

# Westfield

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**Summer 2012**

*Tilman Skowronek, Editor*



Warm welcome to the third issue of the Westfield newsletter of this year! It reaches you while the Westfield Center *International Harpsichord Academy and Competition* is still fresh in the minds of those who were present. Joseph Gascho has been so kind as to provide a detailed report on this event. I have also taken the opportunity to interview Professor Mitzi Meyerson, the Academy instructor, about her approach to teaching the harpsichord.

Anthony Romaniuk, the prize-winner of last year's *Fortepiano Competition*, will play a number of concerts throughout the country during the upcoming concert season; in the second interview of this newsletter he gives us the news about these concerts, and talks about his relationship to historical keyboard instruments.

A review of the new recording by the German harpsichordist and fortepianist Andreas Staier, featuring Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* and a selection of variations on Diabelli's famous waltz by ten other composers, follows Anthony's interview.

*(Continued on page 2)*



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## CONTENTS

- The Westfield Center International Harpsichord Academy and Competition 3
- An Interview with Mitzi Meyerson 8
- An Interview with Anthony Romaniuk 11
- A Review of Andreas Staier's *Diabelli Variations* 19
- Organ symposium at Cornell, September 21–22, 2012 20
- Announcing the EROI festival "Bach and the Organ" 22

*(Continued from page 1)*

Two announcements of upcoming events conclude the newsletter. Annette Richards informs us about an upcoming *Organ symposium* at Cornell University, and Annie Laver contributes with the latest information about the *EROI festival “Bach and the Organ,”* which will take place in Rochester. Both events will take place in the second half of September. Many thanks to all the contributors, and especially Joseph Gascho and Kenneth Slowik, Robin Blanton for an extra proofreading eye, Evan Cortens for the layout and, as always, Annette Richards for her valuable last-minute feedback.

The next newsletter will appear in the late fall 2012. As always, members are encouraged to submit contributions, which will reach me via [info@westfield.org](mailto:info@westfield.org) or [tilman@skowroneck.de](mailto:tilman@skowroneck.de)

*Tilman Skowroneck*



**THE WESTFIELD CENTER INTERNATIONAL HARPSICHORD  
ACADEMY AND COMPETITION  
BY JOSEPH GASCHO**

The Westfield Center International Harpsichord Academy and Competition attracted nearly thirty harpsichordists to Washington DC to study and compete for more than \$15,000 in prize money. Recitals by competition jurors as well as opportunities for students and competitors to play antique instruments at the Smithsonian Institute and the Library of Congress enriched the meticulously organized two-week event.

The academy portion in the first week attracted a handful of student performers, as well as a number of auditors from the Washington community. Led by master teacher Mitzi Meyerson from the Universität der Künste in Berlin, the classes focused on the basics of harpsichord playing. As Francis Yun, one of the participants, wrote later, “The Academy was an incredible experience. It was just four students plus Mitzi, so we formed a very strong bond with each other. Each of us got an amazing amount of attention (all of us played 2 hours every day in class) and we covered a broad range of topics from solo repertoire to continuo playing and harpsichord technique. One of the benefits of having such a small class was that each of us got to try out all of the technical exercises that Mitzi demonstrated. That would have been impossible with a bigger class. I felt that I learned quite a lot at the end of the experience. What I appreciated most was that we spent a substantial amount of time on small details, polishing our performances, and setting up a good strategy on how to approach learning and performing harpsichord repertoire. I would definitely do this again, if offered.” (See also the interview with Mitzi Meyerson further below.)



The foyer of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Photo by Catherine Slowik

The University of Maryland hosted the Academy and provided numerous rooms for practicing. The intimate Gildenhorn Recital Hall in the university's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center was the site of the competition performances. The five jurors were Arthur Haas (SUNY Stony Brook), Charlotte Mattax Moersch (University of Illinois), Davitt Moroney (UC Berkeley), Christine Schornsheim (Hochschule für Musik in Munich), and Kenneth Slowik (Smithsonian Institute).

Haas, Moersch and Moroney, along with academy instructor Mitzi Meyerson, each performed solo recitals at the Smithsonian Institute on harpsichords by Andreas Ruckers (Antwerp, 1620), Nicolaus DeQuoco (Florence, 1694), Johann Daniel Dulcken (Antwerp, 1745) and Benoist Stehlin (Paris, 1760). These recitals and other aspects of the academy and competition received considerable press coverage in the Washington Post and the local classical music blog, Ionarts. Unfortunately, none of the rounds of the competition was reviewed, however. (Selected press coverage is available at: <http://westfield.org/competition/harpsichord2012/Press-Coverage/>)



The Jury; l. to r. Kenneth Slowik, Davitt Moroney, Christine Schornsheim, Charlotte Mattax Moersch, Arthur Haas, with Competition President James Weaver in 2nd row. Smithsonian photo by Harold Dorwin.

The repertoire for the three rounds of competition was chosen by the jury, coordinated by jury chairperson Kenneth Slowik. The first-round repertoire included an Invention/Sinfonia pair by J. S. Bach (either G Minor, A Major, or B Minor), two courantes by Louis Marchand from his D Minor Suite, and the competitor's choice of two sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti. The second round focused on 17th-century music, requiring a choice of pieces by Louis Couperin (either in C Minor, D Major, or E Minor, including an appropriate prélude), an English virginal piece (William Byrd's "Walsingham," Thomas Tomkins' "Barafostus' Dream," or Giles

Farnaby's "Up Tails All"), and the *Tombeau sur la mort de Monsieur Blancheroche* and a toccata from the second book of Johann Jacob Froberger. The third and final round featured Girolamo Frescobaldi's Toccata Undecima from his *Il secondo libro di toccate*, J. S. Bach's first Partita in B-flat Major, a set of pieces from François Couperin's third or fourth books, and a choice of one from several sonatas by C. P. E. Bach or Joseph Haydn.

The overall level of playing was consistently very high: the competitors generally displayed good taste, an artful touch and highly accurate playing, but with a wide variety of interpretations and bold creative decisions. The second-round performances of Froberger's *Tombeau* showed this variety. The *Tombeau*'s final descending scale is well known in the harpsichord repertoire, and the ten performances of this scale were each quite different from one another. Marchand's two *Courantes* in the first round were also pieces that clearly showed the true colors of the players. In general, ornamentation in repeated sections was minimal and considerably more ornaments might have been desired. The ornaments of more than a few players became a display of less than the best taste.



Barbara Wolf tunes. Photo by Catherine Slowik

The wide-ranging repertoire offered the chance for a variety of harpsichords, and local harpsichordists and institutions loaned fifteen instruments by builders Mark Adler, William Dowd, John Phillips, Martin Skowroneck, and Thomas and Barbara Wolf. Webb Wiggins, professor of harpsichord at Oberlin Conservatory, even brought an instrument from Oberlin for one competitor who required a high *g'* for a Scarlatti sonata. Barbara Wolf was responsible for the impeccable maintenance and tuning, and different temperaments were available for each round. Players and jurors alike voiced their admiration for the quality, regulation and tuning of the instruments.



Julia Ageyeva Hess. Photo by Catherine Slowik

The jurors chose the instruments available for each round. For the first round, two Wolf instruments were available: a German single after Vater and a French double after Dumont. For the second round, a Phillips Italian single after Giusti, a Dowd Franco-Flemish double after Ruckers, and a Skow-

roneck German single after Mietke were used. The final round featured three instruments by the Wolfs: an Italian single after “GBC,” a French double after Germain, and a German double after Vater. The only thing more diverse than the variety of harpsichords was the nationalities of the performers. Juror Haas pointed out that in the second round featuring ten performers, nine nations were represented.



Jury and the Finalists. Front row l. to r.: Stephen Gamboa, Sabina Chukurova, Julia Ageyeva Hess, Ignacio Prego and Ronan Khalil. Photo by Catherine Slowik

The jury sat in the rear balcony, almost invisible to the audience. The first rounds were sparsely attended, but more than eighty people attended the final evening session, which ended up featuring the first and second prize winners. After the final round, the jury took just over an hour to make their decisions. According to Competition President James Weaver, these were based on the finalists’ performances in both the second and third rounds. Several sources reported that the jury aimed for real transparency, and the competitors were told they would eventually receive a list of the juror’s votes during the three rounds.

Thirty-one year old Spaniard Ignacio Prego took the \$7,500 first prize in the competition. His playing was steady and somewhat conservative, but it was also consistently elegant and intelligent. Several audience members found that his Louis Couperin in the second round belonged to the best playing in the competition.

Prego has studied with Elisabeth Wright at Indiana University, and will be studying in the Historical Performance Program at Juilliard this fall. He recently recorded his first CD, an all-Bach album for the VERSO label.

Julia Ageyeva Hess of Estonia earned \$3,500 for her second prize. As with the other finalists, her playing in the third and final round wasn't her strongest, and it was probably her beautiful and thoughtful performance in the second round that brought her second place. American Stephen Gamboa won third place and \$2,500, and the remaining two finalists Sabina Chukurova of Tajikistan/Germany and Ronan Khalil of France each took \$500 for honorable mention.

Most of the audience must have been somewhat surprised by the outcome, given that they had cast their ballots for Ronan Khalil as the winner, in contrast to the decision of the jury—a fact that earned him the \$1,000 Audience Prize. As must be the case with most competitions, there were other surprising choices, too. The failure of Marianna Henriksson to move past the second round despite her highly imaginative and accurate playing was one of the biggest surprises.



The audience toasts the winners. Photo by Catherine Slowik

Overall responses from the competitors and audience were nevertheless decidedly positive. Top-prize winners Prego and Hess both wrote about the overall quality of the competition and the harpsichords. Hess said, “I will surely remember this competition by the great choice of instruments—it was the best I’ve ever seen!” and Prego added, “The instruments at the competition were great. Thanks to Barbara Wolf, they were always in a great shape and it was a pleasure to perform on such a varied collection.”



The top two winners. Photo by Catherine Slowik

Mid-week day trips to downtown Washington during both the academy and competition were highlights for many of the players. The tours featured opportunities to play 17th- and 18th-century instruments at the Smithsonian, a chance to try one of Wanda Landowska's Pleyel harpsichords and examine some of her first editions at the Library of Congress, and a tour of art works featuring musicians at the National Gallery of Art. Academy participant and competitor Yun wrote, “My absolute favorite part of the whole experience was trying out the instruments at the Smithsonian and Library

of Congress. The instruments were fantastic ... and I felt so privileged to have been able to go behind closed doors and spend some time playing and learning about these harpsichords.”

## AN INTERVIEW WITH MITZI MEYERSON

BY TILMAN SKOWRONECK

*Professor Meyerson, you have just concluded teaching the Summer Academy of the Westfield International Harpsichord Competition and Academy 2012. In my own experience, masterclasses can make a profound and long-lasting impression on students—But how about the teachers? How do you feel after saying goodbye to the participants?*

I can only speak for my own experience. Music altogether is a very personal thing, and when we talk about learning how to play, it brings up a lot more than just the correct way to execute a trill. Most students play with tensions in the body, manifested in the neck, shoulders, hands, forearms ... learning to release these tensions is often harder than anything in music. It also has to do with everything in their lives, so dealing with that can be an extremely personal matter. Of course we spend a lot of time on musical topics—forms, ornamentation, rubato, national styles—but I find that we wind up discussing the way one uses one's equipment, and that means looking into one's strengths and compensating for the weaknesses. It seems to be terribly difficult for many students to release the tensions that prevent them from playing at their best level. Once we can address this, their sound on the harpsichord is really transformed, and it becomes much easier for them to play well. It is clearly recognizable; the sound is fuller, freer, and more flexible. People show their hearts when they play, and there is a fear that their audience may not think much of their hearts. This is very scary! We try to overcome this, and it draws the members of the class together. Each one is rooting for his colleagues, and they all burst into applause when a stumbling block is overcome. The class feels like a family to me. Everyone tries his best, and everyone gets support from all the others.



*How many active participants were there? From which countries, at what stage of their development were they?*

There were four active participants and then auditors all through the week at different times. One lady was from Korea, and the rest are resident in America. Two were candidates in the competition, honing up the repertoire for the first round. The other two were also intensely involved with music but chose not to compete. That was actually a nice thing because then we could address different kinds of pieces as well as what was on the list for the competition.

*The organizers of the Harpsichord Competition and Academy have provided an impressive number of harpsichords in different styles. Can you tell us something about how the students of the academy approached this variety?*

The organizers of the Westfield Competition (hats off to Ken Slowik and Maja Anderson for their marvelous vigilance in attending to all these complicated things) were spectacular at finding an impressive collection of harpsichords, and also, thanks to Barbara Wolf, keeping them maintained and in tune. There were French and Flemish doubles, a variety of Italian and German single-manual instruments, and a choice of 6th comma and mean-tone tunings. It was a real plus for the people in the Academy and competition to have a chance to play and hear so many different kinds of instruments. Harpsichords are the best teachers, and they really do teach us how to play, if we listen carefully to the advice.

*What music did the students present to you? Do you feel that today's harpsichord students have typical preferences for certain styles? Which styles were, perhaps, missing?*

I think there was a good representation of all types of music. Of course the candidates brought the pieces for the competition, but these were designed to cover a wide range of styles and epochs. We had French dance suites, J. S. Bach Partitas and Inventions, English pieces such as Farnaby, Byrd, Tomkins and Purcell, and a lot of early Italian music. The only thing that was conspicuously lacking was later music in the galant style. I have no doubt that if the course had lasted another day or two, we would have addressed these as well.

*What is your favorite music to teach?*

I like teaching everything! I never make stipulations as to specific repertoire in a course, because every piece is interesting and brings up many things to study. Even if a student says they are not prepared enough to play a piece, I ask them to bring it anyway so we can find out in advance what things to look out for—fugal themes, ornamentation, solutions to technical difficulties, etc.

*During a masterclass, you're bound to encounter very different, or even contrasting manners of playing the harpsichord. What are your strategies to handle this situation?*

I think it is important to be flexible and address the needs of each student so that they will play better after the lesson than before it. What can make someone play better is the big question. Some need to know what the ornament symbols mean, some need to identify where they are tensing their arms unnecessarily, some need to learn how to conduct for themselves before they begin a piece. We look at style, form, technical problems of all kinds, rhetoric, and presentation. I always think that if people take care to understand how they communicate with speech, the same tools should transfer easily to how they can do the same thing with music. My first question with every student, no matter at what level they are, is, "What do you want to say?" and then the next question is, "How do we communicate it?" I find that in most cases, the players are not sure what they wish to convey. I can show them how the same text can be presented to be aggressive or mournful, depending on the touch, timing, tempo, and registration. This awareness is an exciting turning point for them, and they start to consider how every

small hesitation has its nuance. Sometimes all a student needs is confidence. I try to create an atmosphere where it will be possible for students to risk showing their hearts in public. This is the hardest part of being a music student. I wrestled with this myself when I was young, so I have a very good idea of what they are feeling and how to help them.

*Do you provide much technical advice, or do you prefer to focus on interpretation?*

I would say we spend about one third of the time on hand technique (that includes articulation, fingering, angles of the arms and hands to get better results, the relaxed execution of trills and other ornaments), one third on musical concerns such as phrasing, style, and timing, and the rest divided between rhetoric, nuance, breathing, history, and related matters. Studying music opens many doors!

*Does teaching masterclasses for one-time students in front of a listening audience feel different from teaching regular students? Do you adjust your teaching style when teaching in public?*

I basically teach in the same way, whether in public or on a one-to-one basis. However, I will notice if a private student presents himself with red-rimmed eyes, and if we are alone I will see if he wishes to discuss the problem. I think I am a little stricter with my regular students, because I am trying to shove them on a particular road of self-awareness so they can teach themselves. I feel that I have been a successful teacher when my students don't need lessons any more. My students tell me a lot of personal things; they may be very ill, or decide to quit music, or broke up their love affair, or are pregnant. Naturally, in the face of things that change one's course in life, how to navigate a 4–3 trill doesn't have the same importance. When they need to do trills, we work on that, and if they need to talk, we talk. I never expose personal problems in a public setting, even when I pick up on them.

*What about dynamics on the instrument? How do harpsichord students of today treat the hidden potential of the instrument? What do you tell them?*

I spent some time discussing and demonstrating the hierarchy of beats, and how to get a sense of this weight on a single note. One can do a wonderful exercise for becoming aware of the fine difference between a bar in 2 and a bar in 4. It looks like a baby exercise until one tries to do it; then it is the hardest thing in the world! We worked on varying length of notes, the subtle size of silence in the articulation between a small interval and a large one, for example between a third and a seventh. The speed and angle of the fingers make a big difference in the sound. One can play on the pad or the point of the fingers, and this produces a range of sound qualities as well. This enormous attention to detail is what makes a nice rendition different from a great performance. It is a lot to assimilate, but I do one thing at a time, and make sure we do not move on until the first thing feels secure. I think when students start with me, they are often shocked at how much work I expect from them. They feel pretty fine that they have the notes

more or less down, and then I start adding all these tiny enhancements. Most of the time, they find it delightful, like opening a door into a whole new world.

*What is the main concern of the harpsichord student of 2012? Which question do you get most frequently?*

Actually, I was surprised to find that the contestants and the students did not seem worried about their future as musicians. They feel that if they work hard, there will be a place for them. It is possible that this situation is different in America than it is in Europe. I have not heard this kind of optimism from my students over there. No one that I know thinks it will be possible to live from playing concerts; perhaps there is more to do in the States. I hope so!

*What type of advice would you like to give people who consider participating in a harpsichord masterclass? How to prepare, what to avoid?*

People study and play music for so many reasons. Some are working towards a concert career, and some just enjoy the focus and discipline of playing such a difficult instrument. I don't have any advice for how or why people should study. I try to figure out what it really is that each person is looking for, and then I attempt to help them find the way to get there.

*Professor Meyerson, thank you very much for this interview!*



### AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTHONY ROMANIUK

In August 2011, fortepianist, pianist and harpsichordist *Anthony Romaniuk* was awarded first prize at the inaugural *Westfield International Fortepiano competition* in Ithaca, N.Y. In the 2012–13 season he will undertake a solo tour of the U.S.A., as part of the prize from the Westfield competition. In anticipation of these concerts, I have asked Anthony some questions about his musical plans, his views on historical instruments and performance practice, and—Pixar movies!

Anthony Romaniuk holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and the conservatories in The Hague and Amsterdam, having completed his master's degree in fortepiano at the latter in 2011. He continues to study privately with Sally Sargent in Vienna and has previously studied with Richard Egarr, Bart Van Oort, Jacques Ogg and Daniel Epstein. Now based in Brussels, Romaniuk performs as a soloist, chamber musician and continuo player throughout Europe, his native Australia and the United States on fortepiano, modern piano, harpsichord and organ.

*Tilman Skowroneck*

*Anthony, what news is there about your upcoming solo tour? Where will you be playing, and what kind of music will you be playing?*

The ‘tour’ actually happens over a period of eight months and will take place over three trips. The concerts which are directly due to the Westfield prize begin with Ann Arbor, MI (October 21), followed by Los Angeles (January 13), Raleigh, NC (January 20) and possibly Boston. Additionally, on each trip there will be other, non-prize-related, concerts and workshops taking place in San Francisco, Phoenix, Chicago and New York, but not everything has been finalized at this point. In time all the information will be on my website!



In terms of repertoire, I’m playing primarily Mozart and Beethoven, with each of the major forms of the Classical style—Sonata, Rondo, Fantasy and Variations—making an appearance. The program in Raleigh is rather different, consisting of chamber music, arrangements and transcriptions. I’m looking forward to playing some quatre-mains with Andrew Willis on that concert!

For Boston I’m proposing an early Chopin program—I hope they like the idea. With such repertoire one runs the risk of falling in between genres: being too ‘modern’ for ‘early music’ and too ‘early music’ for the ‘moderns’.

*How do you select your pieces, and how is this repertoire special to you?*

Selecting these pieces was done by the usual process: I had a few ideas which I discussed with my teacher, and this collection of music was the result. Some pieces are rather well known and oft-played (e.g. Mozart K. 475) and other pieces are infrequently played on historical instruments (Beethoven’s *Eroica* Variations). I think it’s nice for audiences to hear at least some familiar repertoire, through which it becomes easier to know the style of the performer.

I never, ever, played Chopin when I only played modern piano, but the combination of early recordings and experimentation on appropriate pianos allowed me to hear it in a new context—so it’s now among my absolute favorite music to perform.

*Do you already know which kinds of instruments you will be playing?*

More or less, yes. Of course, the proportion of instruments with a range of five octaves (or slightly more) to instruments with a range of six or more octaves must be something like 10 to 1, so one is pushed into particular areas of repertoire most of the time. But I think that all

fortepianists are used to this—we have to program based around a generic type of instrument. It's not as if there is a shortage of repertoire...

For Boston, I'm hoping to find a six-and-a-half-octave Viennese original or copy for the Chopin program—similar to what Chopin saw during his Viennese sojourn at various times in 1829–31.

*Speaking of instruments, it is always interesting to hear the story of how a modern pianist got involved with the early piano or the harpsichord, or both. What's your tale? How did you get interested in early keyboard instruments?*

In late 2005 I was in Australia taking time off to prepare for serious compositional study when I heard the tail end of Charpentier's *Te Deum* (played by Les Arts Florissants) on the radio. I was driving, but it was so captivating, I had to pull over and listen. More or less at that juncture I decided that I needed to change direction and study harpsichord, in order to get to know this awe-inspiring music! I often refer to this as my 'road to Damascus' moment. After taking a few lessons back in New York with Arthur Hass I enrolled in the conservatorium at The Hague, which seemed like an accessible entry point to the European community.

There was no such dramatic moment for fortepiano. One day I just walked into the wrong room and saw an old piano—I could not have said how old. 1890s? 1850s? I had no idea. It turned out to be a six-octave instrument by Gerling, c. 1835. I didn't find this piano particularly interesting, but it seemed wise to take lessons when the opportunity existed. Slowly, slowly, the expressive potential of these instruments was revealed to me.

Of course, one passes through a stage of being completely obsessed with the multiplicity of options of early pianos, particularly coming from the modern piano, where one has no choice of instrument. But here, you can play a Silbermann or Stein (with or without leather on the hammers), Spath und Schmah, Walter (early, middle, -und Sohn), Brodmann, Broadwood, Graf, Fritz, Streicher, André Stein: you can go on and on *ad infinitum*.

Nowadays I'm a bit more relaxed about such things. Ultimately, for me, the choice of instrument is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself meaning, it's a constant in any given performance, and therefore the variables of each performance will adjust or be adjusted to as a result of this constant.

*Could you elaborate on this point? To many lovers and players of the modern piano, the standard concert grand remains something of a measuring stick, and discussions about alternatives very soon turn to how the sound, the attack, and the dynamics of the earlier piano are "different." How do you define your "variables" and how do you help your audiences to rid themselves of this fixation on surface characteristics? What needs to come in its place?*

Firstly, regarding constants and variables: the piano itself is there to help bring into being the combined thoughts of the composer and performer—but the instrument itself cannot be changed; it is an outside factor. Therefore one cannot play beyond what the instrument is capable of. One can only stretch one's own capabilities. Of course, different players draw different sounds out of the same piano, but that's exactly the point: it's the same piano! The player has the responsibility to explore the furthestmost possibilities of the instrument.

Regarding the audience/player perception of early pianos: this is certainly a tricky area. In terms of an explanation, I use the same metaphor for audiences and modern pianists—that is, an early piano is filled to overflowing by a Beethoven or a Mozart. Exploding with sound. Utilizing every sounding part. “Brechen muß das Klavier!” (LvB!)

If we think of it in reverse, Scarlatti's music sounds rather good on the modern piano, but the river-bursting-its-banks-type explosive energy is missing. The instrument is simply too massive to make the two-part textures sound like a universe unto themselves. But on a fine Italian harpsichord, bass and treble realized with a 2 x 8' registration almost rips the soundboard out of the case. This holds true throughout the development of the piano. Chopin knew his piano's strengths and wrote handsomely for them, as did Brahms, Ravel, Rachmaninoff and Ligeti. An aside: this concept—the ever-increasing massiveness of piano writing with the end goal of filling up the instrument—explains why we program recitals in the way that we do (chronologically). After playing a few Ligeti Études, our Brahms is somehow less impressive; indeed, it sounds small (not to mention our Mozart)...

So that's how I like to explain it. The *Eroica* variations sound great on a modern piano, but they are completely overwhelming (overflowing!) on a five-octave Viennese beauty.

*What about historical performance practice? Where is your focus?*

If I was constructing an 'early music' curriculum, day one, lesson one would begin with primary sources—that is, the earliest recordings we have (e.g. Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Reinecke, Leschetitsky etc.)—and then proceed from there. We all know how, even for gifted writers, words cannot adequately express so much that we experience. And how difficult (actually, impossible) it is to express musical nuance in words! But the trend is still to rely on 17th- and 18th-century written sources as the exclusive arbiter of performance manner. Additionally, it seems dangerously misleading to assume equivalency of various terms/phrases (or taste) when reading early sources. For example, a comparative reading of a late 19th-century text, which corresponds to an early recording (e.g. Saint-Saëns' description of his own way of playing Chopin and his piano roll from 1907) reveals a massive disconnect in the way that we understand things like “strictly in tempo,” “slightly after the bass note” and “evenly”—and this disconnect likely only gets wider as the distance between us and the source grows. So, while reading these sources is vitally important, taking them at face value can easily mislead us. It is, of course, encouraging

that Quantz, Leopold Mozart, C. P. E. Bach, François Couperin, etc., all implore us, as a final word, to rely on our ears and our own good taste!

Nineteenth-century written source material is, of course, far more detailed and richer than that of previous centuries backed up as it is by early recordings. We know so much about the pedagogy of that time: how various people taught, what was taught, how performance and interpretation were viewed, ways of practicing...

*I understand that, to you, 19th-century pedagogy and the evolving concept of performance and interpretation are closely related. Do you have examples?*

Of course, there wasn't a monolithic 19th-century pedagogical school as such, but several important pedagogue-pianists seem to have had remarkably similar ideas. For instance, Liszt claimed that technique comes from the "Geist," not from the fingers—as did Thalberg, Chopin (less pithily) and Busoni. The concept of a single, correct interpretation seems to have been anathema to every notable pedagogue, and examples of how each performance was different from the last abound (Liszt, Chopin, etc.). The attitude to 'wrong' notes was, of course, less catholic than today: witness Beethoven's statements on this (also, Hans von Bülow told pupils to occasionally miss some large leaps, so that the public knew how difficult the passage was!). Improvisation, of course, was taught at least somewhat—both free-form and preluding—and one can imagine what effects this had on performance. The fact that Leschetitsky had pupils as different as Schnabel, Friedman and Paderewski gives some idea of the flexibility of his approach (or, at least, that he was happy to have pupils who scarcely resembled each other). We often read how pupils were encouraged to become well-rounded artistic people—to be well-read, learned and appreciate art in general—and perhaps as a corollary, practicing for six or eight hours a day seems to have been inadvisable.

Interestingly, Chopin forbade pupils from working for more than three hours (to prevent "abrutissement"), and advised that rest periods should be spent reading good books or looking at masterpieces of art or going for walks (all the Chopin references are from Eigeldinger's indispensable collection "Chopin, pianist and teacher, as seen by his pupils").

*And old recordings? How much do they actually tell us about keyboard playing in the 19th century? Do we find links between written romantic sources and the emerging sound documents of the early 20th century? If so, what are these links?*

As I hinted at earlier, the relationship between written romantic sources and early recordings is a case of truth being stranger than fiction. Here's what I mean: a colleague of mine memorably described early recordings in general as sounding like they came "from Mars"—yet, obviously, the musicians themselves didn't think of themselves as extraterrestrial, they just played the way they wanted the music to sound. For instance, Carl Reinecke was a friend of Schumann and Mendelssohn (who was himself considered rather conservative), ended up teaching for decades

at the Leipzig Conservatory (known for being a bastion of conservatism) and was a reputable Mozart specialist. If we listen to his piano rolls, it is (at least initially) scarcely believable that such playing could match up with such a résumé! But (even taking into account the deficiencies of piano rolls, which have mostly to do with color, etc., while rhythmic parameters are rendered exactly) this matchup is a ‘truth’ of a kind. Clearly we have to make room in our imaginations for such possibilities. Again, this is why I find early recordings so invaluable—they (almost) cannot be misrepresented.

*You mentioned the relationship of various arts to each other, and how it is helpful for your approach. Do tell me more.*

Knowing the visual idea of beauty for a particular time and place (through painting, sculpture and architecture) can certainly help shape one’s concept of how the scores of that particular time and place should be realized. Again, it’s not an end in itself—it’s more like an aid to refine one’s general sensibilities. So, does knowing the paintings of Friedrich help my Beethoven? Yes, in some way. But do I think about Friedrich whilst performing? Absolutely not!

It’s rather a similar situation with literature (prose, poetry, correspondence)—it can place one in a historical context very directly. Perhaps my favorite example of this would be Mendelssohn’s letters: to modern ears his prose is almost unbearably sentimental, but the fact is that this is more or less how well-educated people communicated with each other in this medium. These kinds of documents bring us directly into another world, which makes them precious.

*You play the harpsichord, the early piano and the modern piano. Which place does the harpsichord hold in your musical universe? Is there any harpsichord repertoire you particularly prefer?*

I love playing harpsichord but I’ve never given a full-length harpsichord recital or played a concerto. It’s really a matter of time and focus. I’ve chosen to play mainly 19th-century solo repertoire and out of pure practicality this has meant excluding repertoire that I love, including Couperin, Bach, Byrd, Froberger... But I play lots of continuo and enjoy playing in ensembles, including the various Bach obbligato works. It’s easy for me to imagine coming back to the harpsichord in a few years—things come in waves, I think...

*The harpsichord and the various kinds of piano seem to require quite distinct approaches. How does one stay in shape on such a variety of instruments? Do you work in periods (switching around between, say, a harpsichord phase, a fortepiano phase, a piano phase), or do you take a different approach to this challenge? What do you recommend to colleagues who work with the same type of problem?*

I have certainly had phases of playing more modern, or more harpsichord, or more clavichord. It depends on what requirements (or repertoire binges) I have had at any given time.

In my experience, the trick behind switching back and forth seems to be more connected to one's ears than anything else. If I attempt to speed up the adjustment by concentrating on my fingers it takes much, much longer than if I simply listen and let the fingers follow.

But switching between instruments like this is just a macro form of what fortepianists (not speaking of organists!) have to deal with at each concert—that is, simply making the best out of whatever you have to work with. It harkens back a little to what I said earlier about instruments being the means to an end—meaning, whatever music one makes is originating in one's mind (i.e. you should hear what it is you're playing immediately before you actually play it) and the instrument is simply a constant in the equation of the performance.

*We cannot really avoid being retroactively influenced by our more modern experiences. We cannot avoid the fact that somehow, our Bach playing knows about Brahms, our Chopin has met Scriabin and our Frescobaldi is aware of Mahler. How do you create an appropriate mindset, how do you 'switch off' unwanted musical influences, when working on any particular historical repertoire?*

You're right, it's unavoidable. I don't really think that 'switching off' the unwanted influences is the goal here, but rather, it's to render the music as fresh as the day it was composed (I think Pollini said something about this). For me, this entails thinking like a composer, or an improviser. For example, if one wants to perform Frescobaldi, ideally one should have more than a passing familiarity with his specific and personal musical language—so that when he writes something inevitable, we feel it as inevitable and when he writes something surprising, we feel it as such. It's about playing with expectations of how the music should go. Mozart is, of course, an unparalleled example of how we can be moved by music through our expectations of its progression. His musical language is an almost unbearable pull between the expected and the unexpected. (We all know when the cadence is finally coming, and what a relief when it does! We hear a theme and expect eight bars but he adds or subtracts something—and we know that the second theme is coming in the recapitulation but how is he going to get there?! etc., etc.). Robert Levin sums this up beautifully with his 'three card monty' analogy, to be found on YouTube!

(The link to Robert Levin's video is <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPuxV0xXEc8>, accessed August 12, 2012. T. S.)

*On your website, we come across the tantalizing information that you are “a huge fan of the entire body of work produced by the Pixar animation studios,” as an introduction to a blog post that analyzes the archetypal “superficially benevolent villain.” Sharing your passion for high-end animation, I've often wondered what the connection is: does watching Pixar make us better musicians, or does being a musician make us better Pixar viewers? How do you view Pixar's take on theatre, passion, emotional depth and variety, and polyphony of content? Is animation helpful at all for our work as HIP keyboard players?*

There must be some very, very smart and funny people working at that studio! I've always been amazed at how each one of their films (perhaps excluding *Cars*, the weakest of the bunch for me) manages to work on so many levels—that is, older siblings, parents and grandparents can enjoy it as much as toddlers. I guess this is what you're referring to with 'polyphony of content'—the multi-layered artwork, appealing to many audiences simultaneously.

If there's a lesson that musicians can learn from this body of work, I'd say it would be in the strength of storytelling. The kinds of stories they can tell, the worlds they can conjure, without a single word of dialogue, is truly remarkable (think of the first 45 minutes of *Wall-E* or the Carl and Ellie story at the beginning of *Up*, and even the short *Lifted*). This kind of approach directly impacts how we should approach our Mozart sonata. Using only sound, we should aim to clearly and directly communicate a story complete with character, structure, tension and resolution.

I'm not sure whether being a musician makes me a better Pixar viewer—in that I don't think that their work is somehow better understood by musicians or other artists—maybe that's why I like it so much. There's no snobbery at all. It is, like much of Shakespeare, written so that the groundlings and the Queen can take equal delight in a great story, told impeccably. (Did I just equate Shakespeare and Brad Bird?)

*What are your most cherished musical plans for the future?*

I'm looking forward to playing a few concerti in the upcoming seasons (plans for Chopin, Beethoven and Mozart). Mozart's concerti are particularly interesting in how one is simultaneously the soloist and an integral part of the ensemble (in the tutti sections). I'm thrilled to have been asked to play at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna this season on one of my absolute favorite instruments (a piano by André Stein, 1819, FF-f'')—this is certainly an upcoming highlight for me!

There is, of course, so much wonderful music that one can play. It's hard to know where to begin. In the past I've looked at Dussek, Weber, Hummel, Clementi, Mendelssohn—surely there's more to explore only with those five. I also love Saint-Saëns' music... Liszt, Alkan, one can go on and on.

*Anthony, thank you very much for this interview!*

You can visit Anthony's website at <http://www.anthonyromaniuk.com/>

## A REVIEW OF ANDREAS STAIER'S *DIABELLI VARIATIONS*

*Diabelli Variations*, Andreas Staier, fortepiano (Harmonia Mundi 2012, HMC 902091).

When Beethoven composed his Diabelli Variations Op. 120—twenty-three of them in 1819 and ten more at the beginning of 1823—he relied on his famous Broadwood grand piano, made in 1817. The variations fit the conservative keyboard compass of this instrument (six octaves, Contra C to c4) like a glove. Even so, recreating Beethoven's home situation by using an English instrument is not necessarily the best choice for a historically informed rendering of Op. 120. True, during the early years of its existence, the Broadwood was often kept in a playable state and Ignaz Moscheles played it, freshly renovated for the occasion, in a public concert in December 1823. However, the Viennese reviewers on that occasion did not at all appreciate the outlandish piano, in spite of its illustrious owner and Moscheles' acclaimed performance.

To play the complete Diabelli variations as they would have sounded in a public Viennese concert of the early 1820s means, in any case, creating a performance that never took place. As Michael Ladenburger informs us in the excellent booklet notes that accompany Andreas Staier's new recording of the Variations, it was likely Hans von Bülow who premiered the work, a whole generation after Beethoven. Staier's recording reaches back past the time when this complex and difficult work was brought to the attention of the public, and recreates a situation of reasonable historical verisimilitude from the time of its origin.

His instrument is a six-and-a-half-octave copy of a Viennese piano by Conrad Graf—not the only option, considering Beethoven's closeness to the Streicher piano building firm, but certainly a realistic one. This choice makes it possible to also incorporate selected variations by other composers that belonged to Anton Diabelli's original project: namely, to have the composer-virtuosos of the day each write *one* variation on his waltz. Thus the recording begins, so to speak, in 1824, when Diabelli published 50 variations on his waltz by various composers. Here, Staier has chosen pieces by Czerny, Hummel, Kalkbrenner, Kerzkowsky, Kreuzer, Liszt, Moscheles, Pixis, Mozart the younger, and Schubert's especially magical variation. Some of these exceed the compass of Beethoven's work; they require the larger Viennese keyboard up to f4.

Next, Staier takes us one year back in time by means of his own "Introduction," a free Fantasy which is beautifully played and impressively close to Beethoven's (and, occasionally, Dussek's) idiom, before he turns to Beethoven's own *33 Veränderungen* from 1823.

I cannot call to mind a single other fortepiano recording that displays such a high level of control over the low and middle dynamic range, and such clarity in fast passages across the entire compass of the instrument and the dynamic spectrum as this one. Staier seems to make a special effort to refrain from a fists-and-muscles Beethoven in favor of underlining the enormous subtlety and depth that many of these variations carry. Especially impressive is his control of

the contrasting dynamics in Var. 27, which often gets reduced to a muddled mezzoforte. The *Fuga* (Var. 32) probably gains most of all from Staier's clarity, but the benefits of his approach can be felt throughout the entire disk, and most decidedly in the more virtuosic variations by some of the other composers. Only, perhaps, at the end of Beethoven's Var. 17 might Staier's virtuosity have gotten in the way of some of the drama that is embedded in the harmonies.

The other element that makes this recording noteworthy is Staier's phrasing, and his observance of heavy and light beats. Listen, for example, to Beethoven's 24th variation, and, of course, to the beautifully paced *Largo molto* (Var. 31).

In view of the difference between some available "modern" interpretations of Op. 120—such as Rudolf Serkin's almost angry recording from 1957, for example, or Claudio Arrau's over-patiently spelled-out version from 1985—there seems to be no truly accepted canonic way to approach these pieces. Staier's fresh start on an original instrument is thus not shockingly revolutionary, but rather, uplifting and refreshing. One element lacking in modern recordings is the variation of sound colors that the Graf copy (a magnificent instrument made by Christopher Clarke) helps to realize. The mysterious Variation 20, for example, is often played so slowly that the listener forgets the musical context between chords, but here it gains an unprecedented unworldly quality by means of touch and registration—the tempo seems still slow for an "Andante," but the leadenness associated with the modern piano is entirely lacking. Staier's use of the bassoon stop in the *Don Giovanni* variation and the janissary stop at a few points of Var. 23 may not, perhaps, be to everyone's taste—but judging by some contemporary reports, this is not a new problem. All in all a highly recommended CD.



### ORGAN SYMPOSIUM AT CORNELL, SEPTEMBER 21–22, 2012

Please join us for an upcoming symposium at Cornell University exploring and celebrating the historical, and historically-informed, organ in America. In concerts and conversations we'll explore the instruments and their music, old and new, with a particular focus on music specially commissioned for the baroque, or 'new-baroque' organ. What is the relation between 'native' and 'immigrant' organs and music, and their historic incarnations and reincarnations? What is the 'historically-informed' organ and to what extent are classic American instruments historically-informed? What are the challenges and rewards associated with instruments constructed on historical models for composers and performers? Two keynote recitals will be given by Kimberly Marshall and Robert Bates; other participants include Jonathan Ambrosino, Michael Barone, Phil Cooper, Randall Harlow, Martin Herchenröder, Kevin Ernste and Zachary Wadsworth. All events are free and visitors are warmly welcome. We hope to see some of you there!

*Annette Richards*

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- 8:00 pm Kimberly Marshall:  
*"A New World Emerges"*  
Anabel Taylor Chapel

Saturday, September 22

- 12:30 pm Randall Harlow and friends:  
*"21st-Century Baroque"*  
Anabel Taylor Chapel
- 5:00 pm Robert Bates:  
*"Old Meets New at the American Organ"*  
Anabel Taylor, and then Sage, Chapels

## Symposium

Saturday, September 22

- 9:30 am *"The Historically-Informed Organ in America"*  
Barnes Hall
- 2:00 pm *"New Music for the Old Organ"*  
Barnes Hall

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- Jonathan Ambrosino  
(organ historian, consultant)
- Michael Barone (American Public Media)
- Robert Bates (University of Houston)
- Philip Cooper (organ historian)
- Kevin Ernste (Cornell University)
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## ANNOUNCING THE EROI FESTIVAL “BACH AND THE ORGAN”

The *Eastman Rochester Organ Initiative* of the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music and the American Bach Society are partnering with the Westfield Center to present the festival “Bach and the Organ,” between September 27 and 30 in Rochester, N.Y. There will be concerts at Christ Church on the one-of-its-kind Craighead-Saunders Organ, one of the most important instruments in North America for performance of Bach-era music. These will include a re-creation of Mendelssohn’s 1840 Leipzig concert of Bach’s organ music, which helped to revive noticeable public interest in the 18th-century composer.

Along with recitals on other historic organs and a pedal-clavichord at the Eastman School of Music, there will be a gala concert featuring a Bach organ concerto and festive cantatas, played by the Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble (directed by Paul O’Dette), and Christ Church Schola Cantorum (directed by Stephen Kennedy). It will also present such renowned soloists as soprano Ellen Hargis and countertenor Daniel Taylor.

The recitalists for “Bach and the Organ” will include Hans Davidsson, Robert Bates, Edoardo Bellotti, David Higgs, Jacques van Oortmerssen, William Porter and Joel Speerstra. The paper sessions focus on new Bach editions, manuscript studies, and the organ’s role in 18<sup>th</sup>-century vocal instrumental music. Some of the world’s greatest Bach scholars will be making presentations, including keynote speaker Peter Williams (Peabody Conservatory, The Johns Hopkins University), Christoph Wolff (Harvard University), Peter Wollny (Bach-Archiv, Leipzig).

All scholarship events will take place at the Eastman School of Music. When necessary travel will be provided to the performance venues. The main conference will run from September 27 through September 30, but supplementary events will be held on October 1 and 2.

The registration fee is \$275 with a \$175 rate for students. One-day passes will be available for \$100; and the transportation pass for the events on September 30 will be \$15.

EROI has set up a web page for information on the full schedule of events and online registration: [www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi](http://www.esm.rochester.edu/eroi). Any questions not covered by the web page may be directed to Annie Laver, EROI Project Manager, at 585-274-1564.

### *“Bach and the Organ”: Performance Highlights*

- September 27, 8pm. Re-creation of Mendelssohn’s 1840 Leipzig Bach organ concert. Hans Davidsson, David Higgs, William Porter. Craighead-Saunders Organ, Christ Church.

- September 28, 8pm. Bach recital by Jacques van Oortmerssen. Craighead-Saunders Organ, Christ Church.
- September 29, 1pm. Pedal-Clavichord recital by Joel Speersta. Hatch Recital Hall
- September 29, 6pm (repeated at 8:30pm). Concert of Bach organ concerto and cantatas by Bach and Stölzel. Ellen Hargis, Soprano, Daniel Taylor, countertenor, Jason McStoots, tenor, Jesse Blumberg, baritone; Edoardo Bellotti and William Porter, organ; Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble, Paul O’Dette, director; Christ Church Schola Cantorum, Stephen Kennedy, director. Craighead-Saunders Organ, Christ Church.
- September 30, 2pm. Recital by Robert Bates (Bach’s Clavierübung III). Halloran-All Saints Organ by Paul Fritts, Sacred Heart Cathedral.
- September 30, 5:30pm. Recital by Edoardo Bellotti (“Bach and the Italian Influence”). Italian Baroque Organ, Fountain Court, Memorial Gallery.

Information kindly provided by *Annie Laver*





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

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