

Westfield

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Tilman Skowroneck, Editor



A very warm welcome to the fourth and final number of the 2017 Westfield Newsletter. It is a bittersweet moment as Annette Richards, in her last days as Executive Director of the Westfield Center, sums up for our readership where Westfield stands today, before, as she wrote to me, “heading out into the sunset”—or rather, to continue with her full-time job at Cornell as scholar, performer and teacher. The years under Annette’s stewardship have been exceptional. There have been highlights every few months, many of which will stay in our memory forever, and the spirit of the “team” behind the scenes was at all times dominated by her unbeatable energy and wit, and the sense of collegiality and fun that she lent to this enterprise. There are no words to thank Annette for what she has done for Westfield, and we wish her the very best in her future enterprises. For the last time, then, Annette here also reminds our readers to renew their memberships.

There are two announcements of upcoming Westfield events: *Debussy as Early Music*, a Westfield Center Study Day at the Berkeley Early Music Festival, June 2018, and *The Organ in the Global Baroque* at Cornell University, September 6-8. An interview with pianist Jocelyn Swigger follows, who recently published a CD of Chopin’s *Études*, performed on an original Érard piano. Jocelyn talks engagingly about the challenges of this repertoire, the characteristics of the piano, and the process of preparing this challenging music.

We have included obituaries for Shirley Mathews (1937–2017), a noted performer and teacher on the harpsichord and fortepiano, and the German harpsichordist, fortepianist, conductor and scholar Ludger Rémy (1949–2017). Finally, Annette unveils the table of contents of upcoming *Keyboard Perspectives* No. 10.

—Tilman Skowroneck



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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

What wonderful experiences I have been able to enjoy with the Westfield Center over the past few years. Our programs have taken us across centuries and geographical regions, and through a wide variety of keyboard technologies. We have welcomed guests from Europe, Australia, and many parts of the American continent; we have enjoyed events brilliantly conceived by graduate students and late-career colleagues alike; we have heard talks and concerts from presenters at all career stages; we have been introduced to familiar instruments in unfamiliar guises, and to strange instruments that have come to seem like musical friends we should always have known.

2017 has been no exception. We began the year with two symposia in Ithaca, NY co-sponsored by Westfield and Cornell: the first a captivating day focused on *Four-Hand Keyboard Playing in the Long 19th Century*, and the second a full-scale conference on *Ghosts in the Machine: Technology, History, and Aesthetics of the Player Piano*. Then in September many Westfield members, new and old, gathered together at the University of Notre Dame to celebrate the magnificent new Paul Fritts organ there, with our conference *Reformations, 1517-2017*. And finally we were able to co-sponsor the one-day *Instruments of Theory* conference in Rochester, NY in November, with its keynote performance by early keyboardist David Catalunya on his magical reconstruction of a medieval Clavisimbalum. Each of these was an opportunity to learn about keyboard music, culture, and instruments, to make new friends and to renew contact with old ones, to celebrate the extraordinary diversity of keyboard instruments and their repertoire, and to marvel at the great richness of their history.

It has been wonderful to see many of you at these events, and I hope you'll plan to join us in 2018 for a one-day event in June at the Berkeley Early Music Festival, on *Debussy as Early Music* and in September our festival *The Organ in the Global Baroque* in Ithaca, NY, which will explore the organ as the point of intersection of global cultures in the 16th to 18th centuries, as well as in the 20th and 21st.

As I come to the end of 10 years as Executive Director of this extraordinary organization, I'd like to say what an honor it has been to be able to help lead a

group of such inspiring colleagues, musicians, instrument makers, thinkers, friends (sometimes all those in just one person!). Many thanks go to all of you, our members, for your energy, ideas, organizational skills and willingness to participate. I am particularly grateful to the amazing team of collaborators who have helped with our conferences, who work behind the scenes on *Keyboard Perspectives*, on this Newsletter (thank you Tilman!) and, especially in the office here at Cornell.

The Westfield Center is in very good health, brimming with musical and intellectual energy, confidently merging old with new, pushing the study of historical keyboards, their music and their culture, in new directions, while fully embracing the long traditions they represent. We have an excellent Board of Trustees helping to guide us, and with Kathryn Stuart as the new Executive Director, we are in good hands. I shall help with the transition by stepping in as the board president for the coming year.

While an important part of our mission is to present programs in different locations around the U.S., we are fortunate that Cornell University continues to offer an institutional home to the Westfield Center. I'm proud to be able to announce that Cornell has agreed, beginning July 1 2018, to a three-year commitment to funding the Westfield Program Coordinator, our half-time administrative position currently filled brilliantly by Kiko Nobusawa. This administrative assistance is critical, and we are very grateful indeed to Cornell.

We now turn to you, Westfield Center members, for robust support of our programs themselves, as we come to the end of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant that has helped us so generously over the past six years. To that end, I invite you all not only to renew your membership for 2018, but to seriously consider making a donation that will support conferences, symposia, and of course our yearbook, *Keyboard Perspectives*. In anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the Westfield Center in 2019, we look forward to working with all of you to establish a secure financial footing that will see us through not just the short term, but well into the future. With warmest thanks to you all, and best wishes for the holiday season, and for a very happy New Year.

—Annette Richards



DEBUSSY AS EARLY MUSIC

WESTFIELD CENTER STUDY DAY AT THE BERKELEY EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL, JUNE 2018

These days, it is probably easier to locate an instrument that meets the contemporary aesthetic requirements of Mozart's music than a piano historically appropriate for Debussy. The piano "eco-system" around 1900 was much more diverse than it is now, and few performers, composers, and audiences thought in terms of a single Steinway gold standard. The Bechsteins that Debussy and Ravel loved, with their comparatively downy hammers, were lighter in touch and tone than most modern Steinways. Moreover, the ways in which performers interpreted their scores on such pianos may seem surprising to the present-day listener.

Debussy also lived in the early years of sound reproduction technologies, and made some "recordings" of his music on Welte-Mignon piano rolls. Controversy still surrounds these passionate, free, and often eccentric performances: musicologists have questioned how adequately the rolls captured Debussy's playing and have been puzzled by the apparent capriciousness of his interpretive choices, and for the modern performer, early recordings raise as many fascinating questions as they answer. For that very reason, in the context of an expanded "early music" ethos, they might be placed alongside Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's great treatise on playing keyboard instruments or Leopold Mozart's tract on violin performance—all of these things are rich but enigmatic sources of evidence for historical musical practices, in themselves susceptible to interpretation and reinterpretation.

These questions will be the subject of a morning colloquy led by Nicholas Mathew (UC Berkeley) entitled "Debussy as Early Music," which will feature two important performer-scholars long associated, in evolving ways, with the early music movement, George Barth (Stanford University) and Kate van Orden (Harvard). In the afternoon, we are planning a recital of Debussy's piano music on the beautiful 1913 Bechstein piano owned by Berkeley's venerable Piano Club.

THE ORGAN IN THE GLOBAL BAROQUE

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA NY, SEPTEMBER 6-8, 2018

The Baroque was the first global style. It fed—and was fostered by—international networks of artists, artisans, traders and adventures, from Italian architects to Chinese porcelain makers. In this context, it is no accident that the organs of the Hanseatic League, built at the nexus of trade routes that reached around the world, should have been some of the most magnificent of their time. Materials could be had from across the oceans—Cornish tin, tropical woods, gold and silver—even as these instruments lavishly displayed wealth accrued through global trade by the communities that owned them.

But organs themselves took part in that trade, as the instruments of the Brebos brothers found their way from Flanders to Spain, or those of Arp Schnitger from Hamburg to Brazil. In the cathedrals of the New World, indigenous artisans collaborated on conquistador organs that sounded out the meeting of colonizer and colonized. If the organ in the 16th-18th centuries embodied and participated in global musical and material networks, so too did the 'baroque organ' in the 20th century, with the creation, especially in Asia, of landmark instruments built in historically-informed styles, and the fostering there of a new organ culture.

In concerts and talks, this conference will address themes that include organ building and trade networks, organists and travel, global materials and musical technologies, the organ trade in Asia and South America, and the baroque organ in today's world culture. This conference is conceived in honor of the late Jacques van Oortmerssen, who was a remarkable influence on so many organists working with historically-informed instruments in the United States today—an organist who performed across the globe, and whose organ class in Amsterdam set the standard for enlightened internationalism.

More information on performers, presenters and program will be available here and on the Westfield Center website in early 2018.



INTERVIEW WITH JOCELYN SWIGGER CHOPIN'S ÉTUDES ON AN ORIGINAL ÉRARD

Jocelyn Swigger, Associate Professor of Music and Coordinator of Keyboard Studies at Sunderman Conservatory, Gettysburg College speaks with Westfield about preparing and recording Chopin's Études Op. 10, Op. 25 and three Nouvelles Études on an original Érard piano.

Jocelyn, you have just released a new recording of Chopin's Études, played on an 1841 Érard grand piano. It is exciting that over the last fifteen years or so, ever more old French pianos are surfacing that are receiving ever better treatment by the restorers, helping us to understand more and more about the sound-world that inspired the Romantic pianists. What is special about this particular instrument?

Well, I'm tickled by the idea that Chopin or his students could have played on this very piano (though I have to confess there's no record that they did)—this particular piano, with this action and these strings. As I'm sure you know, Érard was one of Chopin's two favorite pianos, and 1841 is during his lifetime; I've had the opportunity to play on some Pleyels, and some other Erards, but I fell in love with this piano from the first chord I played on it. You're exactly right to point to the restorers: Anne Acker (the piano's owner and technician) is a wizard, and brought this instrument back to beautiful condition. Its rich, warm, metallic sound is addictive—when I visited to practice on it, I would wake up in the morning feeling like I couldn't wait to hear that sound. It's so, so different from the modern Steinway; I describe it as being as different as the sound of a clarinet and an oboe. I miss it.

Playing all of Chopin's études on any piano is a major undertaking (which is a bit of an understatement). To play them on an early piano takes things to yet another level: action control is different from the modern piano; dynamic shifts manifest themselves as shifts in tone color rather than gradations of loud and soft, while the



Jocelyn Swigger

greater overall clarity of the tone presents its own set of difficulties. How did you address these challenges?

A lot of it was about letting go: of my preconceived notions, of my own perfectionism, even of some of my identity as a player. The hardest thing for me to let go of was soft dynamics; usually I like to find the quietest sound a piano can make, and I probably have some ego about that, but this piano's quietest sounds were what I call “a nice healthy mezzo-forte.” I couldn't play as softly as I wanted to. You say it beautifully: the dynamic shifts are about tone color. The action was tricky, too; though Anne is a genius, the original action can only be so even after almost

two hundred years. It was hard to find the exact bump in the escapement on some of the keys, and anything above the bump felt very loose. Keeping my hands close to the keys helped, but I still had to let go of some evenness. The clarity of tone meant that I couldn't count on a quiet wash of color to smooth out lumps in the fast accompanimental runs. I tried to point my attention towards phrasing the big lines of the melody, even though that's often not where the technical difficulty lies. Fortunately, that voicing was much easier on this instrument. I think of the études on this instrument as being like a painting with vivid colors and visible brushstrokes.

Are there any specific things, musical or technical, that turned out in a different way when playing these pieces on the Érard, as compared to the modern concert grand?

Chopin often has surprisingly few pedal markings—almost none on the first two pages of the ‘cello’ étude, for example—and I thought using less pedal really worked on this instrument, while adding it in then made for some really nice color changes. Also, since the tone decays so quickly on the Érard, melody lines can only be so slow before the decay kills the legato. Chopin's tempo markings

for the slower etudes are actually pretty speedy—a lickety-split MM=100 for Op. 10/3, for example! There’s a long aural tradition, including some really gorgeous recordings, of people playing the slower etudes on modern pianos with luxuriously slow tempos and lots of pedal, but I felt like the slower pieces wanted faster tempos on the Erard.

One thing that sets your recording apart from others is the use of an unequal temperament. What is the story behind this choice? How does music that employs enharmonic shifts, diminished seventh chords and chromaticism benefit from an unequal temperament?

The Westfield Center is actually at the heart of this story! In 2010, at the very beginning of starting this project, I went to the Westfield Center’s Chopin bicentennial conference at Yale. One of the things that really stood out to me at that conference was the chance to hear Chopin on unequal temperament. A few years later, I had the chance to play on some of David Breitman’s instruments tuned to unequal temperaments, and loved how they brought Chopin’s harmonies into relief. David encouraged me to look up the scholar who had presented on Chopin’s tuning at the Yale conference. I found Jonathan Bellman, and he very generously shared his recipe for a Chopin temperament with me. About a year after that, I met Anne Acker, who owns the Erard on this recording (and who tuned to Jonathan’s recipe). She and I looked familiar to each other, and figured out that we recognized each other from the bicentennial conference.

As far as how the tuning affects the music, it makes everything more intense: dissonances hurt more, resolutions offer more relief, and minor keys are unhappier than major ones. It also gives different keys distinct personalities: some keys, like A flat major, are happy and bright, while others, like G major, are unstable and unpleasant (Chopin rarely writes in G major in the etudes). C major is still and monolithic, while B major is shimmering and full of possibility. To return to the painting analogy, the brush strokes are not just visible but in relief, popping off the canvas.

Chopin’s Études may have started out as exercise material, but they are today known as brilliant concert pieces. How much artistic freedom, embellishment, or even improvisation does this music permit?

Probably a lot of people would say not very much! But I chose to ornament and embellish these pieces. You read so much about improvisation being important for Chopin and his contemporaries, I felt like I had to learn

to improvise in order to understand Chopin’s style. I did study and practice improvising—I still do—and now I can’t imagine playing these pieces without making a few changes here and there. Some of my embellishments I have planned out, and play the same way every time, and some I change on different days. I think the thing that’s so incredible about Chopin’s etudes is that they are music above all, so I tried to make choices in the direction of artistic expression. I’m really curious to find out what listeners think of my choices, and I’d love for players to hear my small changes (some of them really are tiny) and feel like they have the inspiration or permission to make changes of their own.

According to the CD booklet, you spent seven years working on this repertoire. Can you tell us something about the trajectory of such a project? What to you do on day one, when you first open the book? Where are you after three years? Are there things you would do differently, looking back?

Actually, day one was probably going to the Westfield Chopin bicentennial conference in 2010, so it’s a thrill that you’re interviewing me now. I was a new mother—my son was one month old—and I was still in a sleep-deprived delirium, but I knew that I wanted to start working on these pieces, and it was inspiring to hear the presentations and try the different pianos people had brought, and think about starting this project. When I did start practicing a few months later, I started playing the first page of Op. 10 no. 1 painfully slowly. I was still playing it slowly a year later! I would pick two or three etudes every week to be on the “front burner” and put two or three on the “back burner.” I tried to pair etudes that had different techniques, so I would work on a right hand piece at the same time as a left hand one, or an open hand one with a closed hand one. I thought a lot about the etudes away from the piano, making theory maps and playlists of different recordings for each one. I made my theory maps early in the process of learning the pieces, so that learning the techniques was within a frame of thinking about how I wanted the music to go.

I gave myself some accountability measures: I’m useless without a deadline, so I booked some concerts before I had the pieces all learned, and I gave myself mini-deadlines. I was performing Op. 10 as a set, with some other pieces, about a year before I was playing all of Op. 25, for example. Probably my most useful accountability measure was hosting a podcast, Play It Again Swig, where I would give myself a piano lesson for the week and make

promises about what I would learn the following week. That completely failed to go viral and win me fame and fortune, but did give me small goals to work towards and make me listen to recordings of myself playing. It also taught me a lot about vulnerability. I used some practice techniques I got from a workshop with Burton Kaplan—I make all my students read his book *Practicing for Artistic Success*—especially planning and timing my practice to the minute. For the past three years or so I've been performing the etudes as a set everywhere that would have me, and also visiting any Erard or Pleyel I could find on Google. I was astonished by how generous and hospitable piano owners were—complete strangers welcomed me into their homes and studios and let me play their pianos. It was incredible. I thought I was ready to record in the summer of 2016, but we couldn't get the scheduling to work out, and I'm grateful for the extra year to polish.

Coachings were important for me. I had some lessons with Rebecca Penneys, my graduate school mentor, who also has recorded all the etudes. David Breitman was incredibly helpful about thinking about the early instruments and looking at the score. Jackie Herbein helped me apply the Alexander Technique (a method of teaching alignment and body awareness) to my piano playing. Chopin's etudes will always make me feel like a student, and it was really important to have such helpful teachers along the journey to recording them. Looking back, I would have been more careful with my body from the very beginning. Many of the etudes hurt until I unlocked them, and I didn't always give up and ask for help as soon as I should have.

What comes after such a recording—what will your next project be? Will you explore other early pianos? Other repertoire?

I don't know what my next big project will be; just the question sends me spinning. I have some chamber music concerts planned for 2018, including a show of art songs by women composers and a Mozart quartet on the Walter copy by Thomas and Barbara Wolf that we have at Gettysburg College. I'm starting to get interested in Chaminade, and it might be really fun to play that repertoire on a historical piano, but I haven't actually practiced any of it yet, so we'll see. I hope I'll get to play on more of Anne Acker's pianos; maybe I'll decide on some of my rep according to what she's restoring (I think she's planning on bringing a Pleyel back to life in the next couple of years, which would make me want to play Chopin preludes and waltzes and mazurkas and scherzos on it). I'm definitely interested in other collaborations too—chamber music and art song but also multimedia possibilities. In a completely different direction, I have about thirty minutes of original ukulele songs, and I'd like to write a few more and make them into an album. We'll see. For now I'm improvising a bit, and there are lots of novels to read...

Thank you, Jocelyn, for this interview!

Jocelyn Swigger's TED talk titled "How I memorize piano music" is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJouIL6uaoc>. Her personal website is <http://jocelynswigger.com>.



See the June 2017 issue of *Westfield* for information about the 1st International Chopin Competition on Period Instruments, to be held September 2018 at the Warsaw Philharmonic, or visit www.iccpi.eu.

SHIRLEY ANN MATHEWS

Shirley Ann Mathews (1937-2017) died peacefully in her home in Freeport, Maine beside her husband Rod Regier on September 30. She was born January 5, 1937, the daughter of UPI reporter Roy Forrest and his wife Myrtle. A noted musician and teacher, she performed on the harpsichord and fortepiano in the U.S. and Europe. For seventeen years she was artistic director of Pro Musica Rara, professional players in Baltimore exploring early works and musical performance practice; earlier directed concerts at The Park School and Goucher College; and later led similar programs in Yarmouth, Maine. She leaves a legacy of students, colleagues and friends whom she touched and inspired, recordings of Baroque period masters, and an early music program she started while on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory.



Elfin in stature but large in heart, Shirley was deeply intelligent and creative, witty and irreverent. Rooms glowed when she entered. Music was part of her soul; Bach partitas, Mozart songs, and Chopin nocturnes played continuously in her mind's ear. When she wasn't practicing or studying musical scores and history, she cooked, gardened, painted floral garlands on harpsichord soundboards, or helped rebuild the old farmhouse she and Rod bought in 1978. Although pearls and a black concert gown were her frequent dress, in one of her favorite photos of herself she wore a hardhat, swinging a crowbar at a rotten fiberboard kitchen wall.

Shirley and Rod were “um, together” since 1973, married five years later, and remained in love throughout their many years together. She died following a fifteen years' struggle with progressive supranuclear palsy, a particularly noxious form of Parkinson's disease.

-- Rod Regier

LUDGER RÉMY



German harpsichordist, fortepianist, conductor and scholar Ludger Rémy died in Bremen on June 21, 2017 at age 68. Born in Kalkar in the Lower Rhine region, Rémy studied the harpsichord in Freiburg and continued his studies with Kenneth Gilbert in Paris. He then established himself as a harpsichordist and fortepianist, and ultimately as an expert conductor of the German Baroque and *Empfindsamkeit* repertoire with a special affinity for the music of C.P.E. Bach.

Not being a natural air traveler, Rémy's international name was perhaps somewhat less established than his outstanding reputation in the German early music scene warranted. His discography, which mainly but not exclusively featured his ensemble *Les Amis de Philippe*, is impressively long and includes a number of important first recordings of lesser known but excellent repertoire.

From the early 1980s to the late 1990s, before becoming Professor at the Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber in Dresden, Rémy taught early keyboard instruments at various institutes, mainly at the Folkwang Hochschule. In spite of (or in addition to) his love for the “original” sound, he saw the field of early music mainly as an arena for experimentation, a search for a way to overcome aesthetic conventions, which to him were the result of a too-rigid musical pedagogy. The music of the 17th and 18th centuries offered him a magnificent chance to find new paths towards artistic genuineness. A passionate thinker, Rémy lived by the motto of the Enlightenment: “Have courage to make use of your own reason.” His idea was that thinking ultimately preceded musical feeling. Asked about his main passion, he would name research, or rather “historical research.” Music would come afterwards, as the inevitable outcome.

And yet, Ludger Rémy was able to enjoy life with all his senses: a good conversation; good food, prepared with care; and music, “bathing in the sound,” as he called it. In a recent radio interview he said, “Music belongs to those few arts that actually show us how beautiful time is, but also, alas, how ephemeral.”

-- Wolfgang Kostujak and Tilman Skowroneck

Ludger Rémy's thoughtful website and blog (in German) is at <http://www.ludger-remy.de>.

2017 is the tenth anniversary of *Keyboard Perspectives*. To mark the occasion, Roger Moseley and Annette Richards have assembled a bumper volume that reflects the great diversity and richness of keyboard studies today, and that celebrates the varied interests and unmatched expertise of Westfield Center members. The book is in production, and all 2017 Westfield Center members can expect to receive their copy in the mail in the next few weeks. We hope you will enjoy it.

KEYBOARD PERSPECTIVES, volume 10 (2017)

Edited by Roger Moseley and Annette Richards

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

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