was unbelievably high throughout. The

same can be said of the quality of the 16 pianos present, a wide-ranging mix of old and new, copies and originals. Special mention also deserves to be made of the fact that the instruments were kept impeccably in tune throughout the event.

Wednesday evening's performer was Kristian Bezuidenhout, who played C. P. E. Bach and W. A. Mozart on a copy of an 1805 Walter piano by Paul McNulty. A somewhat late model for this repertoire, to be sure, but an instrument equipped with a sound that made sense in the medium-large hall, especially in the Mozart selections.

Bezuidenhout plays with breathtaking accuracy and cultivates an utterly refined approach to tone and dynamic shading. His use of the knee levers for the damping and the moderator was judicious, letting the instrument sound at its best, even if it seemed somewhat liberal relative to the composers on the program. His interpretations are marked by strong musical convictions and great concentration: no matter how virtuosic a passage, he has energy to spare to carefully shape beginnings and endings; no matter the complexity of a sequence, he will take care of its dynamic nuances. Wrong notes do not remotely enter the picture here, which, on a light and relatively shallow Viennese action, is a marvel in and of itself.

The lecture session on Thursday, "Past and Present Meanings of Performance Practice," was opened by Malcolm Bilson with a panoramic talk titled "50 Years of Early Pianos: How Far Have We Come, Where Should We Be Going?" Bilson focused on the importance of understanding various kinds of historical pianos and of using them well. He also addressed the musical flexibility



Simon, Blüthner, McNulty-Walter, and Érard pianos await their turn backstage.



present in many historical recordings and the question of how to “intelligently” make use of such recordings.

Rebecca Cypess, assisted by Yiheng Yang at the piano, followed with a lecture about fortepiano/harpsichord duos and the 18th-century practice of ad hoc arrangements of other music for two keyboards. Tom Beghin introduced his multidisciplinary project of playing Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata—a fascinating lecture that combined questions of text and technology with practice statistics and slow-motion videos showing fast repetition in a Viennese piano action.

The lunchtime concert at Barnes Hall began with an entertaining and virtuosic four-hand Moscheles performance by Tom Beghin and Andrew Willis. Ryan McEvoy McCullough and Andrew Zhou followed with music by Georg Friedrich Haas, Rand Steiger, and John Luther Adams for piano and electronics—the most modern feature of the festival. McCullough’s focused but relaxed approach was a great help for the listeners in this complex repertoire. A lecture-demonstration by Edward Swenson, with gorgeous, polished performances by Stefania Neonato, on the piano-maker Anton Graf (and using Swenson’s ca. 1827 Graf original) followed.

The master class with Kristian Bezuidenhout revealed one of the “silent” themes of the conference: the use of the damper pedal in various musical styles and on various instruments. Bezuidenhout stated that he “felt strongly” about the issue and demonstrated various pedalings in their function as reactions to the resonance of the instrument at hand. To him, it makes no sense to “make a deliberate point of not using the pedal,” that is, to accept an instrument’s possibly dry sound, when a simple movement of the knee easily helps to enhance the tone.



A colorful tree on the way between the festival venues.

Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

His demonstrations were well thought-out and—within the framework of his argument—convincing. The topic was revived in other lectures later on in the festival and addressed in contrasting yet equally compelling tones. Bezuidenhout also gave much attention to tone production and talked about “reigning in” one’s attack when playing on “loud and grippy” pianos.

Thursday’s evening concert began with Jiayan Sun, who played a few Beethoven bagatelles from opp. 119 and 126 and the last sonata, op. 111, on a Viennese piano from 1835. Sun is a pianist of great concentration and superb confidence: to start a program with the fiddly “Beethoven-trills” of op. 119 no. 7 is not for the faint of heart. His interpretation of the last sonata belongs to the best late Beethoven I have heard in concert, both in terms of architecture and clarity.

Hardy Rittner, who specializes in Romantic performances on period pianos (and is portrayed by Sezi Sekir and reviewed by Stefania Neonato in Westfield’s *Keyboard Perspectives* VI, pp. 133–52), played three preludes and the four impromptus by Chopin on an 1868 Érard. These were beautiful and thought-provoking readings of well-known repertoire. Interestingly, Rittner demonstrated the very kind of rhythmic freedom present on very early recordings that Malcolm Bilson had addressed in his opening lecture; the results in terms of rhythmic flexibility and controlled asynchrony between the hands was very attractive to listen to. The four impromptus fared especially well in Rittner’s impeccable and occasionally conceptually-daring approach. The third one, op. 51, received an engaging reading that revealed many details in the right hand’s various voices and great clarity in the left



Kristian Bezuidenhout teaching. Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

hand. The concluding famous C-sharp Minor Impromptu, op. 66, was played with superb technical command.

Anthony Romaniuk concluded the evening with music by Liszt's "American pupils" William Mason and Edward MacDowell (adding Alexander Siloti's arrangement of a Bach Adagio at the end). He played on Cornell's newly restored Blüthner from 1876. Romaniuk plays with great charm, flair, and precision, and he appears to have a great sense of stage presence and, incidentally, humor. The previously unheard Blüthner piano, a very fine instrument in excellent shape, was a good match for the exuberant character of this repertoire.

Friday's lecture session started with Erin Helyard's fascinating overview of the history of modern research into pianoforte pedaling, which added substantial nuance to the discussion that had started with Bezuidenhout's remarks on the previous day. Sandra Rosenblum, too, addressed the pedal in her lecture; the pedal markings in Chopin's submissions to his various editors reveal how the composer responded to different kinds of pianos of different national styles. Maria Rose concluded the session with a lecture about Dussek and his Parisian contemporaries.



Sandra Rosenblum. Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

The lunchtime concert featured the piano as a collaborative instrument in a program with Mozart sonatas for violin and piano (Lucy Russell, violin, and Sezi Seskir, fortepiano) and Schubert songs (Martha Guth, soprano, and Penelope Crawford at an original Graf piano). The afternoon was devoted to early Florentine pianos, with lectures by harpsichord and piano-maker David Sutherland and Antonio Simón. The afternoon concert

was shared between Kristina Kobb (Schubert) and Erin Helyard (Clementi).

Alexei Lubimov played the Friday-evening recital, with selections from Debussy's two books of *Préludes* and *L'isle joyeuse*, Stravinsky's Piano Sonata from 1924, and a number of pieces by Erik Satie. The entertaining texts from Satie's *Sports et divertissements* (1914) were exquisitely recited by Gary Mouldsdale, to the amusement of the audience.



Alexei Lubimov addresses the audience.

Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

Lubimov played the entire program on the 1876 Blüthner with a sensitive but quite compact approach. His playing is a study of controlled forte playing, probing the piano's boundaries without ever exceeding them—his tone is very full, but never harsh. Lubimov's technique is relaxed and stunningly precise. His tone projection is unflinching, while his stage appearance is modest, almost self-effacing.

It is difficult to imagine a more convincing and both stylistically and technically secure Debussy (notwithstanding an elegantly "saved" memory lapse in *L'isle joyeuse*). The canonical touchstones in the *Préludes* ("La cathédrale engloutie," "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest," and "Feux d'artifice") that tend to become messy or clangorous, or both, could here be heard in a version where sound-cloud and clarity, drive and gesture were in perfect balance. Lubimov's Satie, likewise, was balanced—between seriousness and tongue-in-cheek absurdity.

Stravinsky's Sonata from 1924, of course, received a more sober treatment by comparison. The Blüthner piano, while not perhaps being the ultimate choice for the French pieces, was a fabulous match to Lubimov's full tone. Lubimov played Chopin's Barcarolle as an encore, again with a big tone and gesture.





Concertgoers with Jiayan Sun and Zvi Meniker in the center gather around Cornell's Blüthner. Photo by Tilman Skowronek.

Saturday, the last full day of the festival, began with two lectures about 18th-century piano culture (one by myself and one by Carmel Raz), followed by a master class with Alexei Lubimov. This was a refreshingly nuts-and-bolts session (Haydn, Schubert, and Chopin) in which questions of musical texture, structure, and harmony were balanced with considerations of timing, voicing, and listening to oneself.

The “Builders & Performers” session of the day was taken care of by Paul McNulty and Viviana Sofronitsky, who talked about and demonstrated various recent building projects of the McNulty workshop.

The lunch concert (on a Graf copy by McNulty) was another shared recital: Shin Hwang played a thoughtful and technically fluent *Kreisleriana* (Schumann). Michael Pecak then presented less well-known works: a beautiful and subtly played nocturne by Maria Szymanowska, a set of variations by Karol Kurpinsky, and the virtuosic *Momentary Bad Dream* and a fantasy by Franciszek Lessel. Petra Somlai concluded the concert with the Schubert's three posthumous *Klavierstücke*, D. 946, which she played with a magnificent grasp for gesture and shadings, and absolute abandon.

At the heart of the festival was the eagerly awaited two-part Reunion Concert that staged the seven pianists who, 20 years ago, first performed and recorded all of Beethoven's pia-

no sonatas on period pianos: Malcolm Bilson and his six former students Tom Beghin, David Breitman, Ursula Dütschler, Bart van Oort, Zvi Meniker, and Andrew Willis. At the time, this project was a milestone. It is still influential for pianists and scholars today. A large and enthusiastic crowd of festival participants, fortepiano supporters, and local concertgoers assembled for the concert.

Ursula Dütschler was first on stage, with the Sonata op. 27 no. 1 (“Quasi una fantasia”)—a sonata that perfectly matched the general sense of expectancy in the audience, played on the McNulty-Walter with great suspense and clarity.

The next program point was a leap forward in time with the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, op. 106, in a contemporary arrangement by Carl Friedrich Ebers for four hands. Tom Beghin and Andrew Willis joined forces behind an 1835 Simon piano for this piece. This large and important work did not become less challenging to listen to, but it was instructive, occasionally even entertaining, to watch the two soloists negotiate the territory around the middle of the keyboard. The arrangement struck me as competent, even if its choreographic complexity raised the suspicion that it was just as difficult to perform as the original version for one pianist. This performance concluded the first half of the program.

Zvi Meniker began the second half with the “Tempest” Sonata, op. 31 no. 2, played assertively in the forte



The “Cornell Seven,” 20 years later. Photo by Ellen Zaslav.



passages and with a very lovely dreamlike pianissimo recitative in the first movement.

The next performer was David Breitman. He addressed the audience in a short talk, expressing his gratitude to Malcolm Bilson for his never failing support and help, and mentioning how special it felt to hear the “Cornell Seven” together again. Afterwards, he played the Sonata op. 110 on the Simon piano. His interpretation was remarkable for its great attention to detail, overarching clarity, and long structural breadth. His execution of repeated tied notes following Beethoven’s original changing fingerings was exquisite.

The final fugue was marked by unforced and clear polyphony, and the final climax became an integral part of the composition rather than a mere concluding crescendo passage that tested the limitations of the instrument.

Bart van Oort, too, addressed the audience before he played, praising the festival and suggesting that this was “the greatest gathering of fortepianists in history.” He then played the Sonata op. 27 no. 2 (“Moonlight”), with a beautiful Adagio sostenuto, calmly but in true alla breve tempo, followed by an Allegretto with a convincingly slower, somewhat folksy, trio section, and an impetuous Presto.

Malcolm Bilson occupied the place of honor as the last performer of the evening. After a charming few words, he offered an astoundingly warm and meditative reading of op. 109. Bilson’s unhurried performance, full

of knowledge, inspiration, and wisdom, was one of the highlights of the entire festival. An enthusiastic audience thanked the artists with prolonged applause.

Two lectures on Sunday morning addressed improvisation. Gili Loftus talked about Clara Schumann and her habit of improvising in concert, and Shaena Weitz brilliantly portrayed the short-lived French music periodical *Le Pianiste* of the 1830s and its criticism of “codified” pianism and a “monochromatic” style of improvising.

The conclusion of the festival’s lectures was marked by a panel discussion. The seven panelists, finishing with Malcolm Bilson, in turn gave their personal view on “Teaching Pianos in Universities and Conservatories.” The focus of most talks was how the “brown” or “little” piano was, could, or should be integrated into piano departments and situated in relationship to performance-practice studies. An audience discussion concluded the session.

This last day’s early afternoon concert featured a wide variety of music. On the 1868 Érard, Frédéric Lacroix performed the variation cycle *Hexameron*, a joint composition by Liszt, Thalberg, Pixis, Herz, Czerny, and Chopin. Some of this eclectic music is very virtuosic, and with Lacroix it was in astoundingly competent hands. Liv Glaser, eminent Norwegian pianist, then set out to play various selections from Grieg’s oeuvre on the Blüthner, which, however, developed a technical problem during her first piece. Soon several gentlemen crowded around



Festival participants. Photo by Ellen Zaslav.

the sick instrument, at which point Glaser, glancing back at the scene, confided to the audience “I wish I were a piano.” While pianos were exchanged, Glaser entertained the audience with her sharp wit and abundant charm. She then concluded her program on the Érard in a grand manner and to great applause.

The last piece on the program was Brahms’s Horn Trio, op. 40, played by Lucy Russell, violin, R.J. Kelley, nat-



Liv Glaser, with Paul McNulty, Malcolm Bilson, and Zvi Meniker behind the piano. Photo by Tilman Skowroneck.

ural horn, and Mike Lee on the (interestingly, half-closed) Viennese piano by Simon. With the (in comparison to modern instruments) softer piano and natural horn, many subtle tone colors emerged, especially in the beautifully played Adagio.

The final concert of the festival was another anniversary concert, celebrating Alexander Scriabin and Jean Sibelius. It was shared between Matthew Bengtson and Tuija Hakkila (Sibelius Academy). Bengtson played selections from Scriabin’s *Préludes*, *Poèmes*, *Études*, some other small pieces, and the Tenth Sonata, op. 70. For me, Bengtson’s meticulous yet rhythmically flexible interpretation and his stunning virtuosity were the last impressions from the conference. Unfortunately, I had to miss Hakkila’s part of the concert, which I afterwards heard was outstanding in every way.

Thanks to Malcolm and Elizabeth Bilson and all the people who planned this extraordinary festival and who performed or spoke on it. My special thanks to Annette Richards for inviting me to write this report (and to play with her little dog, Pascale).

## CONFERENCE REPORT: *THE MUSE’S VOICE*, A MUSFORUM CONFERENCE

JUNE 19–20, 2015, NEW YORK CITY

BY GAIL ARCHER

Musforum, the network for women organists, held its first conference, *The Muse’s Voice*, in New York City on June 19th and 20th, 2015. The conference took place at four churches that boast women as music director and organist: West End Collegiate Church, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, The Church of the Transfiguration and St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Featured artists were women organists, composers, and conductors from across the United States and Canada, and many of the programs included works by international women composers. The conference was made possible in part by a generous grant from Barnard College, Columbia University.

The events began at noon on June 19th, with a keynote address by Susan Ferré, who currently serves as music director of Music in the Great North Woods (a nonprofit organization) and as director of music and organist at St. Barnabas Church in Gorham, NH. In her inspiring address, Ms. Ferré spoke about her early experiences with sacred music, listening to African-American

children singing hymns in a tiny schoolhouse in Ohio. Moving to Texas for her college years, she pointed with pride to the many women who held prominent positions as college and church musicians in Texas and Oklahoma, Helen Hewitt at North Texas, Dora Poteet at Southern Methodist University, and Joyce Jones at Baylor. Moving to Paris for advanced studies with Jean Langlais, Ms. Ferré encountered modern French masters: Darius Milhaud, Andre Marchal, and Olivier Messiaen. Her experiences shaped her professional approach to the problems and prejudice that women organists face in the modern world. She suggested that fairness for all needs to become our goal: “The ‘token female’ becomes the ‘smart choice’ for the common good.” Women need to use data about searches, salaries, and management to drive our argument for equity in the workplace. We need to search for beauty, and then communicate that joy and beauty with fearless determination. “The role of the artist is transcendent: non-rational forces which are essential to being whole as a



human being. This is not quantifiable, but able to express grief, beauty, love, to struggle with our own humanity, our own mortality, not empirically measurable, but the search for meaning comes through art, which has origins in all religious expression, fused with art, poetry and music.”

Following a delicious and convivial luncheon, the afternoon performances featured Canadian organist Karen Holmes and a song cycle by composer Pamela Decker for piano, soprano, and dancer. Ms. Holmes delved into the French Canadian tradition with lively, short organ works from an anonymous 17th-century manuscript, *Livre d'orgue de Montreal*. Her program included *Courtes Pieces*, Vol. VII by the fine Canadian composer Rachel Laurin, and the *Chromatic Partita* by Ruth Watson Henderson. Pamela Decker wrote the poetry for her song cycle, *Haven: Songs of Mystery and of Memory*, and played the piano as accompanist for soprano Katherine Byrnes and dancer Clare Elise Hancock. The hour-long work has 14 songs, some for soprano and piano alone, and others choreographed by the dancer. The performers used the whole space, having cleared the altar area to take advantage of the various heights of the front of the sanctuary at West End Collegiate Church. The music and dance combined beautifully to express the color, emotion, and elegance of the poetry.

Moving to Emmanuel Lutheran Church on Manhattan's East Side, all of us enjoyed a wine-and-cheese hour prior to the evening performance by harpsichordist Alexandra Dunbar and violinist Karen Dekker. Music director Gwendolyn Toth very kindly provided her large two-manual harpsichords for the performance. Ms. Dunbar and Ms. Dekker offered a splendid early-music program with selections by Bach, Couperin, Biber, and Corelli. The ensemble playing was perfectly coordinated, as these brilliant musicians work together regularly. Their rhythmic energy, precise articulation, and flawless technique made the repertoire come alive, both in the poignant slow movements and in the spirited finales.

Our second day began early in the morning on June 20th with a varied program on the Fisk organ at the Church of the Transfiguration by Christa Rakich. Ms. Rakich had arranged a Sonata in F for flute and basso continuo by Anna Amalia, Princess of Prussia, for organ solo. The three-movement work is full of late Baroque verve and humor, and worked very well indeed as a piece for organ alone. Ms. Rakich juxtaposed chorale preludes by Johannes Brahms and Ethel Smyth on the tune “O Traurigkeit, O Herzeleid” and then contributed her own composition, *Hommage a' Pachelbel*. The program concluded



Christa Rakich. Photo by Camille June Gregoire.

ed with the American premier of a demanding recent work by the Dutch organist and composer Margaretha Christina de Jong, *Prelude, Choral varie' et Fugue sur Veni Redemptor Gentium*. Composer Hilary Tann was our guest on Saturday morning, discussing the creative process involved in her recent commission for the American Guild of Organists, *Embertides*. Louise Mundinger gave a detailed analysis of the piece along with a performance of excerpts, with extensive commentary from Ms. Tann.

The morning concluded with two hours of inspired playing by four young women who are pursuing graduate study or have recently completed advanced programs in organ performance: Katelyn Emerson, Mary Copeley, Emma Whitten, and Ashley Snively.

In the afternoon session, Marie Rubis Bauer, the organist of Saint Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha, Nebraska, presented an eclectic program of early works by Scheidemann, Sweelinck, Aguilera de Heredia, and selections from a contemporary work, *Windows of Comfort: Two Or-*



Hilary Tann. Photo by Camille June Gregoire.



Claudia Dumschat at the organ with Judith Hancock as registrant at the Church of the Transfiguration.  
Photo by Camille June Gregoire.

*ganbooks*, by composer Dan Locklair. One of the most uplifting moments of the conference was the Evensong service at 4 pm at the Church of the Transfiguration. The celebrant of the service was the Rector, Bishop Andrew St. John. Music director Claudia Dumschat led her children's choir in two English anthems, "O Praise the Lord" by Maurice Greene and "Evening Hymn" by Henry Purcell; the "Magnificat" and "Nunc dimitis" settings were composed by Sarah MacDonald. The angelic voices of the young singers were graciously accompanied by the distinguished organist Judith Hancock.

The gala evening recital took place at St. Patrick's Cathedral, featuring Kimberly Marshall, Sarah Jane Starcher Germani, Jennifer Pascual, and myself, Gail Archer. Ms. Marshall offered the Mass "L'Homme armé" by Margaret Vardell Sandresky, followed by Ms. Starcher Germani's program of J.S. Bach's Prelude and Fugue in A major BWV 536, "Tu es Petrus" by Jeanne Demessieux and

works by Alexandre Guilmant. Music director Jennifer Pascual and I played programs entirely composed by women: Libby Larsen, Johanna Senfter, Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Jeanne Demessieux, and others.

All the participants remarked upon the supportive and kind atmosphere of the weekend—we came together to affirm one another and to celebrate women organists, composers, and conductors. We had enough social time to have meaningful conversations about our work at the luncheons and wine-and-cheese hour. We made new friendships and deepened long-standing ties among our colleagues. One of the problems for women organists is that many of us live a continent away from one another and have only rare opportunities to interact professionally. One can feel isolated and even discouraged by the general culture of the organ world, which too often diminishes the contribution of highly educated and skilled women musicians. Musforum grew out of my research on the success of women organists, which I published in the *Journal of the International Alliance of Women in Music* in spring 2013. The database of women organists is on the Musforum site: [www.musforum.org](http://www.musforum.org) as well as the complete program, biographies, photos, and an archival recording of the conference under "Events." All women, no matter what age or point in their professional career, are welcome in the Musforum network. Women organists are cordially invited to join us by sending me an email at [garcher@barnard.edu](mailto:garcher@barnard.edu) and I will add your name to the free listserve. Women need to move forward in the field on the basis of merit: their education, skill, and accomplishment. The world will be enriched by our musical gifts and we will lift up hearts and minds by the beauty and powerful inspiration of our song.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ANNOUNCING THE WESTFIELD CONFERENCE

*KEYBOARD NETWORKS: INTERROGATING THE CULTURES AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE KEYBOARD*  
MARCH 4–5, 2016, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

This one-and-a-half day conference will take place at Cornell University on March 4–5, 2016 and will be the highlight of a yearlong project on keyboard cultures and technologies from the French revolution to the present. The metaphor of networks brings together recent inquiries into the embodiment, performance, and individual disci-

pline of keyboard playing, on the one hand, with scholarly analyses of music's imbrication in politics. The event will be organized around a keynote lecture-recital featuring renowned performer and scholar Kenneth Hamilton, as well as paper presentations.



**Call for proposals:** The conference organizers seek papers that interrogate the numerous guises the keyboard assumed during the given time frame. We are especially interested in research that illuminates the different contexts in which keyboard instruments appeared, as well as the constructions of meanings inspired by these decidedly social media; these inquiries tie into the recent interest in the humanities in all questions of materiality, as well as the focus on sound, and particularly timbre in the field of musicology. Potential topics include: keyboard pedagogy as a site for the disciplining of bodies, and, generally, of subjects in the homes of the rising bourgeoisie; the politics of keyboard-centric agonism, whether in “piano duels,” contests, or competitions; cosmopolitan virtuosos and their local audiences; instrument trade, exchange, and production; pianolas, player-pianos, and MIDI; the feedback between notes and instrument.

The program committee invites proposals of up to 300 words. Abstracts should be submitted to [info@westfield.org](mailto:info@westfield.org) by Monday, December 7th, 2015. We anticipate contributions from a wide range of scholars and performers from the United States and abroad, with a total of 12 to 15 outside papers selected for presentation, in addition to papers from Cornell scholars. A reading group in the music department for students from all across campus, started this fall, will promote knowledge of the recent scholarly literature and further current graduate research.

**Conference organizers:** Dietmar Friesenegger, Roger Moseley, Mackenzie Pierce, Annette Richards

This event is free and open to the public.

### ACADÉMIE D’ORGUE DE FRIBOURG ORGAN SCHOLARSHIP 2016/17

Following the statutory aims that provide promotion of the Historical Organs Heritage in the Fribourg region and the encouragement of young people in organ studies, the Fondation Académie d’Orgue de Fribourg is offering a scholarship for organ students who want to study at Fribourg University of Music (HEMU–Site de Fribourg [www.hemu.ch](http://www.hemu.ch)) in the academic year 2016/17. The suc-

cessful candidate will also be invited to play a concert in the Fribourg International Organ Festival.

**Scholarship amount:** 5000 CHF/year and a concert in the Fribourg International Organ Festival

**Application deadline:** March 1, 2016

### INTERNATIONAL ORGAN COMPETITION CAVAILLÉ-COLL MARCH 18–20, 2016, VILLE D’AVRAY–NEUILLY-SUR-SEINE–TROUVILLE

Organized by Amis du Grand Orgue de Saint-Pierre de Neuilly-sur-Seine, l’Association des Amis de l’Orgue de Trouville, Concours International d’Interprétation de Ville d’Avray.

engagements may be offered to competition winner or winners, with or without payment.

[www.orgue-neuilly.org](http://www.orgue-neuilly.org)  
[www.orgues-trouville.org](http://www.orgues-trouville.org)  
[concoursparisva.jimdo.com](http://concoursparisva.jimdo.com)

**Jury:** Jean-Michel Louchart, Loïc Mallié, Nicole Marodon-Cavaillé-Coll, Jean-Louis Petit, Philippe Sauvage

Email: [concours@jeanlouispetit.com](mailto:concours@jeanlouispetit.com)

**Observers:** Patrick Pouradier Duteil, Françoise Labaste

**Prizes awarded:** First Prize (1500€), Second Prize (1000€), Prix du Conseil Général des Hauts de Seine, Prix de la Commune de Ville d’Avray, Prix du Public, Prix de Neuilly (800€), Prix de Trouville (500€). Several concert



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**Submissions and questions may be directed to:**

Tilman Skowroneck, Editor ([tilman@skowroneck.de](mailto:tilman@skowroneck.de))

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