

# Westfield

E-NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTFIELD CENTER, VOLUME XXI, No. 10

*A National Resource for the Advancement of Keyboard Music,  
Serving Professionals and the Public Since 1979*

**Fall 2010**



Warm greetings to all. Westfield members have been busy over the past months with conferences, publications, performances and planning—and we are glad to bring reports of some of these activities to you with this issue of *Westfield*. The most recent news is that Cornell University has formally agreed to provide the Westfield Center with an administrative home, initially for two years. Westfield will have an office at the Cornell music department, and some administrative help funded by the university. While Westfield will remain fully independent as a not-for-profit organization, this affiliation is going to help us run our programs, communicate with our members, and develop new projects with efficiency and enthusiasm. Our new administrative assistant this year is musicology graduate student Evan Cortens, who has been doing stellar work already, and from whom many of you will likely hear in due course. We are very fortunate to have him on board, and to have the support of Cornell.

The past six months have been wonderfully productive for Westfield members, with two conferences, on which we report below, the creation of a packed third issue of *Keyboard Perspectives*, and with exciting plans for a new project which we hope to announce formally in a couple of weeks. Many thanks to all of you for your continued support for all that we do.

Annette Richards  
Executive Director



## **In This Issue**

- “Playing Chopin His Way” Report by Erica Levenson and Mia Tootill 2
- The Eugene Conference Report by Timothy Tikker 7
- *Keyboard Perspectives* III (2010) 14



**“Playing Chopin His Way”: Romantic Pianos and Performance Practice**  
**A Westfield Center Conference at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments**  
**24-26 September, 2010**

**A Conference Report by Erica Levenson and Mia Tootill**

To commemorate the bicentennial anniversary of Frédéric Chopin’s birth, a diverse group of scholars, pianists, and instrument makers gathered at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments in New Haven, CT for a weekend of concerts, lectures, and discussions. Aiming to move closer to Chopin’s sound-world, attendees sought to reconceive how they might perform, listen to, and engage creatively with the composer’s music. The conference title repurposed Wanda Landowska’s (in)famous comment to Pablo Casals: “You play Bach your way, and I’ll play him his way.” It reflected the desire for “authenticity” and authority that often motivates research in historical performance practice, but the weekend’s proceedings demonstrated that the pursuit of such goals is particularly quixotic in the case of Chopin, whose idiosyncratic musical sensibility was projected and perceived via many different instruments, performance styles, listening strategies, and cultural contexts throughout his lifetime and beyond. In a stimulating series of attempts to reverse-engineer the qualities of Chopin’s own playing, presenters offered suggestions regarding specific issues such as pedaling, fingering, and articulation, and contemplated broader issues of interpretation on a fascinating assortment of nineteenth-century pianos, all handsomely housed in the Yale Collection. Complementing the speakers, an array of pianists gave two concerts in which their interpretive and instrumental choices offered polyglot answers to the question of how performances of Chopin’s music might navigate between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.

Proceedings got underway on Friday night, when pianist Jean Saulnier (Associate Professor of Piano, Université de Montréal) swept us up on an entrancing tour of a representative cross-section of Chopin’s output. A relative newcomer to nineteenth-century instruments, Saulnier established an obvious affinity with the 1848 Pleyel—an instrument belonging to Andrew Willis (Professor of Music, University of North Carolina at Greensboro), which he had heroically brought with him). Chopin avowed that this brand was his favorite, and Saulnier revealed this particular instrument to be particularly responsive to the chiaroscuro of Chopin’s music.

On Saturday morning, Jonathan Bellman (Professor of Music and Head of Music History and Literature at University of North Colorado) opened the paper sessions with a keynote lecture entitled “Chopin’s Pianism and the Reconstruction of the Ineffable.” Bellman set the tone of the conference with his stirring appeal for performers to enter into the spirit of Chopin’s compositions as they attempt to strike the precarious balance between individual expression

and fidelity to the composer. He lamented that while it is impossible to recreate the playing of Chopin himself, modern performances of Chopin's music often stray wildly from the characteristics and qualities described in contemporary accounts of the composer's pianism. Bellman related Chopin's opinions of the various pianos he encountered as he traveled across Europe, providing a fitting precursor to the performances on many such instruments that were to come later in the day. While Pleyel pianos were Chopin's favorite, he welcomed the appealing "ready-made" tone of Érards when he felt "out of sorts." While Chopin seemed to prefer French instruments to English ones, Bellman cautioned against using the fairly minimal number of contemporaneous reports to generalize about the composer's views on the wide range of pianos he encountered.

One of the most illuminating parts of Bellman's lecture was his discussion of temperament, in which he suggested that the pianos Chopin played on were more "well tempered" than "equal tempered." Unfortunately the exact specifications of this tuning are impossible to reconstruct, since tuning treatises from the time only offer vague directions such as a certain note should be "a little flat." However, Bellman performed examples from Chopin's repertoire on a Pleyel piano that had been tuned using what he termed "Bellman-Chopin temperament" in an attempt to demonstrate what the music might have sounded like. Bellman also dealt with fingering, citing both treatises and Chopin's personal views on the matter, in particular his conviction that each finger's power and sonic characteristics are determined by its shape and thus that each digit should not be treated equally. Chopin stressed the importance of a caressing touch, which drew upon techniques previously associated with clavichord playing. Finally, Bellman pointed up the importance of *rubato* when playing Chopin's music, pointing out that the composer used at least three different types of *rubato* and that it is incumbent upon the performer to consider which is most appropriate to use at any given moment. Bellman concluded by arguing that musicians and audiences might benefit from the attempt to listen to Chopin's music in the manner in which it was received in his own day. Audiences today too often listen for technical bravura and accuracy, he claimed, whereas in the nineteenth century more attention was given to the connotations, images, and even narratives that the music stimulated in the listener's imagination. It is ultimately through such creative listening, informed and stimulated by historical research, that we might grow closer to Chopin and his music.

Following Bellman's keynote, Anne Acker, a renowned builder and restorer of early keyboard instruments, gave a grand tour of pianos from Chopin's time. Among those available at the conference were an 1830 Bösendorfer, an 1842 Broadwood, and Pleyels from 1842 and 1848. Using these pianos as examples, Acker demonstrated how the designs of pianos were continually changing throughout the nineteenth century, resulting in huge variety among pianos, even those by the same maker. Considering the length of the strings, the sound-board design, and the damping materials (to name just a few parameters), Acker revealed how every small detail of construction makes a difference to the touch and tone of each piano, and how their ramifications shaped and constrained musical possibilities for both composers and performers.

Zooming in on a specific aspect of Chopin performance practice, David Breitman (Associate Professor of Historical Performance at Oberlin Conservatory) led a thought-provoking discussion concerning Chopin's pedal markings, using the Impromptu in A-flat major, op. 29, as his prime example. Breitman first addressed the question of when to pedal at the beginning of a bass note by pointing out the distinction between 'syncopated' and 'rhythmic' pedaling. On older pianos, rhythmic pedaling seems to produce the clearest sound, yet transferring this approach to a modern piano results in a dry sound; pianists are thus more likely to use syncopated pedaling. He also raised the question of what to do when there is no pedaling marked in Chopin's music. A common assumption among pianists is that one should simply repeat prior pedaling for the sake of consistency. However, after demonstrating several passages from the Impromptu, Breitman concluded that Chopin may in fact have deployed the pedal when he wanted to highlight a particularly expressive moment. Although it is difficult to follow Chopin's pedal markings on the modern piano owing to the risk of sounding dry, Breitman showed how one can infer important information about texture and contrast in Chopin's music by critically observing his pedal markings as well as by hearing how they sound on nineteenth-century pianos.

Sandra Rosenblum (author of *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music*) and Andrew Willis teamed up to discuss the implications when there are two different autograph scores of a composer's work and why this might have occurred in Chopin's case. Two Nocturnes, op. 55 and op. 62, no. 2, provide instances where such issues arise. For instance, the slurs and pedal markings in the manuscripts of op. 62, no. 2 differ between the manuscripts that Chopin sent to be published in Germany and France. Rosenblum argued that Chopin was well aware of the distinctions between French and German pianos, and that he deliberately altered his markings to compensate for discrepancies between instruments and stylistic tastes in the two lands. For instance, he indicated low trills to be pedaled in the German manuscript but unpedaled in the French manuscript, thus revealing his concern for how the passage would sound on instruments with different qualities in each market. Rosenblum's thoughts reinforced Anne Acker's message concerning the extreme variability among pianos in the nineteenth century, and suggested that such issues were not exclusively the concerns of performers: Chopin himself adapted his music to account for such diversity.

James Parakilas (Chair of the Music Department at Bates College) steered the discussion toward Chopin's larger forms. He used the incomparable Barcarolle, op. 60, as an experiment for thinking about Chopin's music in a more imaginative way, thus picking up both on Saulnier's performance of the work the previous evening and on Jonathan Bellman's recommendation from earlier in the day. Parakilas asked his audience to concentrate on the image of a boat at sea and to listen to the music poetically. He suggested, for instance, that when we hear a change in the familiar bass pattern at measure twelve, we might also hear a change in the rhythm of the waves. While the whole piece evokes a sense of aqueous motion, Chopin's subtle rhythmic fluctuations create the poetic image of a boat gently disrupting the natural course of the water. The image of the Barcarolle is ultimately so intensified, Parakilas claimed, that "it creates a new musical language."

After dinner and the opportunity for conference attendees to try the pianos for themselves (some even forgoing the former to allow more time for the latter!), Saturday evening featured a thought-provoking concert involving an array of performers, music, and pianos. Andrew Willis opened the concert with Chopin's *Berceuse*, op. 57, performed on an 1864 Bechstein, and followed it with the *Bolero*, op. 19, on a Broadwood from around 1842. While Chopin is more easily associated with the Broadwood piano than the Bechstein (having praised the former on a visit to England), the instrument Willis played seemed to have deteriorated significantly, highlighting the need for caution when making judgments concerning individual instruments that are based solely on the basis of Chopin's preferences. Matthew Bengtson—a talented concert pianist, fortepianist and harpsichordist—followed this with the *Nocturne in F major*, op. 15, no. 1, on the 1848 Pleyel that Saulnier had played the previous evening. David Breitman's performances proved particularly illuminating, as he played the *Nocturne in D-flat major*, op. 27, no. 2, on two different pianos—an 1830 Bösendorfer and an 1881 Érard—allowing for a direct comparison of the two instruments. Yi-heng Yang, an accomplished pianist and faculty member at the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music, then introduced the other Pleyel (from 1842) with the *Scherzo in E major*, op. 54. Interestingly, this piano sounded quite different from the 1848 Pleyel, perhaps because its action is no longer in its original state.

Following an intermission, Matthew Bengtson returned to play the *Fantaisie*, op. 49, on the 1864 Bechstein. Andrew Willis treated the audience to another two pieces before Shuann Chai, a pianist currently based in the Netherlands, brought the concert to its conclusion with the *Waltz in C-sharp minor*, op. 64, no. 2, on an 1864 Steinway and *Scherzo in C-sharp minor*, op. 39, on the 1881 Érard. In the keynote lecture, Bellman had discussed how Chopin's contemporaries spoke of the magic of his playing and the importance of the sense of the unexpected. Amidst the great variety of interpretations heard throughout this concert, the performers succeeded in capturing some of this magic and brought the audience closer to imagining what nineteenth-century performances of these pieces might have sounded like.

On Sunday morning, Anne Acker's presentation entitled "New Trends after Chopin's Day" followed on from her previous discussion about the design of the nineteenth-century pianos with which the composer was familiar. Interspersing her talk with images of piano interiors and live examples, Acker demonstrated how these instruments differ in construction and tone from their modern counterparts. She voiced her views on the lack of tonal variety among twentieth-century pianos, and traced this tendency back to the ascent of Steinway, which started in the latter stages of the nineteenth century and resulted in the standardization of piano manufacture, regulation, and maintenance. A primary issue that concerned Acker was the modern piano technician's tendency to replace worn parts of older pianos with brand new materials, thus creating hybrid instruments. Acker acknowledged this might cause fewer problems for owners, but pointed out that it ultimately devalues the pianos. She highlighted the importance of retaining the "authenticity" of rarer pianos, suggesting that prospective buyers check the number of pianos of a certain model that still exist when considering reconstructive work. This stimulated an interesting discussion about consumption and entropy: should we preserve

these instruments as historical artifacts, displayed in museums but rendered mute for today's performers and listeners, or make use of them despite the accelerated deterioration that comes with every stroke of each hammer upon the strings? This central dilemma preoccupied many presenters and attendees; it will become ever-more pressing as interest in nineteenth-century performance practice widens and the instruments ineluctably age.

In the final presentation, "The Chopin Connection, and Other Distinctive Approaches from the Early Days of Recording," Donald Manildi (Curator, International Piano Archives at Maryland) offered a comprehensive examination of Chopin performance practice by playing ten recordings of short works by different performers. Biographical information was provided for each; Manildi's emphasis on their various links with Chopin reflected the impulse to forge connections with the composer, and these early recordings seemed to serve as midpoints between Chopin's world and our own. The presentation served primarily as an introduction to the various performers, whose pianistic characteristics were illuminating and suggestive. Ignaz Friedman was perhaps the best known, with his 1936 performance of the Nocturne in E-flat, op. 55, no. 2, serving as a prime example of his finely wrought and subtly poetic style. Ferruccio Busoni's 1922 recording of the little A major Prelude, op. 28, no. 7, and Étude in G-flat, op. 10, no. 5, provided a unique insight into a lost element of performance practice via his laconic improvisation that served as a transition between the two pieces. In a similar vein, Raoul Koczalski preserved an interesting sequence of embellishments through his 1937 recording of the Nocturne in E-flat, op. 9, no. 2, that had purportedly been approved by Chopin himself. French and Polish pianists who were directly "descended" from Chopin (such as Raoul Pugno and Moriz Rosenthal) and a handful of other European performers with various types of connections to the composer completed Manildi's presentation, demonstrating once more that the careful perusal of documentary and material evidence from the past need not dictate to twenty-first-century performers and scholars, but can encourage them to explore interpretive possibilities that are at once old and new.

As a whole, the conference revealed the importance of examining historical and material evidence in order to discover what it can—and cannot—tell us about how music sounded in the past. Attendees relished the rare opportunity to explore these issues at first hand by playing and hearing pianos from Chopin's time. The diversity of these instruments, coupled with the range of stylistic interpretations that emerged from both scholars and performers, revealed both the allure and the futility of attempting to "play Chopin his way." We instead heard many ways of playing Chopin that merged careful consideration of the composer's intentions (or what we may know of them) with each pianist's personal moments of inspiration that emerged when touching the keys of these historical instruments. In this sense, it was easy to imagine that the instruments played the performers who played them, and even (in more fanciful moments) to hope that Chopin's spirit might soon hover nearby, summoned by our séance-like attempts to reach him through these enchanted relics. Yet, ultimately, his stubborn refusal to appear demonstrated that although we can never completely "reconstruct the ineffable," to use Bellman's phrase, it is up to us to arrive at a conception of Chopin and his music that is inspired

and enacted via tactile, auditory, and imaginative means, informed by the evidence that still connects our world to his.



**The Eugene Conference: The Netherlandish School of Organ Building  
and its North American Legacy  
8–11 April 2010 in Eugene, Oregon**

**A Conference Report by Timothy Tikker**

The conference, per Annette Richards, Westfield’s Executive Director, brought together “an unprecedented collection of organ experts, builders, performers and scholars ... to explore the great Netherlandish organ traditions of the 16th century, their legacy in North Germany a century later, and their extraordinary influence on organ building and performance both in Europe and in America into our own era.” The conference was also held especially to honor the life and work of American organ builder John Brombaugh.

A pre-conference lecture by David Yearsley (Cornell University) was offered Thursday afternoon: “What Is a Sängerin?: Anna Magdalena Bach, Coffee, and Musical Women in Enlightened Leipzig.” This presentation was co-sponsored by the Oregon Bach Festival and the University of Oregon School of Music and Dance. Yearsley related how J. S. Bach’s second wife was a noted virtuoso soprano, employed at the Cöthen court and receiving a salary there second only to her husband’s. Professional female singers were fashionable in German courts, though only rarely performed in church. Anna Magdalena’s opportunities diminished when the Bach family moved to Leipzig: she could occasionally sing at the university, in coffee houses, and return to Cöthen for guest appearances, but otherwise was primarily occupied with duties as a mother. Bach’s *Coffee Cantata* BWV 211 was likely composed either for Anna Magdalena, or as a showpiece to present their daughter not only as a singer but as a candidate for marriage (a prospect which never materialized).

That evening’s concert was held at Central Lutheran Church, home to a three-manual 38-stop organ built by John Brombaugh (Opus 19) in 1976. This organ provided a vital centerpiece for the entire conference: built in historic Netherlandish-North German style, it is a landmark instrument in this country, both as a profoundly convincing medium for a great repertory (not just Bach, Bruhns and Buxtehude, but Mendelssohn and even Liszt are a revelation here), and for the breadth and depth of its sheer beauty and musicality. Dana Robinson (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) and Christa Rakich (St. Mark the Evangelist Church, West Hartford) ably performed music by Böhm, Reincken and J. S. Bach.

We returned to Central Lutheran for Friday morning’s session, “The Netherlandish Organ and

Hendrik Niehoff.” After a welcome by Westfield President Jim Weaver, David Dahl (professor emeritus, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma) gave an introduction. He spoke of how builders such as Brombaugh have sought to “regain the genius and beauty of the best of the old organs.” Essential to this quest was the perspective “let’s look at what the old builders did, before we assume we can do better.” Niehoff, Fritsche and Schnitger were primary influences on Brombaugh, though he never copied their work per se. Then John Brombaugh himself told how he became an organ builder. Born of Pennsylvania Dutch stock in Germantown, Ohio, Brombaugh’s youth was occupied with things musical and electrical. These led to a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Cincinnati, then employment with the Baldwin Piano Company, for whom he developed four patented designs for electronic organs, including electronic chime and an artificial reverberation system. Yet the sounds of great European tracker organs heard on E. Power Biggs’s recordings so fascinated John that, after obtaining his Master’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University, he apprenticed in pipe organ building 3½ years with Fritz Noack and Charles Fisk in New England and completed his training as a ‘Geselle’ (journeyman – a ‘grad’ student in the trades) with Rudolf von Beckerath in Hamburg. While in Germany, Brombaugh met Harald Vogel, whose depth of understanding of old organs and their music proved a vital and continuing influence. Brombaugh built his first church organ for Trinity Lutheran, Ithaca, NY, donating his labor. Dedication recitalist David Boe (Oberlin) recognized a young builder of exceptional talent, and soon asked Brombaugh to build the organ for the Lutheran church in Lorain, Ohio where Boe was organist. This led to John establishing his shop on his father’s farm west of Germantown in 1968. A Ford Foundation grant afforded Brombaugh ten weeks to study historic organs in Europe in 1971.

Harald Vogel then gave a lecture-demonstration of the Central Lutheran organ. Vogel described the “vocal” quality of the principal stops as “a certain airiness,” even a “sandy” quality. We heard how effective principal choruses were registered without added flutes (such thickening became a norm only with the introduction of the organ to congregational singing in the 18th century). We heard stops in ancient style – reeds with vowel tones varying note by note so as to enhance their contrapuntal clarity – as well as Schnitger-type stops (e.g. Quintadena, Spitzflöte). Vogel noted how Brombaugh understood the right contrast between flutes and principals, unlike neo-baroque builders who, reacting against Romanticism, produced bright, noisy flutes that sounded nearly like principals.

The morning session continued in Central Lutheran’s Parish Hall. Koos van de Linde, organ researcher and consultant who had worked with Brombaugh in 2007 documenting the largest of Hendrik Niehoff’s organs built in 1551 for the Johanniskirche in Lüneburg, spoke on “Dutch Organs from the School of Jan van Covelens: Characteristics, Technical Construction, and Influence on the Hamburg Tradition.” Van de Linde described Dutch Renaissance organ builder Jan van Covelens as an experimenter and innovator, as well as the founder of the tradition that led to Arp Schnitger. Van Covelens built what is now the oldest extant organ in the Netherlands, the choir organ at the Laurenskerk, Alkmaar (1511). Its main manual has the principal chorus and trumpet on the chest, then a flute chorus tubed off above, which shows

how these stops were meant to function separately in the music of the time. Van de Linde went on to describe the work of Henrik Niehoff, whose work unfortunately only survives in fragments. No pipes survive from his two organs at Amsterdam's Oude Kerk (1539-45), where Sweelinck later played. The Oude Kerk's three-manual organ had a Hoofdwerk with only a principal chorus, then a Bovenwerk with only non-pleno stops (flutes and reeds), again showing the divided-chest concept seen at Alkmaar. The only manual coupler was Bovenwerk to Rugpositief, obviously to allow combining their reeds (a proto-*Grand Jeu*?). Extant Niehoff pipework (e.g. at Lüneburg) shows his interest in contrast: narrow principals, wide flutes, and wider Quintadenas with a strong fundamental tone. Reeds had open, duckbill shallots, parallel or only slightly tapered, with a brilliant sound not unlike French reeds (smooth-toned reeds with leathered shallots were introduced probably only c. 1600). Also, paired mixtures had dovetailing compositions, clearly indicating that they were always used together (as were the French baroque Fourniture and Cymbale). Cimbels, with fourth and sixth-sounding ranks, were used only in solo combinations.

Cor Edskes, renowned expert in charge of many restorations in northern Europe such as the Schnitger at Hamburg's Jacobikirche and Denmark's oldest organ at the Danish National cathedral in Roskilde making his first trip (at age 85) to the Western Hemisphere, then gave his keynote lecture, "Some Remarks on Early Organ Building in the Low Countries and Neighboring Areas." Lynn Edwards Butler, founder of the Westfield Center in the 1970s, served as moderator. Edskes began with the sage observation that historians always try to fit things into tidy categories, which often conflict with a more complicated reality! Edskes drew on his vast knowledge as he presented an overview of ancient organ history, showing just how complicated that reality was. We learned that the Blockwerk – the Gothic principal chorus with most all the ranks always "on" and no means of isolating ranks for registrational variety – was named (in "modern" times: the term was first used in 1710) for the method of its chest construction. The wood was not sawn, but split with wedges from huge trunks of 400-year-old oak; thus it would be impossible to duplicate this construction today, for lack of appropriate lumber. This led to considering the dilemma of the organ Peter Gerritsz built in 1479 for St-Nikolaikerk in Utrecht (moved to the Rijksmuseum in 1885 and then, after World War II, to the Koorkerk in Middelburgh where it is presently located), which has the only surviving Blockwerk chest, made from two wainscot blocks glued together, with grooves chiseled out. Edskes has recommended against the organ's restoration, as that would risk the loss of so much historical material. Even to make a functional copy of the organ could be a dubious venture, as so much of the original organ is missing, and the techniques of its construction are largely unknown. Edskes went on to describe the organ at the Martinikerk in Groningen, in which Arp Schnitger preserved several ancient stops, including a remarkable principal with a triple-rank treble, the only true "Doof" (16th-century Dutch for "principal") surviving in the Netherlands. Edskes also told how in 1944 he found the pipes of a rare ancient Zink stop (a broad-scaled cylindrical reed, precursor of the French Cromorne), lying atop an organ case!

David Yearsley moderated Friday's afternoon session, "From Old to New in the Netherlands

and America.” George Taylor (Taylor & Boody organ builders, Staunton, VA) addressed “The Influence of the Early Dutch Tradition on American Builders.” Taylor met Brombaugh while they were learning in von Beckerath’s shop, and he joined Brombaugh’s shop towards the end of the building of the Lorain organ. He noted this organ’s daring innovations: a Great 8’ Principal with a double-ranked treble in façade; a *trompe* Pedal tower inspired by the painting of Haarlem’s Gothic organ; and the first use of unequal temperament (Werckmeister III) anywhere in the world in a newly-built large modern organ. The shop’s subsequent instrument for Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Toledo was even more daring: historic-style casework (based on the organ in Rhenen, Netherlands); flue pipes with higher mouths for a more relaxed, beautiful tone (von Beckerath taught raising mouths just short of too high); pipe metal of 17% tin; the use of one basic principal scale from 8’ through mixtures, in Renaissance style. Central Lutheran’s organ marked the first use of pipes made in Brombaugh’s shop; Taylor was given the task of establishing the pipe shop. The first rank made was the Pedal 2’ Nachthorn of 94% lead and 6% trace elements. Tests showed the great stability of pipes made from a 98% lead alloy, discovered in some ancient pipes by Jan de Zwart (once thought to be by Niehoff) Dutch organologist, Dr. Maarten Vente gave Brombaugh in 1971 so this became Brombaugh’s standard alloy thereafter. Pipe metal was cast with tapered thickness, then hammered following historic practice. Since Brombaugh had decided to move his shop to the Pacific Northwest when Opus 19 was completed, his former partners George Taylor and John Boody moved to Taylor’s home state of Virginia to establish a new shop in Staunton—with the three always remaining close friends working together to advance the art of organ building. Taylor & Boody’s four-manual organ for Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts used a case design based on Niehoff’s for Lüneburg; some Oberwerk stops in this organ were also copied from Lüneburg, and the lead principal chorus in the Hauptwerk also shows Dutch inspiration. Their organ for Saint Thomas Church in New York City has a case based on the organ Peter Janszoon de Swart built in 1565 for the Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden.

Frits Elshout, General Director of Flentrop Orgelbouw, then related a few personal notes about various practical aspects in dealing with historic material and sources. Elshout stressed that in organ building based on historical models, the quality of interpretation is what counts. He has seen many organs built as historical copies, which were technically accurate—but the “soul” was missing. Even in restoration, organ builders have a tendency to approach matters too technically. He then noted: “all of John Brombaugh’s organs have a soul.” In the end, organ builders’ work requires reflection in collaboration with musicians.

Elshout was then joined in a panel discussion with John Brombaugh, Koos van de Linde, Winold van der Putten (builder in Province Groningen specializing in medieval organs), George Taylor and moderator John Boody. Boody started with the question “When do we reach a point when we don’t restore?” Elshout noted that it’s hard to be specific, as organ restoration procedure needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Van de Linde said that while some cases, e.g. the simple repair of chests, are fairly straightforward, and the question of how the organ is to be used should be taken into account; otherwise, the time has come to be more

cautious, though some organ's recent second restorations have been good. Van der Putten described his building a medieval organ in the style of Theophilus (c. 1250; see [www.orgelmaerij.nl/frameen.html](http://www.orgelmaerij.nl/frameen.html), link "Organs," then "Medieval organs"). George Taylor related his firm's experience in re-restoring the Tannenberg organ at Salem's Single Brothers House. A typical restorer's dilemma presented itself with original pipes which had been changed into a Gamba: the name "Gamba" had been scribed onto the fronts of the pipes. But these were to be restored to the organ's façade. Should the "Gamba" scribings be kept, as they were also part of the organ's history? The restorers finally decided to clean and polish the pipes, restoring them to the façade minus the "Gamba" marks. Brombaugh told of a c. 1670 organ in the Frick Museum in Pittsburgh, once inspected by Gustav Leonhardt, who recommended Brombaugh as restorer. Built for Louis XV's daughter and similar to the instrument shown in Plate LXXXIX of Dom Bedos's 'Facteur d'Orgues', it has two ranks (4' Oak Gedackt, 8' Regal) and is in virtually original condition. Brombaugh also gave an account of his effort to save the Schnitger organ of Groningen's A-Kerk, to the point of removing the organ to safe storage in the Martinikerk.

Harald Vogel spoke of how we have already reached the point past the last restorations. For instance, public outcry forestalled a recent plan to restore the A-Kerk organ to a hypothetical original state. Such proposals that go too far are based on an excessive optimism of somehow getting even closer to the organ's original state, which is simply not possible. One particularly unfortunate case is that of the recent restoration of the Hildebrandt organ in Störmthal, which had been the best-preserved organ directly associated with J. S. Bach, who played the organ's inaugural concert in the fall of 1723, composing his cantata BWV 194 for the occasion. This organ, Hildebrandt's opus one, so impressed Bach that he befriended the builder, culminating in his involvement with this builder's great organ at the Wenzelkirche in Naumburg. Vogel said that this organ's new restoration included the historically uncalled-for raising of the organ's wind-pressure—plus, the church's acoustic was drastically altered with modern paint and flooring; so this organ's original sound is now lost.

The afternoon continued at Brombaugh's organ building shop, closed since his retirement some five years ago. Bruce Shull (former apprentice with Brombaugh and then at Taylor & Boody) offered a slide presentation on "Historic Organ Cases as Models for Contemporary Organ Building," showing how the masterful cases of Rhenen, Oosthuizen, Salamanca, Bremen, Lübeck, Leiden and others served to inspired the modern cases of Brombaugh, Fritts, and Taylor & Boody. Rudy Zuiderveld, organist at First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Illinois, then told of his experiences related to the creation of that church's Brombaugh Opus 35 in "Customer Conversations with John Brombaugh – from Niehoff to English Swell." He described how Brombaugh adapted North German and Dutch tonal concepts for a modern American congregation, meeting the needs for a versatile organ for congregational singing, varied repertoire, featuring an English-inspired Swell for choral accompaniment. Zuiderveld related the process in how the congregation was "sold" the need for this organ, which included a video presentation. John Boody and George Taylor then told "Tales from the Brombaugh Shop in Ohio," starting with humorous anecdotes, such as the time Brombaugh drove across

the Arizona desert in searing heat at 70 MPH, listening to Bach's *Magnificat* on the car's stereo... while the car was in second gear the whole time! This led to a serious description of Brombaugh's landmark Opus 9, built in 1971 for Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Toledo, Ohio. They enumerated this organ's daring technical features: shallow casework, a Blockwerk-inspired Great chorus, a highly concentrated stop list, historic case architecture, suspended mechanical key action, mortised tenons, no slider seals in the chests, hammered lead pipes, use of solid wood throughout (no plywood), mechanical stop action with hand-forged iron, wedge bellows... This organ was recently sold when the Baptist congregation moved out of their building; its new home will be Schroeder's Concert Hall in the Donald & Maureen Green Art Center, Sonoma State University, California.

Friday evening's recital took place at Beall Concert Hall at the University of Oregon, home to a 38-stop four-manual organ built by Jürgen Ahrend in 1972. The program featured music off the beaten path: Matthew Dirst played Alessandro Scarlatti, Eustache du Caurroy, Louis Couperin, Diego de Conceição and Georg Böhm; David Yearsley played Handel. Both performed with aplomb and virtuosity.

We returned to Central Lutheran to begin Saturday's morning session, "The Netherlands and North German Organ: Building Traditions and Performance Practices." Matthew Dirst was moderator. David Yearsley opened with "The Niehoff Pedal and North German Feet." He outlined the importance of the pedals in organ playing in north and central Germany, focusing on how this affected the Niehoff organ at Lüneburg. In his *Organographia* (1619), Michael Praetorius praised the Lüneburg organ, in spite of its limited pedal. Arp Schnitger evaluated the organ as having no "gravitas." Schnitger's student Dropa rebuilt the organ in 1712-14, adding two large pedal towers. Georg Böhm, who played this organ before Dropa's additions, then had a limited pedal (a 16' Untersatz from low F, then coupling only).

Elizabeth Harrison then addressed "The Significance of Dutch and North German Organs for Current American Organ Pedagogy." She related her own experience of beginning organ lessons on a one-manual Brombaugh, and how it taught her that a responsive instrument built with integrity and beauty of sound is vital to teaching. She then outlined the history of organ pedagogy in the USA: the influence of Mildred Andrews, Alexander McCurdy and Arthur Poister, as well as the playing of E. Power Biggs; many students traveling to Europe for study after World War II; Fenner Douglass bringing Flentrop organs to Oberlin and Duke University; Harald Vogel accepting his first American student in 1970, then first visiting the US to play the Toledo Ashland Avenue Brombaugh in 1972; Vogel's residency at Westminster Choir College; Vogel's tours of European organs offered 1970-1992. She noted how approaches to pedagogy have changed: few schools now use method books, and technical exercises supplements are rarely used. Baroque music is now standard repertory, when much of it was previously seen as peripheral, or simply remained unknown.

Harald Vogel then spoke concerning the question of a chorale fantasia on “Nun freut euch” attributed to Dieterich Buxtehude, putting forth Heinrich Scheidemann or Adam Reincken as other possible composers, even suggesting that the work might be a collaboration of at least two of these.

The morning continued at the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection. We began with a fine concert, started by David Yearsley playing Handel and Scarlatti on a Cristofori-style fortepiano by Thomas and Barbara Wolf. His performance incorporated a brilliant improvised cadenza serving as a link between the two compositions. The Cascade Consort continued, with gambist Joanna Blenduff, baritone David Rogers, organist Julia Brown (playing a Brombaugh continuo positive), elegantly and movingly performing Buxtehude, Scheidemann, Johan Rosenmüller, J. S. Bach, and Schütz.

Mark Brombaugh performed the afternoon concert on the Church of the Resurrection’s organ, one of John Brombaugh’s last: Opus 38a, of two manuals and 12 stops. Mark confidently and beautifully performed works of Buxtehude, Sweelinck, Gade, David Dahl and J. S. Bach. Dahl’s *Dove of Peace: An American Suite for Organ* was played in *alternatim* with the audience singing verses of the hymn “Messiah Comes on Wings of Hope.” This provided the perfect opportunity to hear how splendidly this beautiful organ supports singing. Indeed, Opus 38 (sister and final instrument, Op. 38b is in the Highlands Chapel in Seattle) was perhaps the ideal way for John to end his organ building career, with what truly represented his original vision: to build small, eloquently simple organs to lead congregational song.

This was followed by a panel discussion with all presenters. This featured Frits Elshout describing his firm’s project to reconstruct the great organ, so esteemed by Bach, at the Catharinenkirche in Hamburg that was partially lost in later major rebuilds and then totally with the destruction of the church in World War II. Although essentially a new organ, it retains some 500 extant pipes from the 17th-century organ and the stop list reported by Matheson in 1720 (see [www.flentrop.nl/uknews.html](http://www.flentrop.nl/uknews.html)).

Back at the hotel, we saw the film *Martinikerk Rondeau*, a documentary about the history and restoration of the Niehoff/Schnitger organ of the Martinikerk in Gronigen. The film featured Cor Edskes and Jürgen Ahrend, and included excellent performances by organist and improviser Sietze de Vries. This film is included in the DVD/CD set *Pronkjuwelen in Stad en Ommeland: The Historic Organs of the Province of Groningen* (available from [www.ohscatalog.org/prinstenomhi.html](http://www.ohscatalog.org/prinstenomhi.html)).

Saturday closed with a substantial evening recital by Harald Vogel on the Central Lutheran organ. Vogel played music by Hieronymus Praetorius, Johann Steffens, Sweelinck, Jacob Praetorius, and Weckmann. He then played the mysterious “Nun freut euch” Fantasia, issuing ballots for the audience to vote on which composer they thought it should be attributed to! Vogel then presented the great E minor Praeludium of Bruhns with his theory that it is actu-

ally a program work about the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. Vogel concluded with works of Böhm, J. S. Bach and Lübeck.

Sunday morning brought us back to Central Lutheran for a reception in honor of John Brombaugh and his wife Christa. This was followed by a festive worship service, with music under the able direction of Central Lutheran's organist & music director, ElRay Stewart-Cook.

Thanks go to the Westfield Center for organizing and realizing this vitally informative, intensely stimulating, once-in-a-lifetime event!



### ***Keyboard Perspectives III (2010)***

We have a first-rate collection of essays in this year's volume, including articles on Chopin and Schumann, in this bicentenary year for both, and a special section on "Bach and the Organ," which collects together essays from the 2010 Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative (EROI) festival (co-sponsored by the Westfield Center). This year's volume is on a slightly later schedule than previous issues, and is scheduled to go into production in a few weeks time. It should be out at the end of the year, and will be sent to all members with a current 2010 membership.

We are accepting submissions for the next volume, *Keyboard Perspectives IV* (2011), and would especially welcome articles with a focus on the harpsichord or clavichord.

Contents of *Keyboard Perspectives III* include:

- Jonathan Bellman, "Chopin's Pianism and the Reconstruction of the Ineffable"
- David Breitman, "Time-travel for Pianists: How Today's Players Can Learn from Yesterday's Instruments"
- Nicholas Mathew, "Darmstadt Pianism, 'Historically Informed' Webern, and Modernism's Vanishing Performer"
- Stefania Neonato, "Irony and the Overcoming of the Mechanical in Schumann's Toccata, Op. 7"

Bach and the Organ:

- Robin A. Leaver, “Bach’s Organ Music in the Context of the Liturgy”
- George B. Stauffer, “Bach’s Late Works and the Central German Organ”
- Gregory Butler, “*Instrumente Mangel*—The Cantata Movements with Obligato Organ as a reflection of Bach’s Performing Forces”
- Lynn Edwards Butler, “Towards a reassessment of the Organs in Leipzig in the years 1710–1745”

Reviews:

- Sezi Seskir on recent Schumann recordings
- Erin Helyard on Clementi



**Submissions to the Newsletter may be sent to**

Sylvia Berry, Associate Editor (e-mail: [sylvia@sylviaberry.org](mailto:sylvia@sylviaberry.org))

Erica Johnson, Associate Editor (e-mail: [ericajohnson@verizon.net](mailto:ericajohnson@verizon.net))

**The Westfield Center**

101 Lincoln Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853

[info@westfield.org](mailto:info@westfield.org) / [www.westfield.org](http://www.westfield.org)



© The Westfield Center, 2010