

MINUTES of the Twelfth Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society

held at 2 pm on Saturday, 30 June 2007, at Cliffe Church Hall, Lewes

Chairman: Garry Broughton. Secretary: Judith Wardman. Treasurer: David Hitchin

Present: Peter Bavington, Alex Bell, Peter Belton, Garry Broughton, John Erskine, David Griffel, Philip Higgins, David Hitchin, Dr Alastair Laurence, David and Pat Medhurst, David Millard, Lynne Mirrey, Patricia Murdoch, Roger Murray, Karin Richter, Peter Stephens, Gerard Vila, Judith Wardman, Paula Woods

1. Apologies for absence had been sent by Derek Adlam, Rosemary Andrew, Brian Blandford, Neil Coleman, Dr Harry Dawson, Frank Field, Christopher Gold, Claire Hammett, Christopher Hogwood, John Lake, Laurence Leith, Dr J. P. Lester, Byron Mahoney, Darryl Martin and Caroline Dooley, Peter Mole, Charles Mould, Huw Saunders, Micaela Schmitz, Paul Simmonds, Geoffrey Allan Taylor, Mike Telford, Kasia Tomczak-Feltrin, Denys Vaughan, Mary Wetherick, Akihiko Yamanobe

2. Minutes of the 11th Annual General Meeting, held on 6 May 2006, were circulated and were taken as read. Their approval and adoption were proposed by Paula Woods, seconded by Karin Richter, and passed unanimously, and they were signed by the Chairman.

3. The Chairman gave this report:

'Welcome to the 12th Annual General Meeting of the BCS. As this is the year 2007 and my seventh year as Chairman, the following report will, in accordance with Baroque composers' predilections for hidden numerological and metaphorical allusions, contain hidden references to 7 planets, 7 deadly sins, the 7 ages of man, and the 7 lost books of Diophantus's *Arithmetica*.

'At last year's AGM, Dr Rodger Mirrey and Mrs Lynne Mirrey were presented with British Clavichord Society Awards. It is my sad duty to report that, as I think most of you already know, Dr Mirrey died at Easter. A full obituary appears in the current Newsletter. Everyone who knew him will have their own memories of this quiet, modest but remarkable man, and a permanent memorial to him is his collection of historical keyboard instruments, including three important clavichords, which he gifted to the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Music Instruments. BCS Committee member Darryl Martin, who is curator of the collection, describes it as being "of a quality that would be next to impossible to amass today". Our heartfelt condolences go to Lynne along with our gratitude for the great contribution she helped Rodger to make to the world of the clavichord.

'I am pleased to be able to report that the BCS, with a few caveats that I shall mention, has continued its successful existence. We are in a healthy state financially, as you will hear from our Treasurer, David Hitchin, to whom we must extend our grateful thanks for his untiring work and careful stewardship.

'We must also extend thanks to our new Membership Secretary, David Griffel, who reports that at present we have 194 paid-up members; if the 23 who have not yet renewed do so, a membership of 210-plus would result: a satisfactory number, I think, for what is considered, alas, a minority interest for the "happy few".

'The officers and committee are worried, however, by the falling attendance figures at events promoted by the Society, and the Treasurer's report shows the negative balance resulting from this and other factors (such as the increased costs of venue hire etc.); what can we do to attract more attendees? Maybe our Membership Survey (which I hope everyone will fill in and send back to us, having fired up their computers or sharpened their quill pens) will provide some answers. It is interesting to note that nearly every one of the events organized by the BCS over the past year has stimulated new members to join the Society.

'New members in the future we hope might come from the students who took part in the educational events we organized at the University of Central England Birmingham Conservatoire, the Yehudi Menuhin School at Stoke d'Abernon and Trinity College of Music in Greenwich. Nearly 100 young people were introduced to the clavichord at these events and the resulting enthusiasms from students and staff were a joy to behold and, as always, led to the question (as we took our clavichords away) "Why doesn't our school/college/conservatoire acquire a good clavichord?" One of the refreshing things about these educational events is that the young people approach the clavichord without any preconceptions: for example, two of the Menuhin School students spontaneously launched into a Vivaldi cello sonata with the clavichord as sole continuo instrument and in a small room with a bright-sounding clavichord it worked

perfectly. Several of the students who had perfect pitch were initially disconcerted by the lower than A440 pitch of the clavichords we brought along - this raises an interesting point: was there such a thing as perfect pitch in the days when pitch varied all over Europe, even from city to city?

'For this important educational work the Society must thank the organizers, teachers and clavichord makers involved: Micaela Schmitz, Terence Charlston, Richard Ireland, Paul Simmonds, Carole Cerasi, Judith Wardman, John Henry, Karin Richter and Peter Bavington.

'Like the educational events, other major events organized by the Society have been covered in our Newsletter, and I won't repeat the details here since those who attended know what they heard and those who didn't don't want to be reminded of the enchanted moments they missed. Suffice it to say that our Handel day in July at the church where the master himself performed and where the harmonious blacksmith is buried (St Lawrence's Whitchurch) was rated a great success, providing equal measures of enlightenment and enjoyment, and our "open day" in Ealing in December also provided a successful mixture of learning and listening. Ensuring these successes was the untiring work of our Secretary, Judith Wardman, to whom we are ever grateful.

'The third major event of the past year, although not so well attended, was perhaps the most important of all in that it added the dimension of contemporary music played in the presence of several of the composers. It is a sobering thought that whereas in the 18th century contemporary music was the norm and older music very much the exception, today the situation is totally reversed. This event was the much-needed and requested follow-up to our 2004 Composition Competition, and the heroic performers who presented the far from easy compositions of (in order of performance) Graham Lynch, Jürg Baur, Peter Nickol, Gary Carpenter, Stephen Dodgson, Herbert Howells, Simon Charles, and Julia Usher were Committee members Paul Simmonds, Julian Perkins and Micaela Schmitz. It is good news that Gary Carpenter's piece has been recorded for issue on CD and Julia Usher's piece (which also exists as a DVD collaboration with Andrea Gregori) is being nominated by the BCS as an entry in this year's British Composer Awards. Stephen Dodgson's Suites may also be recorded.

'Detailed discussion of this new music (much of which is available from our Bookshop) can be found in an article in the current Newsletter by its editor Peter Bavington, whom we must thank for a publication which is an indispensable guide to the whole clavichord scene (events, books, music, discs, performance practice etc.), and whose recently published book on clavichord tuning and maintenance is also essential for all clavichordisti.

'Many BCS members have been involved in other events, not under the BCS umbrella, during the year: to mention only a few examples: the Clavichord Symposium at Edinburgh in October 2006 (which filled the gap left by Sheila Barnes retiring from running the traditional BCS Edinburgh weekend); the Winchester New Generation Early Keyboard weekend; Tim Roberts gave the annual clavichord recital on the Hoffmann at Hatchlands; Kasia Tomczak-Feltrin, another of our Committee members, gave a recital on a new clavichord by former Chairman of the BCS Edmund Handy during the Greenwich exhibition. Dr Keith Howard was involved in the most exotic piece yet written for clavichord plus another instrument, in which an amplified clavichord accompanied the traditional Japanese flute, the shakuhachi, in a composition by Yumi hara Cawkwell at SOAS in March, and our President, Derek Adlam, has been giving recitals in Switzerland.

'Looking to the future, we will be represented at the 8th International Clavichord Symposium at Magnano in September. The BCS's first event in Bristol will feature Joel Speerstra and the pedal clavichord on 3rd November: this event is under the auspices of the Bristol University Lifelong Learning Department and you are advised to book early to ensure a place.

'The Greenwich Exhibition of Early Music in November will again feature a harpsichord and clavichord master class by John Henry, and our last event of 2007 will be a recital in Blackheath, London, by Francis Knights (our Archivist and editor of Clavichord International, which I hope you all read - and here I must thank Committee member Paula Woods for her reports to that journal which present the BCS's activities to an international readership). We anticipate that Francis's recital will contain a BCS contribution to Buxtehude's anniversary.

'Looking further ahead, 2008 will see celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Arnold Dolmetsch, so we shall all be making more gentleness than violence. It looks as if an important part of the celebrations will be centred on Finchcocks in Kent, which houses Richard Burnett's collection of historic keyboards. Alastair Laurence is planning a Dolmetsch exhibition, with performances by members of the Dolmetsch family, and a clavichord weekend. The BCS is planning to issue a booklet on Dolmetsch and the Clavichord.

'Simon Field has continued work on the Clavichord Database and gave a talk at the Edinburgh University Clavichord Weekend last autumn; he will also present a paper at the Magnano Symposium this September. We are grateful to him and to Mike Daniels, who began this project for the BCS in 2001. We have also benefited from contacts with the British Harpsichord Society and look forward to future co-operation.'

4. Annual accounts and Treasurer's report

The independently examined accounts for the year 2006 and the following report from the Treasurer were circulated: :

'Presentation

'After my experience of the first year I have made a few more changes in the presentation of accounts which I hope will make them clearer and more useful. After this I hope to keep the format very similar so that it is easier to make comparisons from year to year.

'In particular I have tried to ensure that all of the costs arising from events are attributed to those events, and that none of these appears under more general headings such as "publicity" or "administration". "Publicity" now covers the cost of the website, and printing costs related to recruitment, while "administration" this year consisted entirely of the expenses of the membership secretaries. While these could have been described as "membership administration" I have chosen to keep the more general heading so that I don't have to create another heading if administrative costs arise from other matters in future years. One innovation is the creation of a new heading, "insurance" as it is important both for the committee and the members to know that we are adequately covered with respect to such risks as public liability and damage to instruments in our care. Most of these are paid as part of our "subscriptions to other bodies", but I think that it is important to itemise the insurance component separately. The remainder of the "subscriptions to other bodies" were to NEMA and Making Music which provide, among other things, publicity for the Society, and payment for performing rights.

'For the first time the assets shown include both the Morley clavichord and bookshop stock. In previous years we have shown only bookshop income and expenditure, and as they don't take account of stock in hand we don't have a trading position for the bookshop. The current valuation excludes copies of newsletters and Clavichord International, and valuation is at sale price (with no guarantee that everything will be sold) rather than cost price. I hope that eventually we will be able to cost stock at purchase price, cost copies of the newsletters and Clavichord International going into the bookshop, and then have true trading figures, but I am aware that quite a lot more work will be necessary before this is possible.

'Brian Blandford has examined our accounts, and I am grateful to him for his work.

'A view of the current position

'Last year our Membership Secretary wished to shed some of the burden of this work, and there was the possibility of paying for administrative help, but because another member was willing to take this over, no such payments were necessary.

'The charts which I have prepared for the meeting give a graphical account of the state of our finances over a period of years, and most of them speak for themselves. We have held larger balances in previous years than were necessary for our level of activity and this has enabled us to provide more services for members, especially recitals which were unlikely to cover their costs. However, the scale of deficits on recitals in the last two years, and on the new music event earlier this year indicates that we will need to consider options which might include (a) increasing income (b) reducing the scale of our activities or (c) increasing our subscriptions. These are matters for the committee to decide, and best decided when the results of the membership survey are available.'

The Treasurer gave a historical review of past BCS accounts and amplified the above report with further details, including a discussion of recitalists' fees, events which had not covered their costs, and the decreasing size of the general fund. The report and accounts were received with thanks to the Treasurer and the Examiner; the acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Peter Stephens, seconded by Peter Bavington and passed unanimously.

5. Election of committee members and officers

The following nominations had been received before the meeting:

David Hitchin (Treasurer), proposed by Judith Wardman and seconded by Peter Bavington
Paula Woods, proposed by Julian Perkins and seconded by Garry Broughton

The Chairman mentioned that these elections would leave one vacancy on the Committee (the maximum number of members, under the Constitution, being fourteen). Further nominations were invited, but none was made. Those nominated were elected unopposed.

6. Election of Examiner of the Accounts

Brian Blandford had agreed to serve for another year. He was proposed by Paula Woods, seconded by

Garry Broughton, and elected unanimously.

7. Any other business

a. Alastair Laurence gave more details of the Finchcocks events mentioned by the Chairman: provisional dates were 13 September 2008 for the Dolmetsch event and 20-21 September 2008 for the Finchcocks Clavichord Weekend. There would be an exhibition, and makers and owners were invited to bring clavichords for the weekend event.

b. The Secretary proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried unanimously.

At 4pm a public clavichord recital was given by Pierre Goy.

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