

Draft Minutes of the Twenty-First Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society

Held at the Friends Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW,
on Saturday, 9th July 2016, 2.15pm

Members present: Peter Bavington, Garry Broughton, David Butcher, Christopher Gold, David Griffel, Christopher Griffiths, Francis Knights, Martha Leigh, Adrian Lenthall, David Millard, Richard Miller, Jillian Mitchell, Ian Mortimer, Charles Mould, Roger Murray, Jacky Peacock, Karin Richter, Oliver Sandig, Huw Saunders, Dan Tidhar, Judith Wardman, Paula Woods.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from:

Sheila Barnes; Carey Beebe; Jane Clark Dodgson; John Henry; David Hitchin; Douglas Hollick; Richard Ireland; Nicole Le Bon; John Lester; Pat Murdoch; Simon Neal; Duncan Preston; Veronica M Read; Eve Richards; Paul Simmonds; Douglas Spence; Peter Stephens; Geoffrey Allan Taylor; Elizabeth Wells; Mary Wetherick; Richard Whitehouse; Howard Woollin.

2. Minutes of the 20th AGM, held 27th June 2015. David Millard proposed and David Griffel seconded that these minutes represented a true record of that meeting; the minutes were agreed unanimously and signed by the chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

"I am happy to report that, over the last 12 months, the sheer horror of world politics was mitigated, albeit momentarily, by some superb clavichord performances coupled with some fascinating developments in the relatively calm world of the clavichord.

Our President, Derek Adlam, in his post AGM recital this time last year, gave a performance of Lars Mortensen's transcription of Bach's great d minor chaconne that was not only a profound musical experience, but also a tribute and a memorial for Christopher Hogwood who had himself recorded the piece in 2001 on his 1761 J.A. Hass clavichord, an instrument that now resides in a private collection 4000 miles away. I know that the proceeds of both the Hogwood and more recent Finchcocks sales will be ploughed back into education and training, but with the majority of the clavichords sold abroad, the V&A collection dispersed, the RCM and the Edinburgh collections closed pro tem, where are the trainees going to practise? I hope the Bate collection here in Oxford continues to be accessible. Meanwhile BCS member Douglas Hollick has been playing the 1909 Chickering-Dolmetsch he acquired from the Hogwood sale (you can read about this in our latest Newsletter). It's sad that Finchcocks has closed (I was there when it opened over 40 years ago); no longer will the evocative sounds of Richard Burnett's clavichords, harpsichords and early pianos drift across a landscape where sheep safely graze under a harvest moon in a scene reminiscent of a painting by Samuel Palmer.

Other notable recitals during the past year were given by Adrian Lenthall (in Whipsnade – sold out!), Marcia Hadjimarkos (Lewes and Hatchlands), Linda Nicholson (at the Art Workers Guild), Julian Perkins (in Devon and Northamptonshire), Terence Charlston (RCM), Steven Devine (Handel House) and Francis Knights (in Cambridge). I won't give all the

details since those who attended know what they heard, and those who didn't don't want to be reminded of what they missed.

Actually three events do need further comment as they presented exciting developments in our clavichord world. Firstly Newsletter 63 contained details and photos of what is believed to be the world's first vis à vis duo clavichord built by Joel Speerstra and Per Anders Terning – sitting face to face with your duet partner instead of alongside means that a sharp kick can be administered when things go wrong.

The second, and more significant, development in clavichord building was unveiled when Peter Bavington and Terence Charlston presented the culmination of their Mersenne project: the reconstruction of an instrument based on the isometric drawing in Mersenne's Harmonie Universelle of 1636 and a recording of it on CD. Perhaps France was not the land without clavichord after all; read Paul Simmonds' review in Newsletter 64 for details of the instrument and the repertoire that Terence plays on it.

Linda Nicholson's recital last October was a milestone in the history of our Society with two 'firsts' : the inclusion of the clavichord's direct descendant, the tangent piano, and the first time one of our events has been recorded by the BBC, with extracts on both instruments broadcast during an interview with Linda on Radio 3's Early Music Show in November. Of course the presence of the tangent piano (Linda's own Friedrich Schmahl made in 1797) was the reason for the BBC's interest but, after all, what is a tangent piano but a very large clavichord?

(Perhaps we should become the BC+TPS, or more simply the B.S.S.S. (Struck String Society) or, moving to Scotland when it stays in Europe, the S.S.S.S.)

I have already mentioned our Newsletter several times: it is probably, for the majority of our membership, our most valuable manifestation, the result of an immense amount of effort made by successive editors Paul Simmonds, Peter Bavington and, holding the fort pro tem. Judith Wardman, but, we do need someone to help relieve Judith of some if not all of her burden (will volunteers please form an orderly queue at the tea interval?). The lack of positive responses to our appeals for help is a problem we share with many small organisations. In our membership survey (see Newsletter 64) being retired was given as a reason for not having time to help!

This brings me to my other perennial complaint, the problem so succinctly expressed by Dickens' Mr. Micawber, of expenditure exceeding income. Ten years ago I said not for the first or last time in my annual report, "we are faced with the continuing problems of rising hire fees for venues and dwindling audiences". Since then our membership has shrunk by about 20% and costs have continued to rise with box office receipts only covering about 60% of the cost of putting on a recital. Looking through the back numbers of the journal 'Early Music' I came across the following statement: "Music is expensive. Most professional concerts run at a loss"; that was Nicolas Kenyon writing in 1976, 40 years ago. Maybe we should accept expenditure exceeding income as a default position, and stop worrying, after all Samuel Butler said, "All progress is based upon a universal innate desire on the part of every organism to live beyond its income". We must continue trying to find that fine point of balance between ticket prices that are too low (income reduced) and too high (fewer sales, income reduced) and we must also ensure that we have enough funds to fulfil another, and most crucial, of our aims: ensuring the future of the clavichord in Britain, sponsoring the training and development of young applicants by individual lessons or workshops and open classes. Whilst on this subject let me remind you of Peter Bavington's article in Newsletter 64 on training in clavichord making and maintenance, and especially

the footnote on p.20 that one of the trainees “benefited from the policy of the Scottish Government under which higher education in public colleges and universities is free to residents of Scotland”.

One of our members who was passionately involved in education whether it was masterclasses, lecture recitals, teaching as professor at Guildhall or developing a Music in Schools initiative was Susan Alexander-Max who sadly died in January this year. Susan was a founder member of the BCS and served on its committee for the first five years of its existence. She excelled on both the fortepiano and the clavichord and played both instruments at BCS events. We miss her enormously: I particularly remember her playing J.C. Bach and Clementi at the AGM here in Oxford 6 years ago. Fortunately her musicianship is preserved in recordings of both composers, although only one of Susan’s CDs, J.C. Bach’s opus 5 sonatas, is on the clavichord.

As you all know the composer Peter Maxwell Davies also died recently. When he moved to Orkney in 1974 he took with him the only keyboard instrument that would fit into his small croft, a clavichord. In 1978 his Four Lessons for Two Clavichords was played at Dartington... not one of his major works.

Looking ahead, we have the prospect of quite a number of clavichord events, either sponsored directly by the BCS or undertaken by individual members of the BCS. At the end of this month Julian Perkins resumes his provincial peregrinations at the Ryedale Festival, and Ulrika Davidsson, Carole Cerasi, John Irving and Johannes Secker are involved in teaching at Smarano, Dartington and Lythe respectively. In September Francis Knights and Dan Tidhar present a Froberger Festival in Cambridge, and Froberger will also feature in two more events: Timothy Roberts’ recital at Dulwich Picture Gallery (which houses Gerrit Dou’s famous painting *Woman playing a clavichord*) and finally there’s our own Froberger Celebration on 19th November (tickets now on sale, see Newsletter 65 pp 33 & 34).

As far as 2017 is concerned we are working with the British Harpsichord Society and the Handel Hendrix House to put on another one of the excellent dual clavichord / harpsichord recitals; other future events will be announced in our October Newsletter.

There are many people who need to be thanked for the contributions they make towards the continuing success of the BCS.

Let me start with our Membership Secretary Paula Woods, without whose efforts in chasing up recalcitrant rejoinders the BCS would have even fewer members. Our General Secretary Karin Richter copes with many tasks including trying to keep a sensible record of the convoluted confabulations of the committee. Adrian Lenthall is to be thanked for his work as Newsletter reviews editor and Huw Saunders for running the BCS shop and Newsletter distribution. Other committee members Christopher Gold, Ulla Kite, Jillian Mitchell and David Millard have all made valuable contributions, as has Peter Bavington acting as a sort of *éminence grise*. As always we must thank our president Derek Adlam for being there for us from the beginning. Lastly we can never thank enough Judith Wardman who, as well as carrying the burden of events organiser, has ensured the continued existence of the BCS by taking on the additional duties of Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Archivist.

Looking back over the last two or three years I think I see a pattern emerging which will sustain clavichord activity in the (not so) United Kingdom: the BCS providing three or four events autumn spring and summer, with events in other parts of the land on the initiative of BCS players / members in response to local demand. I remain relatively

optimistic that this pattern will continue despite the disruptions triggered by what happened on June 23rd.”

4. Treasurer’s Report. The independently examined accounts for the year 2015 were circulated along with a written report from the Treasurer, Judith Wardman, and introduced by her. The treasurer’s report was agreed without further questions. Garry Broughton proposed a vote of thanks to the treasurer; this was applauded by the meeting. The report and accounts are available at <http://www.clavichord.org.uk/AGM%20pdf%20files/2016%20ACC.pdf>

5. Election of chairman and Secretary.

For the election of the chairman, Karin Richter took over the chair. Garry Broughton was standing for re-election; he was proposed by Huw Saunders, seconded by Adrian Lenthall, and elected unanimously.

For secretary, Karin Richter had agreed to stand again. She was proposed by Christopher Gold, seconded by Judith Wardman, and elected unanimously.

6. Election of Committee members.

David Millard and Byron Mahoney have come to the end of their two-year term, and have decided not to stand for re-election. Garry Broughton expressed his personal thanks for their valuable contributions and good advice in committee meetings over a number of years; this was met with a round of applause.

The following committee members had come to the end of their two-year term and agreed to stand for re-election:

Christopher Gold, proposed by Karin Richter, seconded by Jillian Mitchell;

Ulla Kite, proposed by Adrian Lenthall, seconded by Christopher Gold;

Jillian Mitchell, proposed by Judith Wardman, seconded by Huw Saunders.

A new candidate, Roger Murray, was proposed by Garry Broughton, seconded by Judith Wardman.

The chairman took the election of committee members en bloc; they were elected unanimously.

7. Election of Examiner of Accounts. Brian Blandford had been proposed by Karin Richter and seconded by Garry Broughton; he was re-elected unanimously.

8. AOB Francis Knights asked whether the 2-year term for committee members should be extended; he thought two years was unusually short, and it was much more common to serve on a committee for 3 or more years. Peter Bavington responded that two years was not unreasonable, and not so long as to be daunting or even put off potential candidates. Others agreed; there was also a comment that Societies with longer terms of office (for example the Galpin Society) enforced a break after a term of office, i.e. committee members could not be immediately re-elected. It was agreed that the committee might want to consider this question.

The meeting closed at 2.55pm, and was followed by a recital by Terence Charlston at 4pm.

