Harpsichord & fortepiano

Vol. 8, No. 1 Autumn, 1999

Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

Igor Kipnis
talks to Elaine Hoffman Baruch

I'd like to ask you first how you got your name. Who were you named after?

My father, Alexander Kipnis, who was a world famous singer, performed many, many operas, not too many of them actually Russian, except for Boris, where he took the title role. But he also performed in *Prince Igor.* Evidently that was a favourite name, so that's how I got mine.

How does it feel to have a name that is probably unique in the United States, if not in the world?

Actually, there are a lot of Igors.

But are there a number of Igor Kipnises?

In doing research on my father to get the family genealogy, I found an Igor Kipnis in California—one looks these things up on the internet—and another one elsewhere. It's a bit of a shock. It's like running into your doppelgänger.

It's not like having the name Joe Smith, is it? Would you have preferred a different name?

When I was growing up everybody took pot shots at it. But in one way it's been sort of fun because I've wound up in quite a number of crossword puzzles, including a good half dozen in the *New York Times*, simply because of my first name. If they don't want to use Stravinsky or Sikorsky or the hero of Borodin's opera, then I finally come in.

Oh, I think they choose you for another reason as well. My next question was going to be: how does it feel to be unique in another way? After your debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1967, Stanley Sadie in the London *Times* called you a "striking musical personality," and recently the *New York Times* spoke of your playing as "enlightened style incarnate."

Well, that's, of course, extremely complimentary. But you never want to believe entirely everything that is written about you. Some of the performers on the instruments that I play are really great ones. I have enormous admiration for many of them. But it's very nice when somebody likes you.

You're probably the only professional musician who decided he was going to play an instrument and a year and a half later made his debut. How do you account for this phenomenon?

Well, number one, I was not a prodigy at all. I received my harpsichord at an age which most people would consider much too late for becoming a professional. I had taken piano from a very young age, something like six, up until the time I went to college; I had some interest in the harpsichord, mainly from hearing recordings, primarily Landowska, whom I certainly appreciated but somehow also felt a little bit critical about. At any rate, I didn't receive a harpsichord until I was 27 years old. I'd been doing other jobs relating to music one way or the other, selling books and records, working in a radio station in the music library, which happened to be a rock station at the very start of rock, and working as an art and editorial director for Westminster Records, which I did for four and a half years before I became the classical music director for a chain of FM stations.

How did you get to the harpsichord?

My father gave me my first harpsichord (upon my request, actually). He felt that I should busy myself with something after work instead of wasting a great deal of time watching television and vegetating on the couch. So I began practising and having jam sessions, calling up friends who would come over and we'd do a Brandenburg concerto or something along those lines.
Then because I was working for Westminster Records at the time, I had an invitation to play on the radio from a friend who worked for the city station, WNYC, in New York. They had no money. I had no money. As a result I managed to talk one of the Westminster engineers into coming to my apartment and taping a programme, which was then played on the radio. (That was a year and a half after I'd received the harpsichord.) It was heard by a young conductor who had an amateur orchestra. He called up about a week later and asked, "Would you like to play the Fifth Brandenburg with my orchestra?" I was too stupid to say no, and my live debut took place about a month and a half after that.
Then I started doing more and more playing, mostly continuo. I did a lot of Handel oratorios

with an organisation in New York, which did everything. But of course, I was not making any money at it. For that I was freelancing, doing all sorts of work: a little bit of reviewing, hardly making any money from that, and pretty much hack work for managers of performers. But gradually I wound up with my own manager.

In 1963 I went off on my first tour, which the manager had arranged. I bought myself a VW bus and sailed off, so to speak, into the sunset. The concert was in Springfield, Missouri, at a small college. I had to drive two and one-half days to get there.

At that point I already had a clavichord, so the manager was trying to sell me for harpsichord recitals or clavichord recitals, or harpsichord and clavichord combination, or harpsichord and orchestra. But when I got to this college I found to my horror that they had put up a poster which said I was giving a lecture recital, which I had never done. Being extremely unused to the whole idea, I took the jack rail off the harpsichord, hauled out a jack, held it up, and tried to explain to the audience what this was and how the harpsichord was able to make a sound. Then I talked about music. And basically I've been doing that ever since.

You must have had a phenomenal technique on the piano for you to have transferred so readily to the harpsichord.

I don't know about phenomenal. I played a lot of Chopin, a lot of Brahms, a lot of Beethoven. And of course, Bach and Scarlatti. The first thing that I tackled on the harpsichord were the early pieces, not the Beethoven or Brahms obviously. I also read a lot and gradually taught myself something. I had some lessons, a very few lessons, to begin with, with Fernando Valenti, who was recording for Westminster Records. But I was basically what you would call an autodidact.

Then I came into contact with Thurston Dart when he was in the United States for lectures and for some research. Dart was extremely helpful. I would describe him as a mentor to me. There were many times when I would write to him for whatever comments he would like to make. And when I was fortunate enough to start to make recordings, which occurred some time in the very early sixties, I would send him a copy of every record. Almost by return post he would send me a critique. I have all of those letters. I think at some point it would be nice to publish them. He was a very witty person, who had a way of getting information across that was extremely effective. He was so knowledgeable; every time he opened his mouth I felt that the British Museum was walking out.

In the late sixties, Paul Myers, my producer for Columbia Records, suggested that I do a record for two harpsichords with Thurston Dart. Well, the idea of approaching Dart on this was to me very scary. But when he was in New York - I think this must have been about 1968 - he had dinner with me and I broached the subject. I said, "Er, uh, Bob" - because his name was Robert Thurston Dart, so people who knew him would always call him Bob -"Bob, do you think you might.-.that is to say, do you think you could ever consider -um, uh, er, er - ?" Finally I got it out. And he said yes, which shocked me greatly.

In 1969 we made a recording of music for two harpsichords. He was not in particularly good shape; the cancer that was going to kill him another two years from then was already taking its toll. He had just come back from concerts on the Continent, and what we had were two days of recording. You have to realise that we had never played together ever. He knew my recordings, of course. He knew how I played. And I certainly knew how he played. But actually sitting down and playing together was different. Now imagine walking into the studio and rehearsing for the first time with the microphone and actually starting to tape a few hours from that time. It was really a matter of performing under fire. And as far as I was concerned he was very much the boss.

Was there anything you took issue with him on?

I remember specifically at one point his saying, "Play the appoggiaturas very slightly before the beat." And I said to him, "But Bob, the appoggiaturas, according to what everybody says, are always supposed to be played on the beat." His reply to me was, "Who says?" And I could only sort of stammer, "Well, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach." Of course, that was the wrong person because he had nothing whatsoever to do with the French baroque music that we were playing, by François Couperin. And Dart said, "My dear Igor, it would take me a seven-hour lecture to explain to you exactly why this should be so. Please, at the moment take my word for it."

Later, of course, I found out exactly why he had come to these decisions. And mind you, this was at a time when everybody was playing their appoggiaturas right smack on the beat. We're not talking about the pianists; we're talking about the harpsichordists. So under fire, right on the spot while we were recording, I had to do pretty much as he said. I think he was absolutely right. He had wonderful instincts. Occasionally he would make judgments which later on he would change his mind about. And that was all right, too. Today he belongs a little bit in the minds of many people to an older generation of perhaps fuddy-duddies, people who have made important statements in

the past which are no longer considered valid. Arnold Dolmetsch belongs to that category and so does Robert Donington. But I think this is a grave mistake because all three of these people had important things to say and wrote them down. This isn't to say that there haven't been many developments since then, which may or may not have changed what they originally wrote.

Did you ever think of becoming a professional pianist, in your youth?

No. Categorically no. I seem to have gone quite against that more recently. But at the point that I was taking lessons in my pre-teens and throughout my teens I would say that music as a profession was discouraged. My father was an important singer and he knew how tough the music business was. He was not the only one.
My mother's father, Heniot Lévy, was a pianist, a composer, and a teacher. He studied piano in Berlin with the same teacher as Arthur Rubinstein. He also studied composition with Max Bruch. He had a career as a pianist but eventually wound up in Chicago with a young family and became the head of the piano department of the American Conservatory in Chicago.
So there were musicians on both sides of the family - not even counting my mother's brother, Hans Heniot, who was a pianist, a composer, and a conductor - the first conductor of the Salt Lake City Symphony, in fact - and a teacher. He took over my grandfather's position when my grandfather died in the mid-40s. All of these people were saying, "Fine, by all means study music, but don't, for God's sake, go into it as a career."
And I was not intending to go into music as a career. I wanted to have something to do with records. I was a record collector from the time I was 14. I wanted to do something in radio or in television, or maybe work for a record company as an artist relations manager or A&R director, something along those lines. It wasn't until my father gave me the harpsichord and one thing led to the other that all of a sudden I seemed to be doing this as a career.

But you asked for that harpsichord, didn't you?

Yes, I asked for the harpsichord. My father wanted to buy me a piano. I didn't want a piano. I wanted a harpsichord. I liked the sound of it and I loved the music.

Didn't he protest?

He was quite surprised. He was also very surprised, I have to add, when I bought a clavichord, basically a Hass model, a six-foot long, end-table style made by Rutkowski and Robinette, all wood, with tortoise-shell keys. It's absolutely gorgeous.
I remember I had my parents over for dinner and played a little bit on the clavichord for my father, who promptly fell asleep. He'd had a scotch by then. Of course, he couldn't understand why anybody would want to play such a soft instrument. You have to realise that he as a singer naturally wanted to be heard. We used to have arguments about other aspects of performance, such as he felt that I should always amplify the harpsichord, for the reason that the harpsichord was not nearly as loud as the piano. I kept trying to explain that you don't do this sort of thing, except possibly if you're playing the Poulenc *Concert Champêtre,* where if you expect to be heard in a modern hall with a large orchestra it is a good idea to amplify. I've done it both ways, and I would say in general, it's better to be heard than not to be heard. The major problem was that he didn't understand the harpsichord aesthetically, so we used to argue back and forth.

Do you think there was any element of rebellion involved in your choosing this instrument?

There might have been. I suppose from a psychological standpoint there easily could have been. It was not an area I was going to go into but then I suddenly wound up in it. My father never could understand why I should want to play an instrument that he considered belonged in the pit of an opera house for a *Marriage of Figaro* or a *Barber of Seville.* When I went out on the road the first few years, there would be people who would come back after the concert and say, "Are you related to ...?" And I would smile.

Did that bother you?

It bothered me to some extent after it had happened enough times. One of these occurred when I played at the American Embassy in Prague. I had just finished a full-length recital, when an older man came up to me and said, "I remember your father as Sarastro in *The Magic Flute.* He was unforgettable." With that he walked away, and I wanted to say, "What am I, chopped liver?" These things happen but after a while - well, you're happy that somebody remembers your father. At that point he had stopped singing for quite a number of years. But the chopped liver syndrome keeps coming up. After a time my father sometimes had people come to him and ask,"Is" - then mentioning my name -"a relation of yours?" So, you see, it worked both ways. At that point my father realised that maybe I hadn't done the dumbest thing on earth.

Well, talk about displacement of the fathers by the sons. But the nice thing is that both of you have achieved so much fame. What about your mother? Was she musical?

She was extremely musical but was not a professional musician. She was very, very helpful as far as my father was concerned because she had a wonderful social sense. But she did not perform. Oh, once in a while at a party she might play and accompany him.

I understand that you are writing a biography of your father.

Barry Lenson is my co-author. It's very difficult to write about your father, especially under these circumstances, so Barry is doing most of the writing. I have been gathering all of the information and have done a fair amount of research.

I hear that you're editing and contributing to another major project as well.

There is an encyclopedia of keyboard instruments which Garland is putting out. Basically my work is done except for looking at what they finish up with and writing forewords to the different sections. It's an encyclopedia of the harpsichord and clavichord, with lots of articles, which I assigned to as many of the best scholars as I could find.

You have been a college professor and editor, a widely respected critic and reviewer, a highly acclaimed teacher of keyboard instruments. You are a master of the harpsichord, the clavichord, the fortepiano, and now duo piano and piano four hands. Is there anything you would like to do that you haven't done yet?

Although I have several recordings, including a number of solo records, I would like to make more. Because of the current state of the record business, a lot of those recordings have not been reissued; they don't sell in sufficient quantities for the larger companies such as EMI or Sony or Nonesuch to issue them. We're talking about a relatively esoteric instrument in comparison with, well, say the music of Leonard Bernstein or Piazzola, the tango composer. These are the things that are very current.

Your CDs and recordings have received such great reviews, it's really unfortunate that they haven't been reissued so that the younger generation and people in other countries could know them better.

The harpsichord is a very popular instrument with a small number of devotees. The afficionado for the harpsichord, or the fortepiano for that matter, is very intense about it. But the greater population is not particularly involved. When you have companies that are so bottom-line oriented - they have to make a large profit - you have to be able to sell well, say 10,000 copies of a compact disc in order to make it worthwhile for them. The European situation to my way of thinking is a little bit better than the American one. But I don't live in Europe, I live in the United States. And the American companies on the whole, the smaller ones, really don't have the wherewithal to put out a lot of records.

Have you thought of living in Europe?

I love visiting there. And I love playing there. But I would say my home really is in the United States.

You have done a number of European tours. Would you tell us about your first trip?

I received a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music to make my debut in four major cities, including London, and also to help pay for the transportation, not only for me but for my harpsichord. At that point most of the harpsichords in Europe were the old-fashioned, production-line models, which are very much frowned upon today. But these were the ones that you would find as either rental instruments or belonging to radio stations: Neupert, Sperrhake, and Wittmayer brands, which were not nearly as good as those being made in other places where historical instruments were coming into public consciousness.
I had something that was a cross between a historical and a modern harpsichord made by Rutkowski and Robinette, a very reliable, two-manual French-styled instrument. Yes, it had pedals. Did I do a lot of pedal pushing? No, because I never cared for that. At any rate, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund paid for me to take it with my van across the water. When I took the boat, the Bremen, I was assured that I would be able to practice once we were embarked. Then I found out that the harpsichord, which was inside my VW bus, was in the bowels of the ship and inaccessible. In desperation I asked, "Is there a piano on board?" And they said, "Yes, there is one in the ship's large bar-room," the so-called Taverne. And I could practice on this upright piano until three o'clock, at which point there would be a dance class and they would kick me out.
Well, I did this for about five days. The first day I was on the water it was miserable. There was kind of stormy weather and I didn't really feel like practising. The second day was almost as stormy but I felt I'd better work because what was facing

me in London when I arrived were three or four days of recording: three Bach harpsichord concertos, a Mozart concerto, K.271 to people's surprise, and the Haydn D Major concerto. About two days after that I was making my debut at the Wigmore Hall. That was a lot of repertoire. I had to practise. So I practised. At first on this piano I found that my fingers were hurting because I had to hit much harder in order to get the keys down. Not only that but I was missing my octaves because I was underreaching. But gradually by the second or third day of practice the octaves were coming in very nicely and my fingers either got calloused enough so that they didn't hurt any longer, or I got used to the harder action.
When I got to London and sat down at my harpsichord again one day before the recording started, I found I was overreaching my octaves badly, I was hitting my poor instrument to death, and what was even funnier is that when I got up - and this occurred during all the days of recording - I felt once again the swaying motion of the boat even though I was on dry land.

Striking out on a concert career, not having prepared for it in childhood, takes enormous perseverance. How do you account for your will power, your persistence? Is this just a gift of character comparable to your other gifts?

I don't really know how to answer that. When you began asking the question I thought that the proper answer is just plain stupidity. Not knowing just how tough this is, you go blindly into something, and it's only much later that you realise somehow you've managed to weather all of this. I think anybody that starts a musical career, assuming that they have enough ambition to go through with this, is going to feel that they can do anything, and that it's not really a very complicated matter. Obviously you have to practise. Presumably you have some modicum of talent, and I guess fingers or vocal chords to go along with it, and then you just get into it. What happens, generally speaking, is that luck has the most to do with all of this.

I strongly doubt that luck alone is the key.

Well, assuming that people are heard and that doors are answered if they are knocked upon, a whole chain of events occurs as a result. At that point, maybe you begin starting a career. Then if you are lucky, as I certainly was, you acquire a manager and you start doing more concerts, and perhaps you're not making a living at it, as I certainly was not at the beginning, but again, being very fortunate, the right doors opened, including recording. The recordings as of the mid-60s were really what put me on the map, so to speak. There were things that happened because of them.
A lot of performers and non-performers seem to think that a recording gets you a lot of money, a lot of royalties. If you happen to be a Pavarotti or Domingo or a Horowitz, you conceivably make a fair amount from royalties. Everybody else just kind of wanders along and maybe will get enough for a case of Coca Cola once in a while. But you need the record today to have your calling card, in order to be hired to perform the concert. I'm looking at it from a very pragmatic standpoint.

You have made over 80 recordings. What are some of your favourites?

There are certain ones that I'm proud of that are not necessarily the best I've made at all. For example, there was one that I did with Leopold Stokowski. I liked Stokowski very much as a conductor of music other than baroque, so I was persuaded by Vanguard Records to play continuo for a kind of Christmas album to be recorded by Stokowski with a group of hand-picked freelance musicians from New York. I knew most of them and had played with a lot of them.
I thought surely I was going to be relegated to the back room as far as any kind of balance with the orchestra was concerned. In fact what happened was that the very first piece that we recorded was "Jesu, Joy of Man's desiring." I was told that I could be heard well enough on the cello mikes and therefore the engineer took away my own microphone and I feared for the worst. At that point I felt I couldn't possibly be heard and so I just played more or less to my heart's content. After that first take, which was really for testing purposes, we all piled into the control room - Stokowski and all the members of this small chamber orchestra - and what I heard was, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," a concerto - CONCERTO in caps - for harpsichord - HARPSICHORD in caps - and orchestra (in small letters) conducted by Leopold Stokowski. I was totally amazed, and somewhat embarrassed by all of this. I thought Stokowski would have a fit. In fact he didn't have a fit at all, and I found that I could do whatever I liked and he allowed it. That was a great, fun record for me. And although it is not the greatest baroque performance in any way, to me it's a wonderful record. As for solo records that I particularly like, there are a number that I made for Angel: all the Bach Partitas, on three LPs; the Goldberg Variations complete with repeats, as well as the little Italian variations; the Italian Concerto and the French Overture. There's an album called, strangely enough, "Bach Goes to Town," with the subtitle "Igor Kipnis plays his happiest encores."

What were those happy "encores"?

In addition to some reasonably happy works, for example, some Scarlatti sonatas, there were also a couple of really lugubrious pieces, such as Johann Froberger's "Tombeau fait a Paris sur la mort de Monsieur Blancrocher," which is anything but happy, considering that poor Blancrocher killed himself by falling down the stairs back in mid-17th century Paris. But it was a fun album, including some rather unusual pieces, some of which I've actually done as encores, such as "Variations on Rule Britannia" by F. Latour. We're not quite sure what the F. stood for, but Latour was his last name, and he was, I believe, a teacher to the Prince of Wales. There were a number of Angel records. None of these at present are out. As far as EMI, which owns all of this material, is concerned, they would not achieve enough interest for the greater record market to be reissued. I'm sorry about this. They were good records and they sounded very well.

They had wonderful reviews, as did your CDs for the fortepiano. One reviewer, Patrick Meanor in *The Listener*, wrote about your early Beethoven - and I like his metaphor, "If your Beethoven deposit needs some fresh funds, get this terrifically rich CD immediately." Would you tell us something about that recording?

I did a miscellany, called "The Young Beethoven", that included the Pathetique and Moonlight sonatas, and the Opus 34 Variations in F major—those were the three major pieces -.plus a set of minuets that had never been done before in their keyboard version. One of these, the second one, was the familiar minuet in G. That was recorded for my son's company, which was called Epiphany.

There has been high praise for the company. Edward Tatnall Canby in *Audio Classical Recordings* said, "Surely, this is Beethoven, impeccably recorded."

Unfortunately, the company was still underfinanced when my son started it, with all of the best intentions. Although it did not go into bankruptcy, the company nonetheless is defunct. And so far, because of the current situation, nobody has picked up on those records. I also did another Goldberg Variations for him. That is a fairly recent recording but it never came out, again because of underfinancing. That was done on a Hubbard copy of a Hass instrument. I used a 16', but judiciously. Whether Bach actually owned an instrument that had a 16' would be only conjectural, but certainly he knew about that register.

You did the Beethoven on a fortepiano, and you also have a Mozart CD on the fortepiano. Bernard Jacobson in *Fanfare*, July/August 1998, writes that your performance on the 1793 Graebner Brothers original from Dresden "could well stand as an object lesson on how to play Mozart on the fortepiano." How did you get to the fortepiano from the harpsichord?

Somewhere around 1960 or '61 I met some people from CBS Records; that was Columbia Records, now Sony. They were interested in doing a children's album which would have involved three instruments - harpsichord, clavichord, and fortepiano. At that point I didn't even have a clavichord, although I'd certainly tried one. Now I had a chance to try a fortepiano for the first time. I fell in love with the instrument, and decided I really would like one of those. That didn't happen then; the record never was made, by the way.
I didn't get a fortepiano until 1980, and then I was very fortunate. Hugh Gough, who was a British builder of harpsichords, clavichords, lutes, and fortepianos, was also a dealer in antiques, and the instrument I obtained from him was made by the Graebner Brothers in Dresden in 1793.

Everyone seems to love the Graebner.

John Koster had done the restoration. Now I needed to know not only how to play it but also what to do for its mechanics, that is, any kind of regulation work; Koster showed me. He did a few adjustments and taught me what to do in case of real problems. Every once in a while you break a hammer or something else snaps, like the Schnabel, which is the beak. I remember once the Schnabel broke while I was playing Schubert. I thought that was somehow very symbolic. I'm not sure of what.
Roughly three-quarters of a year to a year after I obtained the Graebner in 1980, I made my debut on it with a programme that included Mozart, Beethoven, and Clementi. At that point I was teaching. I had a residency in Indianapolis at the Festival Music Society. With great trepidation I piled the fortepiano into my van and drove off; it took one and a half days to get to Indianapolis from Connecticut. When I arrived I was extremely concerned because of the temperature. Indianapolis is very warm during the summer; not only that, it's extremely humid, and I worried about how the instrument was going to withstand this. I had always had trouble keeping it in tune at home in Connecticut, so I asked the people involved to make sure I had an air conditioner. They gave me a wood-panelled room that had a small air conditioner in the window. The only furniture in this small library-type room aside from the instruments were some chairs. I set the air conditioner on low and tuned the fortepiano. The next day I tuned it again. The third day I tuned it

one more time. The fourth day I suddenly realized the fortepiano loved the air conditioning. It was having a wonderful time, and in this room, which had a little bit of reverberation but not excessive, and with the wood panelling, it sounded wonderful, and you could do anything you wanted with it. You could get the most gorgeous cantabile legato quality you could ever imagine as well as all conceivable dynamics. It was terrific. I was able to practice with the air conditioner on the instrument, and it was smiling at me all the time. The only problem of course was that my fingers were blue from the cold, but that was a small price to pay.

About a week later, the day before the actual concert, my so-called debut on the fortepiano, we took it to the auditorium which was on the grounds of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. It had air conditioning, but it was a different type, a sort of wet air conditioning. The next day, the day of the concert, I came to practice and then took a nap in the afternoon, which is what I usually do on a concert day. When I came back in the evening to play the concert, I found that the whole instrument had changed to the point that all of my wonderful dynamics back in the room where it stayed were gone and I couldn't do a damn thing with the instrument.

You have played everywhere from concert halls and churches to college cafeterias, school outreach programmes, and shopping malls, any place where you thought you could find a new audience for the harpsichord, particularly a young audience. You have also played everything from baroque and earlier to Ellington and Brubeck at these events in programmes called "The Light and Lively Harpsichord." What venue have you enjoyed the most?

I don't think there's anything that's quite like a young audience, although today that's harder to obtain than in previous years. This is mainly because the younger audiences are not geared to classical music, and it doesn't make any difference whether you're playing a harpsichord, fortepiano,clavichord, or the modern piano. But I've always felt that if you can expose an audience and interest them in what you're playing and what you're doing, this is the best answer to what is wrong with the reception of classical music today. You have to make a good presentation, you have to be sincere as you're doing it and not get too hokey in your programming. You have to play good music and play it well.

When did you first start trying to reach the young?

My first experience in this kind of proselytising was around 1971 or 2 at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. The people there were worried, not just the music department, but the events committee also, that students were not being involved. I had a residency there, something like three, four days, I think, and the first day that I arrived I played in a cafeteria in one of the dormitories after they had stopped serving. They had signs posted all over the place. Posters, I think, play a very large role in trying to get the message across that something is happening. I had a whole bunch of people who were waiting for whoever this person was with this strange-looking and strange-sounding instrument. And I did this kind of thing for three days running.

That takes a great deal of energy and commitment. Did you just play in the cafeteria?

I played in a library, in a television room - with the TV off, of course - in an English lounge, and in the agricultural centre, in another part of the University. The last day, the fourth day, the only thing that I did was to play the concert, which was not in a regular auditorium at all. It was in a large ballroom, and there were about a thousand kids. You couldn't pack any more in. They were hanging almost literally from the rafters. I played a full-length regular recital, and I would say that that probably did the most good as far as building an audience.

After that time I tried to do it again, providing I was allowed to. In one case there was a dedicatory recital in a very small college in the northwest corner of Missouri. I was picked up at the airport, and we had about an hour-and-a-half drive to get to the University itself. The person from the music department filled me in a little bit about what kind of concerts they had, and I asked a question knowing full well what the answer probably was

going to be, which was, "Do the students come to the concerts?" The answer, which avoided talking about the students almost entirely, was, "Well, we have a lot of faculty who love our concert series, then there are townspeople, and of course you know that the music students are forced to go." By the time we arrived we hit on a scheme based on some of my previous experiences. We put posters all over the place saying," What is a harpsichord doing in the ...?" and then it filled in the name of the cafeteria. "Come Thursday at noon and find out." It was a teaser. Just my first name was there, so people didn't know what it was. But posters were all over the place; they were put in the mailboxes for the students, and when I played, on a raised platform, I was amplified. You have to be under those circumstances. By the time I got there and adjusted the amplification, it was at least something that could be heard above the din of people getting trays of food and talking. There were a number of younger people who were gathered right around the harpsichord, and there was a long line, of course, of people waiting to get their trays and their lunch, so there was no way that they could not be aware that there was a harpsichord that was being played.
I played short pieces, all sorts of things - a little Bach, a little Scarlatti, a little Couperin, a little bit of crossover material such as a rag or Brubeck. I was told later that for the next day's concert, which was the formal event, something like 75 kids lined up at the box office to buy tickets. That to me was the proof of the pudding.

You have been called both a purist and a populariser. Is the very ebullience of your personality a possible drawback for those who associate early music with restraint?

Hmn. Very good question. I've always considered myself pretty much of a purist, but that doesn't mean playing only the notes that are in front of me. It means trying to get as close as possible to the style of the period, playing an instrument in the manner in which a Bach or a Handel or a Couperin would have played it. If I had an instrument which was a modern instrument to begin with, which actually had pedals, I would use the pedals very similarly to what you would do if you had hand stops. As I said before, I was never a pedal pusher. But the pedals come in very handy if I happen to be playing something contemporary where you have to make fast changes of registration. Let's put it this way. I am, in my own mind, being as authentic as I can be.
There are those who are suspicious of the fact that I would like to popularise, but I don't popularise in a manner that I consider denigrating to the music. If I play the Goldberg Variations I'm going to play them straight. I may do some embellishing on repeats. In fact when I recorded them the very first time I did embellish on the repeats, in a way that I thought was valid, trying not to overdo, and yet to show that the second time around it was the performer's prerogative to do something. Now, interestingly enough, a lot of people are doing exactly what I did 20, 30 years ago.

What would you advise a young performer to do today to maximise his or her opportunities?

From the standpoint of getting background I would say, "Listen as much as possible to records and live concerts. Expose yourself to everything. Compare performers, even ones that you don't like. If you listen to somebody that is playing a Scarlatti sonata that you despise for reasons of phrasing, tempo, articulation - any of these details, try to analyse what it is that you don't like. How would you do it differently? Think about the music and what you're hearing."

When you first started playing seriously, how much did you practise?

Oh, it might have been a couple of hours, three hours. I did as much practising as I was able to. I didn't sit down and look at the clock and say, "Now I'm going into my third hour."

Well, three hours doesn't sound like very much.

It depends entirely on your technique, on how much time is available, and what kind of practice you do. You could spend four hours practising rather badly, and you could practise very well for a half an hour and get much more work done.

All right. What constitutes good practice?

Persevering. Trying not to be impatient. The first thing that I do in general is try to work out the fingering. I read through the piece so I'm familiar with it, without writing down the fingering that I might prefer. Then I try to work it through with the fingering. I tend to be much more detailed with it than a lot of people. Whether that is the only way of doing it, I wouldn't say. It happens to be my way. I'll spend a lot of time with fingering, and then I find when I work out the next day or the next several days, I will change all of that fingering. So I obviously use pencil and not pen.

What are the advantages of being an autodidact?

Well, you don't have anybody to blame except yourself, for one thing. I don't think that there's anything so terrible about having been your own

teacher, except of course if people ask you, and they always do, "Who did you study with?" they are disappointed if you say," Well, I didn't really study with anybody." In my case I have to add that there were a number of people standing on the sidelines. The most important of these was Thurston Dart, whom I have already described as a mentor to me. Another person who guided me was the organist and harpsichordist Melville Smith, who was the head of the Longy School in Cambridge, [Mass]. I met him after a lecture that he did at the Mannes School many years ago when he talked about *notes inégales*, a concept that I was totally unfamiliar with at that point. That was my introduction to a particular aspect of performance that was extremely valuable.

You had no desire to major in music at Harvard, did you?

I would have enjoyed majoring in music very much but the music department at Harvard was a very dry institution, at that time, and not very interested in performance per se. And even though I was not a performer then nor was intending to be one, that bothered me. As a result I switched majors although I continued to take a lot of music courses. The music department would have been very good for anybody interested in musicology - I didn't know about such things then - or being a composer or being a teacher. Instead, I went for a major called social relations, which was a combination of four different disciplines: social psychology, clinical psychology, social anthropology, and sociology. Social anthropology and sociology I found of somewhat less interest to me. But I thought social psychology was extremely interesting and very helpful, even today, in that I'm interested in how concerts are put on. How do you attract audiences? What do you do to promote music? The other field that I enjoyed - and I have to joke about this - is clinical psychology because supposedly it enabled me to understand why I should do such a crazy thing as play the harpsichord.

Oh? And what did it tell you?

Well, what did it tell me? I'm afraid I was stuck with it, once I decided I liked the instrument, and then by extension the related instruments: the fortepiano and the clavichord. And, of course, now I'm back to the modern piano, which is something I hadn't expected to do at all.

Many of your lectures are interdisciplinary and draw on the arts as well as music. Do you think that your interest in painting has affected your playing?

When I began to realise that there was a relationship in style between, for example, baroque music and baroque painting, I became aware of certain similarities. For instance, the idea of ornamentation in baroque music and post-baroque music as well, you also find in painting, in the amount of detail work, the decorative devices. If you look at almost any large religious canvas where there may be a whole variety of saints and the Madonna, the eye is hardly able to see all of the detail that is on that canvas. Yes, there is a central object, obviously, the Madonna. But then there's all this intricate detail of one saint after another. The amount of articulation that's required in baroque music, and again, post-baroque, the classical period, has its counterpart in painting of the period also.
I do a rather complicated, two-hour lecture, called "The Age of Baroque," where I use not just musical examples but slides of art works. One of my concerns is that a lot of people feel that a Scarlatti sonata should be played rather straight-faced without too much in the way of emotional outlay. But in the lecture I show some of the Spanish statuary and paintings and elaborate altars. If you try to duplicate this in the Scarlatti sonata you will arrive at something that is infinitely more colourful than you normally hear in your average harpsichord performance.

Have you thought of doing a movable harpsichord concert at a museum whereby you moved your instrument from one painting to another to illustrate parallels?

It's a fascinating concept. And if it could be done, I would do it.

Well, I would come. But I suppose a lecture/ performance with slides of the original works is almost as good and a lot more practical. You are very involved with bringing music to others. Is there anything that you would like for yourself— instrumentally or otherwise.

I made a movie for a young filmmaker, which was called "The Momerath," after Lewis Carroll. It was something that entertained me very much because I was a harpsichord-playing devil. I went around murdering people. You don't have to make any comments about my murdering the music. I tried not to.

Was this a fantasy of yours?

Not really. It sort of evolved, and I wound up acting, something I hadn't done since college. I found it very intriguing and learned a little bit about film-making and how you have to wait around for long periods of time while the crew

sets up the camera, the lights, and all the artifacts. If somebody offered me the chance to do another one, I would probably take it. The movie, which is only 32 minutes long and in black and white, would be good for television. I would be happy if it were shown around a little.

Well, I've seen it, and it's certainly well done, both in the filming and the acting, to say nothing of the playing.
In your career as a harpsichordist have playing styles changed very much?

When I first got interested in the harpsichord, the harpsichordist was Wanda Landowska. Her recording of the second English Suite was what turned me on to the instrument. And although I was very fond of the piano - that is, the modern piano - I always had an ambition to try a harpsichord. That didn't happen until I was in college. The style of playing then was based very much on the Pleyel, which has been described somewhat unkindly but not incorrectly as a plucking piano. In order to get the keys down, you really have to have a claw-like finger apparatus, as one realises by looking at Landowska's hand position in photographs. A good historical instrument requires considerably less finger pressure. Of course, there are lightly quilled instruments and more heavily quilled instruments. But you don't have to really hit hard in order to get the key down and the plectrum past the string.

Have approaches to rhythm changed?

At the time that I became seriously interested in the harpsichord, the style of playing had veered away from the super-romantic, anything-goes-rhythmically direction. Around the early 1950s the approach became an objective one, in which you could say the player had blinders on like a horse and played very straight, with no rits, and very little involvement emotionally with the music. Obviously, from the way I'm describing it, I don't go along with this, nor did I when I first began playing. Over a period of time the clinical approach was replaced by a looser one rhythmically. In fact, a certain amount of rhythmic license became not only possible but almost mandatory. Sometimes it was exaggerated to the point that you lost the beat. There is still a good bit of that going on, something that I don't particularly care for either.
I like a good solid beat, with the kind of rubato, for instance, that Mozart talked about, or that Chopin talked about, which means you always know what the essential pulse of the piece is. Within that, the weak notes can move rhythmically; they don't necessarily have to come right on the beat. You could say that the concept of notes - *notes inégales* - is a distant relation to what I'm talking about. Rather than sewing-machine style, which I find anathema, this is much more of a humane approach, but you should always keep an underlying beat in mind so that you know where a one comes and a three comes, where strong beats are and weak beats. This has become of much more interest to players over the last couple of decades. But the exaggeration that one still hears sometimes moves away from that kind of a pulse, and one wonders especially in dance rhythm pieces, exactly what is going on. How can you possibly dance this? With two left feet, perhaps. I'm not talking about free-type pieces such as a fantasia or a prelude, especially a French unmeasured prelude. That's an entirely different story; I'm talking about pieces that have regular bar lines.

What about articulation?

The whole idea of articulation has changed, all the way from very long-line legato with no breaks whatsover (the romantic approach) to something that was a kind of pointilistic idea in which all notes were rather short. There have been certain schools of piano-playing, especially of Bach, notably Glenn Gould's, where all notes were played as staccatos. This achieves a certain amount of clarity but is certainly not an imitation of the harpsichord. The harpsichord can do very well with the legato line, providing somebody is aware that there is a legato line to be brought out. There are many different types of articulation. A staccato can be viewed as a short note, but how short or how long should that short note be? You have an infinite variety of touches. And this is what makes harpsichord playing and music come alive.

What are the differences in technique between the harpsichord and the fortepiano? The fortepiano and the clavichord?

They each, of course, have their separate techniques. The hardest keyboard instrument to play, I believe, is the clavichord, because you can't haul off on it. You shouldn't haul off on a harpsichord or a fortepiano either. You can haul off on the piano, and probably most people won't be aware that you are hitting it hard, but tonally you will be making a rather ugly sound. On the harpsichord you will not only be making an ugly sound musically, but you will also make a noise as the jack hits the underside of the jack rail too hard. It will create a banging sound. Even worse is what happens if you play a fortepiano too loudly. With a clavichord on the other hand, you can only play up to a certain volume. Past that you will sharpen the tone quite a bit. That's an ugly sound on its own.

I think the best way of learning how to play the fortepiano is to start with the clavichord, as opposed to going backwards in time from the modern piano to the older fortepiano. You learn to do things with your fingers. You don't worry too much about the pedal. You are able to use finger legato or finger pedalling if you like. And that applies to the fortepiano which can have an infinite variety of dynamics providing you know how to play softly and can get the instrument to respond. It will only play so loudly - considerably louder, of course, than the clavichord.

In general, how do you feel about pedalling?

On that subject there has been a fair amount of controversy. In most cases, the early piano, that of Mozart's time or Haydn's time or the young Beethoven's time, had knee levers. The early piano in England had foot pedals. A lot of people are surprised to learn this because they are unaware of a pedal mechanism, a damper-raising mechanism of any kind on the Viennese action fortepiano, mainly because they don't see pedals if they are at an actual concert. Secondly they are not so aware of pedals from hearing either, because there is much less smearing with the damper-raising mechanism than others.
But I have very decided views on the sound and the use of a - let's say pedal for ease of describing, whether it is a knee lever or not. The fact is that there are very few pedal marks, very few damper-raising marks in the works of the earlier composers of the late 18th century. There's nothing in Mozart. There's a little bit in Haydn. And there's some in Beethoven. But again, not an awful lot. The second movement of the Third Concerto has an indication in Beethoven that the dampers should be raised. On the modern Steinway or whatever, that would create an intolerable Debussyian effect. The same thing, even worse, would occur in the Moonlight Sonata, which calls for the raising of the dampers throughout the entire first movement. On a good fortepiano it sounds wonderful. On the modern piano, of course, it is a horror. You have to pedal very judiciously if you play it on the modern piano.
There is the feeling that because the Viennese-style fortepiano has extremely efficient damping, you should go by only the very few marks for raising the dampers that exist and not do too much on your own except possibly in an arpeggio area. In other words, don't pedal nearly as much as would be the case if you were playing Chopin or Schumann or Brahms on a much later piano. In the case of the English instruments you have much less efficient damping. There are also square pianos where you either have no possibility for raising the dampers or you have hand stops which raise them. You are only able to change them by having a free hand, so you obviously can't have a damper-raising section unless you're playing a slow movement. And you're going to have something that sounds vaguely like an Aeolian harp with a tremendous amount of reverberation. What I'm coming to as a basic point is that I think there was much more leeway than most people would give credence to. The pedal device, the damper-raising mechanism, would have been much more used than many think. Let me give you an analogy. You have just bought a new car. That car has a brand new gadget called a cruise control. Now obviously you can't use that in the city when you're going very slowly. But now you're out on the highway. Would you not want to try out this gadget a little bit? So now we have a fortepiano, whether the Viennese or the English type, and it's got a damper-raising device. Would you stick entirely to the few places where some conservative said that's it and no more use of the damper-raising device? Or would you judiciously use it, not just for connecting, which is one of the things that it does, but mainly for colour, for sonority?

I take it that you think Beethoven would have been satisfied with his fortepiano.

I think Beethoven was satisfied with any one of his many fortepianos as long as he could hear them.

And that he didn't in his imagination somehow envisage the modern piano?

That is one of the specious arguments which goes along with the Stokowski orchestration of Bach. If Bach had only known the modern orchestra as we know it, would he not have written like this? It's a difficult question to answer. Of course he would have written differently. Beethoven would have written differently also. He might have loved the modern piano. Bach might have enjoyed it too, for all we know. But that's not what he wrote for, so I would rather stick with what might have been possible. But if you do have a knee lever on a fortepiano, such as I have on my Graebner, my 1793 antique, I think that there are plenty of times when you can use the sustaining pedal to achieve a colouristic effect. I can't imagine that somebody during the young Beethoven's time would not have used it in a similar way.

As a harpsichordist, how did you feel about recording with a contemporary orchestra?

I've recorded the Bach harpsichord concertos, the first time with Neville Mariner and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Of course, that's a modern chamber orchestra. Then I recorded most of them over again, plus all of the multiple concertos, with

students. I did those with Karl Munchinger and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, also a modern ensemble. There were some very good things about both sets, but I would like to do all of them once more: all the multiples, the fifth Brandenburg, which is really the first harpsichord concerto, the A Minor Triple Concerto, which has the same instrumentation as the Brandenburg, that is, flute, violin, harpsichord, and my reconstruction of Concerto no.8 in D Minor, BWV 1059. I'd like to do all of these over again, but with a period ensemble.

You're doing something pretty amazing on tour next month, going from one keyboard instrument to another in quick succession. Most people would not dare to do it. Would you tell us about it?

About three weeks from now I'm going to be performing with my duo piano partner, Karen Kushner, in Albuquerque with the Chamber Orchestra of Albuquerque in a programme in which I start playing on the harpsichord in the Haydn Concerto in F major for violin and harpsichord. It's not one of the best known pieces and actually I've never played it before. After the intermission, however, I am playing the Mozart Concerto in E flat, K.365 for two pianos with my duo piano partner. I don't mean fortepianos in this case, but the modern Steinway or whatever they choose to give us. The day after that we are doing an outreach program me playing piano four hands. Again, that's modern piano. We're doing several days of this, in fact, before I leave for San Diego in California. There I play harpsichord, giving demonstration lectures, a master class on the harpsichord, and performing my "Light and Lively harpsichord" recital, which is a full-length concert that shows the whole range of the harpsichord in chronological order from the earliest harpsichord pieces to the jazz and the pop use of the instrument. From there I go on to Berkeley where I play for Laurette Goldberg's Music Sources series and have a concert, the first half of which is clavichord; the second half, fortepiano. Two days after that I do a harpsichord master class at San Francisco Conservatory. I think about the only thing that I'm not playing on this two-week-long tour is the organ, as far as keyboard instruments are concerned.

Would you like to?

No, I don't have the feet for playing the organ. My feet are much too wide.

What about your hands? You have been described as looking like a linebacker.

I have hands which would seem to be more appropriate for playing a Brahms rhapsody, which of course I did play as a kid. And there are times on a very narrow compass harpsichord when I am hard put to get the fingers between the keys. That's not the easiest part of what I do.

But you do it very well.

Well, I try. Sometimes I feel as though I have to play side-saddle. But in any case, playing on four different keyboard instruments all within a week's time is going to be a challenge. I look forward to it in a peculiar way. It's a sort of masochism, if you like.

No, I think it's virtuosity.

Elaine Hoffman Baruch is professor of English at the City University of New York. The author of books and articles on literature and psychoanalysis, she is now writing a book on opera.