

MINUTES of the Eighteenth Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society
held at 2.15 pm on Saturday, 22 June 2013
at Napier Hall, Hide Place, Vincent Square, LONDON SW1P 4NJ

Members present: Susan Alexander-Max, Peter Bavington, Alex Bell, Martin Brady, Garry Broughton (Chairman), David Derrick, Christopher Gold, David Griffel, Claire Hammett, John Henry, David Hitchin (Treasurer), Richard Ireland, John Irving, Adrian Lenthall, David Millard, Lynne Mirrey, Jillian Mitchell, Ian Mortimer, Claire Randall, Karin Richter (Secretary), Mimi Waitzman, Judith Wardman, Richard Whitehouse, Paula Woods.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Sheila Barnes, Carey Beebe, Brian Blandford, James Brinsford, Penelope Cave, Braham Claridge, Neil Coleman, John Collins, John Erskine, Sally Fortino, David Gerrard, Marcia Hadjimarkos, David Helliwell, Ulla Kite, Francis Knights, Pam Jackson, John Lester, Charles Mould, Simon Neal, Grant O'Brien, Carl Rennoldson, Oliver Sandig, Huw Saunders, Chris da Silva, Paul Simmonds, Peter Stevens, Brian Wishart, Elizabeth Witts, Beverley Woodward, Howard Woolin

2. The Minutes of the 17th Annual General Meeting, held on 23rd 2012, were circulated and taken as read. They were accepted unanimously, and signed by the Chairman.

3. The Chairman gave this report:

"In this report I shall try to review the activities of the Society over the last 12 months and also report on wider aspects of the clavichord related musical scene in which our members are active or interested. Despite the increasing gloom resulting from the economic effects of national and international recession, we are surviving with a healthy bank balance, although a shrinking membership together with the ever mounting costs of promoting recitals and other events are a threat to our future (even if we doubled our ticket prices we would probably not break even).

I'll begin my survey with events organized or sponsored by the BCS: Marcia Hadjimarkos' recital, which followed last year's AGM, was remarkable and refreshing for including music by John Cage, Philip Forget, and Bartok. ¹ Widening the repertoire is an essential part of guaranteeing the continued viability of the clavichord – we cannot forever rely on what the 18th Century would have called Antient Musick'. (The repertoire threatens to narrow considerably next year with everyone wanting to play CPE Bach for his anniversary!) Marcia not only repeated the John Cage at her recital at Wolverton Manor, Isle of Wight, in March, but added music by Chick Corea, a prolific jazz pianist who has also recorded Mozart's Concerto for two Pianos with Friedrich Gulda conducted by Nikolaus Harnoncourt.

Twice during the last twelve months the clavichord has been heard as accompaniment to the voice: last July Norbert Meyn and Terence Charlston performed songs by C.P.E. Bach, and in January Laurence Cummings accompanied himself in Handel arias, a delightful surprise in what turned out to be 'some enchanted evening' at the Handel House in Brook Street (which is about 1½ miles from here).

¹ So far as I know no-one has yet performed Cage's 4'33" on the clavichord – maybe would-be Cagists have been put off by the price of £8-£9 for a score consisting of three empty pages.

Last September saw the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Richard and Katrina Burnett's keyboard collection at Finchcocks in Kent, where our esteemed president Derek Adlam was a co-founder of the Adlam-Burnett workshop there. The workshop eventually produced 82 instruments of which 9 were clavichords. As part of the celebrations the BCS co-sponsored a recital by Derek in which he played repertoire from John Blitheman (1525 – 1591) to the Bachs (Johann Sebastian and Carl Phillip Emmanuel), on three different clavichords. By the way, Derek has promised that one day he will share with us his research on Handel and Mrs. Delaney... Derek also demonstrated a copy of the RCM's 1480 clavicytherium; a reconstruction of a clavichord of around 1460 has been heard recently in the series of mini-recitals given by Federico Truffi at the Courtauld Gallery in Somerset House, London. Federico is one of the young professionals to benefit (in 2006) from the BCS student sponsorship scheme. We hope that another beneficiary of BCS sponsorship, Nathaniel Mander, will be turning his talents soon to the clavichord. Needless to say, we are constantly looking for more young people and educational establishments to sponsor in furtherance of one of the key aims of the society which is to give musicians of the future the solid foundation of technique and musical understanding that follows from a deep study of all aspects of the seemingly humble clavichord.

There were several other clavichord events during the past year not under the aegis of the BCS, which is a good sign: we will have succeeded in all our aims when we are no longer necessary... In September and October Julian Perkins gave recitals in Cambridge and at the Workshop in Lewes; he included in the latter recital Stephen Dodgson's Suite No.1 for clavichord, which thanks to Julian's advocacy is fast becoming a modern clavichord classic. As most of you will know, Stephen died earlier this year at the grand age of 89. We have lost a brilliant composer with a vastly varied output of music in an uncompromising but approachable modern idiom, even when writing for the harpsichord or clavichord; a warm hearted and open minded personality who modestly encouraged musicians of all ages and backgrounds. The current issue of the BCS Newsletter contains a movement from Suite No.1 which I hope everyone will play – it has moments of great beauty.

The town of Wokingham in Berkshire heard what was apparently its first clavichord recital when Richard Smith played there in June last year. Clavichords by Dolmetsch figured twice in the news: No.10 from 1897, decorated by Edward Burne-Jones, was seen but not heard by thousands of visitors to the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at Tate Britain. And Dorothy Swainson's small Dolmetsch, given to the National Trust after her death in 1959 and now in the Fenton House collection, has been fully restored, the BCS contributing £945.82 to the cost. Next September a day of talks, master class, and a recital by Terence Charlston, will celebrate this instrument's restoration by Peter Bavington, assisted by Ben Marks. Speakers will include Dolmetsch's granddaughter Jeanne, and Mimi Waitzman who has now moved from Fenton House to the Horniman museum in Forest Hill. There, she is creating a new keyboard instrument display which will include some of the historic instruments transferred from the closed gallery in the Victoria and Albert museum. There will be a research conference at the Horniman museum in March next year entitled 'Roots of revival'. Just a reminder here that Dolmetsch No.2 from 1894, restored by our secretary Karin Richter, is at the RCM Museum not far from here. A final piece of news about restorations: thanks to tireless work by committee member David Millard enough money has been raised to restore the Michael Thomas pentagonal clavichord, originally the property of distinguished BCS member Lady Mary Verney, and now in the Bate Collection, Oxford.

Our most recent event is still reverberating in the memory: Carole Cerasi's magisterial performance of music by W.F. and C.P.E. Bach, Mützel, Haydn, and Mozart in Oxford at the end of April. I am very pleased to announce that she will be playing for us again next February at the Handel House. This will mark the beginning of our 20th year of existence; the anniversary AGM and recital will take place on 28th June at one of our favourite venues, the Quaker Meeting House Oxford, and the recitalist will be one of our favourite clavichordists, founder member Paul Simmonds. Other events for 2014 are at the planning stage.

Before then, there will be conferences in July in Edinburgh and at the Bate, Oxford, and in September the 11th International Clavichord Symposium at Magnano in Italy.

I think most of what I have mentioned so far has been more fully reported in our Newsletter, and I must pay tribute to its brilliant editor, Peter Bavington (assisted by Adrian Lenthall as reviews editor) for his comprehensive coverage not only of events, news, and research, but also of practical matters helping all of us to get the best out of our clavichord. Of great interest to many of our members, especially those who cannot get to live recitals, are the reviews of compact discs not always covered by other journals. Notable CD issues over the past year have included volumes 23, 24, and 25 of Miklos Spanyi's C.P.E. Bach project; Wolfgang Schröder playing Fischer's Musical Parnassus, and Jaroslav Tuma's Froberger (it was not far from here that Froberger had a fit of the blues on his visit to London in 1650). Other CD issues included Michael Tsalka playing music by Türk who died 200 years ago, and who composed those 60 pieces for Aspiring Players that we all have been using to perfect our technique; Bernhardt Klapprott played music by the underrated Jiri Benda, the six sonatas of 1757 which the 10 year old Mozart received as a gift in Amsterdam in 1766. I've been wanting to hear more Benda on the clavichord ever since Timothy Roberts played the one of his sonatas for the BCS on the 1743 Hass in the Bate collection in 1995. Another renowned clavichordist from those far off early days of the society, Colin Tilney, reappeared amongst us in the form of a recording of Bach's French Suites enthusiastically welcomed by our president Derek Adlam.

On behalf of the membership I must thank my fellow officers and committee members for their tireless voluntary efforts in pursuing the aims of the BCS: Karin Richter, our secretary, David Hitchin, our treasurer, for his watchful husbanding of the Society's resources, Paula Woods for keeping track of our membership, Huw Saunders for running the BCS shop and for Newsletter distribution, David Millard for his work on the education side, and of course Judith Wardman our events organizer, without whom a lot of what I have reported on today would never have happened.

Finally, what of the future of the BCS? Against a background of continuing economic and political gloom descending into black comedy when a government minister announces that a 5% cut represents a victory for the arts and culture in this country, the costs of promoting the clavichord will outstrip our income. Is there any alternative to carrying on until our money runs out? Answers please on a postcard (not monitored by GCHQ). In the meantime, don't let anxiety spoil your enjoyment of the clavichordist pleasures Stephen Devine will be offering here at 4 o'clock."

4. Annual accounts and Treasurer's report

The independently examined accounts for the year 2012 were circulated along with a written report from the Treasurer. Introducing the report and accounts, the Treasurer pointed out that:

- Events do usually leave a deficit. This is due to the policy of paying a halfway decent fee to the recitalists and for transport and tuning of the instrument(s). It has also been accepted at various committee meetings in the past that promoting the clavichord, which is our stated aim as a society, is likely to be loss making.

- Subscriptions to the BCS have been held at the same level and offer good value for money. The separate subscription to Clavichord International, which is offered as a service to members, had to be increased in line with increased costs. Though accounts for 2012 show a loss for this, over several years we have occasionally had a surplus, so that it evens out.

- Bookshop: the figures have to be somewhat approximate, since stocktaking each year is impractical. It is the figures over several years which give the true picture.

- Education: while the effectiveness of our educational activities is often hard or even impossible to gauge, a recent example of a 'success story' is BCS member Federico Truffi, who was sponsored to take part in the West Dean Clavichord weekend in 2006, and is now teaching and researching, and has recently given a number of informal recitals at the Cortauld Gallery.

In response, Mimi Waitzman queried why the BCS offered a subscription to CI, rather than leaving this to individual members. David Hitchin pointed out that bank charges for direct transfers abroad are prohibitively expensive, so it makes sense to have just one charge for a collective order, and also that it was considered a service to our members.

There were no other questions. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Garry Broughton, and seconded by Karin Richter, and was passed unanimously.

5. Election of Treasurer and Committee members (see below)

a. Treasurer David Hitchin had come to the end of his two year term, and had agreed to stand for re-election. He had been proposed by Karin Richter, and seconded by Huw Saunders. No other nominations had been received. He was re-elected unanimously.

b. Committee members. Andrew Lamb has resigned from the committee. Neil Coleman has come to the end of his term and has decided not to stand again.

The following had reached the end of their 2-year term as committee members, and were eligible and willing to stand for re-election:

Adrian Lenthall, nominated by Judith Wardman, and seconded by Garry Broughton.

Huw Saunders, nominated by David Millard, and seconded by Karin Richter.

Also, one additional nomination had been received:

Penelope Cave, proposed by Judith Wardman, and seconded by Jillian Mitchell.

The meeting agreed to take a single vote to elect the three candidates above. They were elected unanimously.

6. Election of Examiner of the Accounts

Brian Blandford had agreed to stand for re-election, and had been proposed by Karin Richter and seconded by Huw Saunders. He was elected unanimously.

7. Any other business

Mimi Waitzman reminded the meeting that a lot of the instruments of the collection from the Victoria & Albert Museum are now housed at the Horniman museum, and that there is a keyboard exhibition on display until 1 September 2014.

A question was raised about the lack of publicity for Federico Truffi's recitals at the Courtauld. Apparently, details had been available on the Courtauld Gallery's website, but not in their newsletter. It had also been advertised on the BCS website, but it had been too late to include it in the February BCS Newsletter. Garry Broughton agreed to take the lack of publicity up with them.

One member mentioned the need to keep people quiet during the Courtauld recitals. It appears to be a general problem rather than specific to the Courtauld; and the informal nature of the recitals may have made it more difficult.

The meeting ended at 3pm.

At 4pm Steven Devine gave a public clavichord concert.