

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

held at 2 pm on Saturday, 12 April 2008, at the Faculty of Music, Oxford University, Oxford

Chairman: Garry Broughton. Secretary: Judith Wardman

Present: Peter Bavington, Alex Bell, Hendrik Bouman, Garry Broughton, John Erskine, Simon Field, David Griffel, David Helliwell, Jean and Monty Herman, Nicholas Lane, Pat Medhurst, David Millard, Richard Miller, Lynne Mirrey, Ian Mortimer, Ruth Muffett, Simon Neal, Claire Randall, Karin Richter, Huw Saunders, Micaela Schmitz, Judith Wardman, Paula Woods

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Derek Adlam, Rosemary Andrew, Sheila Barnes, Carey Beebe, Brian Blandford, Terence Charlston, John Collins, Chris da Silva, Sally Fortino, Christopher Gold, David Hitchin, Richard Ireland, Francis Knights, J. P. Lester, David Medhurst, Charles Mould, Patricia Murdoch, Julian Perkins, Duncan Preston, Paul Simmonds, Kasia Tomczak-Feltrin, Peter Stephens, Margaret Woodbridge

2. Minutes of the 12th Annual General Meeting, held on 30 June 2007, were circulated, taken as read, and signed by the Chairman.

3. The Chairman gave this report:

'Nearly five years ago, in June 2003, the British Clavichord Society held its 8th AGM at the Bate Collection here in Oxford and I was thanking the Curator, Dr H el ene La Rue, for her enthusiastic support and hospitality. As you all know, H el ene died suddenly and unexpectedly last year, so it is with great sadness that I must now pay tribute to her, on behalf of the whole membership of the BCS, for all her efforts in promoting appreciation of the clavichord.

'I must also pay tribute, on behalf of the BCS, to two other important figures in the clavichord world who died recently: Valda Aveling and David Bolton. Valda Aveling was a rare link to the early days of the clavichord revival in the twentieth century in that, according to Jessica Douglas-Home, she was "one of only two followers of Violet Gordon Woodhouse who could be described as a pupil", having been introduced to Violet by no less a figure than Winnaretta Princesse Edmond de Polignac, the "grande dame" directly and indirectly responsible for three twentieth-century masterworks involving the revivalist harpsichord by Poulenc and De Falla. Unfortunately she commissioned nothing for the clavichord (perhaps influenced by Landowska's negative attitude towards the instrument), although it would have been the ideal instrument for another member of her Salon: Marcel Proust in his cork-lined rooms that shut out the noise from the Boulevard Haussmann. Valda later said "Violet taught me all the secrets of her touch and the magic of her effects . . . how you must stroke the keys". There was also her connexion with Tom Goff, which Stephen Dodgson mentions in his obituary in the current Newsletter.

'David Bolton's recent death will be mourned by many present members of the BCS, for his reasonably priced kits started many people off on the adventure of making their own clavichords (including Stephen Saunders, several of whose instruments may be seen here in the Bate Collection). Amongst David's many contributions to the clavichord scene he seems to have been personally responsible for the launching of clavichord making in Russia: I urge you all to read his article about this in the February Newsletter.

'Despite losses due to death and illness an influx of new members has kept membership figures pretty stable: David Griffel, our Membership Secretary (whom we must thank for his considerable time and effort), tells me that at the moment we have 165 paid-up members, and if most of the 46 who have not yet renewed for 2008 do so we will again have over 200 members (I believe this is called "flat-lining": the figures for the last six years are 220, 215, 210, 213, 216, 208).

'When a team from the Lute Society appeared recently on BBC2's University Challenge, the lute and its supporters were described by Jeremy Paxman as occupying a "niche" in the classical music scene: now the Lute Society has four times as many members as we have, so that means we occupy a mere crack or "nichette", and one that is continually under pressure - despite our stable membership and increased subscription - from the economic reality of increasing venue hire fees and our determination to reward adequately the artists, makers, tuners etc. involved in our events, which have to compete nowadays with so many rival attractions. Formal recitals and new music events are two types of event that have simply not attracted even remotely viable audiences and so we increasingly turn to other types of activity and perhaps most of all to the support, in whichever way is appropriate, of initiatives from individuals, groups or organizations wanting to promote clavichord events of a more locally specific nature, thinking especially of

clavichord enthusiasts who do not live within easy reach of London. The following report of clavichord events over the last nine months will show, I think, that this trend is already beginning to operate.

'Under the heading "recitals" I can record memorable Mozart in Lewes, played by Pierre Goy; beautiful Buxtehude in Blackheath, played by our archivist Francis Knights; and, in Buckingham, "Byrd, Bach and Beyond", a recital by BCS member Geoffrey Allan Taylor that included his own BCS competition-prizewinning score Pages from Homer. A long overdue return visit to the Open University to hear the John Barnes-Darryl Martin clavichord modelled on the 1765 Friderici gave Paul Simmonds a chance to air works by Reichardt, Hüssler and Wolf, six of whose "leichter Klaviersonaten" have been edited and published by Paul with Mike Daniels (available from the BCS Bookshop).

'Under the heading "publications" mention must also be made of Peter Bavington and Francis Knights's continuing successful editorship of the BCS Newsletter and Clavichord International respectively. Peter's book on Clavichord Tuning and Maintenance has been widely acclaimed, and his research on Arnold Dolmetsch's clavichord making before 1914 will be published in *De Clavicordio VIII*. A reminder here that the BCS has issued a reprint of the talk about his father and the clavichord which Carl Dolmetsch gave to the Society in Haslemere in 1995. If Arnold Dolmetsch were alive today, I wonder if he would be thinking of publishing his research on the internet? He would be shown the way by BCS members Peter Bavington, John Dobson, Simon Field, David Hitchin, Darryl Martin, and Judith Wardman who are all involved in publicizing and updating clavichord data electronically and developing our website.

'I am very pleased to report that clavichord recording on compact disc has recently achieved a much higher profile than usual with two discs singled out for feature-reviews in Gramophone magazine. They were Paul Simmonds's disc of W. F. Bach's Polonaises and Volume 17 of Miklós Spányi's ongoing C. P. E. Bach edition. An excerpt from the latter was on the cover CD and will therefore have been heard by many thousands of people. Also on compact disc BCS member Martin Farrar published his own performance of Bach's Art of Fugue; and the piece that won first prize in our composition competition, Gary Carpenter's Van Assendelft's Vermeer, played by Pamela Nash, is included on an NMC disc devoted to Gary Carpenter's compositions. CDs in the pipeline include BCS committee member Julian Perkins playing the clavichord suites of BCS's senior composer, Stephen Dodgson.

'The BCS was well represented at international events. Judith Wardman has reported in the current Newsletter on the Dutch Clavichord Society's 20th-anniversary Symposium, and recitals and papers were given at the 8th International Clavichord Symposium at Magnano by BCS president Derek Adlam (a Handel recital and a paper on Mrs Delany's correspondence) and members Susan Alexander Max (a recital of J. S. and C. P. E. Bach) and Simon Field ("Building a Database of Early Keyboard Instruments").

'The BCS's education wing sponsored a young potential clavichordist, Paolo Zanzu, to attend Paul Simmonds's Easter weekend course at West Dean College, and other collaborations with centres of learning facilitated the John Henry masterclass at Trinity College of Music, Greenwich (which will take place again this year), and the Pedal Clavichord day at Bristol University's Lifelong Learning Centre to which BCS member Joel Speerstra was enabled to bring, from Sweden, the pedal clavichord after Gerstenberg 1760 made by himself and John Barnes in 1995. Joel gave a recital in Lewes on the way back to Göteborg. Every organist should have a pedal clavichord, of course, and Terry Charlston, with BCS sponsorship, will be introducing the clavichord to organists at the St Giles Organ School, London, on 12 July.

'Not to be outdone by Bristol or Trinity, the Royal Academy of Music presented its first ever clavichord class concert in January, obviously the result of hard work by the two eminent clavichordists on the Academy's staff, both BCS members: Laurence Cummings and Terence Charlston, who, by the way, will be giving the annual clavichord recital on the Bavington-restored 1784 Hoffmann at Hatchlands on 23 April. Four days before that, on 19 April, Paul Simmonds will be playing a newly restored clavichord made by Jansen 1767 at the Workshop in Lewes, and I hear that Paul is preparing "Haydn on the clavichord" for next year's bi-centenary celebrations. There are events to look forward to before that, however: we are working with the Finchcocks Musical Museum to present a clavichord weekend which will culminate in a recital by BCS member Steven Devine on several clavichords, including the two historic ones in the Finchcocks collection, and we are hoping to organize a visit to Christopher Hogwood's instrument collection in 2009. Details of the Finchcocks event and of the October Edinburgh University Early Keyboard Symposium are on a flyer available at this meeting. Since this is Arnold Dolmetsch's anniversary year (he was born in 1858) I should add that Finchcocks will be presenting a Dolmetsch Celebration on 13 September which will include a talk by his grand-daughter Jeanne, recorders, lutes and harpsichords but not, it seems at the moment, clavichords . . . never mind, there is Dolmetsch's No. 1 clavichord of 1894 only yards from where I'm standing.

'On behalf of the BCS I must express our thanks to Andy Lamb of the Bate Collection, for being such a helpful and enthusiastic host today, and David Millard, for making the splendid display on the clavichord and its history which you can view in the corridor leading to the Bate Collection.

'Finally I must thank those members of the committee I have not already mentioned, Karin Richter, Micaela Schmitz and Paula Woods, and acknowledge the crucial contributions made by Secretary Judith Wardman and Treasurer David Hitchin whose expertise keeps the BCS on a realistic financial foundation.

'The last word must be one of thanks to our President, Derek Adlam, for agreeing to take on a third term as our President; we look forward to hearing him play later today.'

4. Annual accounts and Treasurer's report

The independently examined accounts for the year 2007 were circulated with the following report from the Treasurer (read to the meeting, in David Hitchin's absence, by the Chairman):

'In the early years of the Society income was considerably higher than expenditure, and at the end of 2002 our funds had reached £11,448. The committee decided that more services should be provided for members until the surplus had reduced to a figure somewhere between £5,000 and £7,500. That enabled us to hold events within music schools for young composers and young performers, to fund the competition for composers, and to organize events such as the one for 20th- and 21st-century clavichord music. All of these are important for the future of our instrument, but we did not expect takings to cover more than a small part of our costs.

'At the end of 2006 our general fund totalled £6,585 and at the end of 2007 we had £5,135. A good rule of thumb for societies is that the reserves should be at least half of the annual expenditure, so we should not allow them to go below £4,000.

'As reported last year, the committee considered increasing income, and for the first time since the Society was founded in 1994 we decided to raise the subscription. The rate for individual UK and European members was increased from £15 to £18, the committee deciding against a larger increase, but prepared to make a further increase later if this becomes necessary. This should raise about an extra £400 this year; those who have paid in advance will first pay the increased rate in 2009.

'We have also set a careful budget for this year, making decisions based partly on the results of the survey. I won't go into any detail on the results here, except to note that only about half of our members live in areas within reasonable travelling distance of venues which might attract sufficiently large audiences, and even within the London area events have not been well supported. We will continue to look for suitable venues, and will seek to minimize the cost of organizing events.

'The effect of some changes in the organization of the accounts, and a willingness of committee members to ensure that the Treasurer is informed promptly about all expenditure should make it possible for us to track the income and expenditure against the budget figures throughout the year and to keep the finances under closer control. I am grateful to the Secretary for providing me with very full information about Bookshop stock and sales figures, so that this year's accounts show fuller information about our assets.

'The cost of distributing Clavichord International has increased. Last year there was a small deficit, but as there had been a profit in earlier years it should not be considered that subscribers to C.I. are subsidized by other members. Nevertheless the additional cost for UK subscribers will be increased from £13 to £15 and the cost of postage and packing for other areas will be considered before the rates are set for 2009.

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

The Chairman invited questions but there were none. The report and accounts were received with thanks to the Treasurer and the Examiner; the acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Karin Richter, seconded by Paula Woods, and passed unanimously.

5. Election of committee members and officers

The following nominations had been received before the meeting:

Garry Broughton (Chairman), proposed by Peter Bavington, seconded by Paula Woods
Judith Wardman (Secretary), proposed by Garry Broughton, seconded by David Hitchin
Peter Bavington, proposed by Paula Woods, seconded by Garry Broughton
David Griffel, proposed by Peter Bavington, seconded by Karin Richter
Julian Perkins, proposed by Karin Richter, seconded by Paul Simmonds
Karin Richter, proposed by Garry Broughton, seconded by Paula Woods
Micaela Schmitz, proposed by David Hitchin, seconded by Karin Richter
Paul Simmonds, proposed by Karin Richter, seconded by Peter Bavington
Kasia Tomczak-Feltrin, proposed by David Hitchin, seconded by Paul Simmonds
John Collins, proposed by Paula Woods, seconded by Paul Simmonds
David Millard, proposed by Peter Bavington, seconded by Paul Simmonds

The Chairman mentioned that these nominations 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 Account

Brian Blandford had agreed to serve for another year. He was proposed by Garry Broughton, seconded by Paula Woods, and elected unanimously, with thanks for his work.

7. Any other business

a. Lynne Mirrey asked whether the BCS Archive was still open to donations; the Secretary replied that new material was always welcome, especially items recording twentieth- and twenty-first-century clavichord activities of all kinds.

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

At 4pm a public clavichord recital was given by Derek Adlam.

[Return to top of page](#)

[Back to home](#)

updated 2 September 2008