

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

LETTERS, NEWS & VIEWS

Dear Editor,

Your readers might be interested to hear about the discovery of Domenico Scarlatti's opera *Tolomeo e Alessandro*, mentioned in the interview with Alan Curtis in your last issue. In 1990 the National Trust librarian, John Fuggles, rang me up and asked me to go and look at a Scarlatti manuscript at Belton House in Lincolnshire which had been acquired by The National Trust in 1984. To my utter astonishment I found three beautifully bound volumes containing a complete opera. On arriving home I looked up *Tolomeo e Alessandro* in The New Grove: "Palazzo Zuccari, 19 January 1711, Score of Act 1 published (Rome 1711)". I immediately rang Malcolm Boyd, who with typical generosity after he had recovered from the shock, said "But don't you want to write about it yourself?" He got a microfilm, read papers and wrote articles but no one performed the opera. He did one or two arias with students at Cardiff and my chamber group *Janiculum* recorded two arias (JAN 202 & 203) in 1999, and in 2003 Alan Curtis recorded a recitative and duet (Virgin Veritas 5455462). Hopefully Alan Curtis will record the whole work so that we can all hear it.

And how did the score get to Belton House? The bookplate is that of Sir John Brownlow, owner of the house, and is dated 1711. I asked the National Trust if he had been in Rome in 1711 when the opera was staged. "No, he never went to Rome" was the answer. However, by the time the great *Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers to Italy 1701-1800* came out in 1997, it had been discovered that Sir John Brownlow had indeed been in Rome in 1711. The score had probably sat untouched on the same shelf in the library until The National Trust listed the books. The fact that a "lost" opera, as well as the information on how it came to England, has surfaced relatively recently fills one with hope that other Scarlatti manuscripts may one day be discovered.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Clark

5-7 June 2008 Berkeley Festival & Exhibition, Berkeley, California.

Organised by Early Music America. To exhibit visit <http://www.earlymusic.org/berkeley-festival-exhibition-june-2-8-2008>

18-22 June 2008 Cembalissimo

International Harpsichord Festival and Meeting in Hungary Budapest-Szentendre-Fehérvársurgó-Győr. with concerts and teaching by Borbála Dobozy, Christine Schornsheim, Johann Sonnleitner, Jacques Ogg, Elżbieta Stefańska, Katalin Komlós, Students of the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music, etc. Fee €100 for the programme, some meals and transportation assistance between venues www.filharmoniabp.hu, www.clavicembalo.fw.hu cembalissimo@gmail.com

5-12 July 2008 The Art of the Fortepiano in Middelburg, NL

Under the guidance of the two world famous fortepianists Bart van Oort (Netherlands) and Malcolm Bilson (USA), students will be offered the opportunity to spend a week of intensive study in historical performance practice, master classes and lectures, at Roosevelt Academy. The workshop is open to College, University, and Conservatory students taking fortepiano as their BA Major or Minor, or following (or having concluded) a Masters degree. Pianists, harpsichordists, and organists looking for an introduction in the world of the fortepiano are also welcome. Fee €500, housing included. g.joosse@roac.nl www.roac.nl/roac/summerschool.phtml Deadline was 1 April- enquire if there are still places.

23-30 August 2008 XXVI International Course for Early Music, Convento de Cristo de Tomar, Portugal with Jill Feldman, Peter Holtslag, Richard Gwilt, Rainer Zipperling, Ketil Haugsand, and Ana Mafalda Castro www.academia-musicantiga.pt phone +21 390 77 34

24-26 October 2008. Edinburgh University Early Keyboard Symposium/Weekend, St Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh, www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/uek

9-12 September 2009, Magnano Ninth
International Clavichord Symposium
www.musicaanticamagnano.com

New organisation in the Benelux for early dance

www.wisper.be/icms/web/php/index.php
Wisper is a new organisation that organises, among other things, early dance courses. If you live or work near the Benelux, have a look!

Smithsonian resources may be useful

<http://www.sil.si.edu/smithsoniancontributions/HistoryTechnology/>

This series reports on the scientific, technical, and historical research conducted by Smithsonian staff and their professional colleagues, as well as the collections of the various Smithsonian museums. The emphasis upon publications as a means of diffusing knowledge was expressed by the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. In his formal plan for the Institution, Joseph Henry articulated a program that included the following statement: "It is proposed to publish a series of reports, giving an account of the new discoveries in science, and of the changes made from year to year in all branches of knowledge not strictly professional."

Square Piano Restorer Wins £11,000 Award from Queen Elizabeth Trust

Ben Marks (20) from Ludlow, Shropshire will begin a three year apprenticeship with Lucy Coad Square Piano Conservation and Repair in Bristol.

Ben says, "This will range from immediate non-invasive conservation for museums, through to full restoration to playing condition, general maintenance and tuning for private clients, music teaching institutions and heritage bodies. I will require a high level of woodworking ability and this will be taught as part of the apprenticeship."

"This apprenticeship is a rare opportunity to work closely with an expert in the field and has the great advantage of providing the necessary practical instruction which is fundamental to conservation and restoration practice. Lucy Coad's work ranges from the making of a single string through to the complete rebuilding of structurally failed instruments."

Scholarships, open to men and women of all ages, are awarded twice a year. The Trustees look for well thought out projects, which will contribute to the pool of talent in the UK and reflect the excellence of British craftsmanship as

symbolised by the Royal Warrant of Appointment.

www.qest.org.uk +44 (0)1442.875267

Closing date for the next Scholarship applications are 6 June 2008 and 9 January 2009.



Ben Marks, Queen Elizabeth Trust recipient

Obituaries:

Joseph Payne, Boston-based harpsichordist and organist, died at his home of a heart attack in Maine on Jan. 14, 2008. He was very busy recording, with an extensive discography, both on organ and harpsichord, mostly on the Naxos label.

David Bolton, instrument maker, died suddenly on 23rd February at the age of 77. He was the son of an Anglican priest and schoolmaster. An unassuming but impressive scientist, linguist, musician, teacher and instrument maker, he was educated at Winchester College and at Balliol College, Oxford, before serving in the Royal Navy, where he took the opportunity to learn Russian at the JSSL [Joint Service School of Languages at Bodmin, Cornwall] In 1954 he began his career as an industrial chemist, which led him to travel widely; at various times he and his wife Marion lived in Holland, Denmark and Norway. David's work at ICI [Imperial Chemical Industries] led them to settle in Middlesbrough in 1964.

On being made redundant from ICI, David retrained as a cello teacher and worked for the Cleveland County Music Service. A stay in Holland among early music enthusiasts kindled his interest in the harpsichord. Not having trained formally as an instrument maker, he had a passion to demythologise the craft as far as possible. His early keyboard business traded under the characteristically prosaic name "Bolton Kits", and was based on a single brilliant invention which brought his old and new

careers together, the "Bolton jack", a high-tech but simple plastic component at the core of the harpsichord mechanism, unsurpassed by other makers; this was launched at the [London] Early Music Exhibition in 1981, with a promise that complete instrument kits would follow.

He soon developed a wide range of instruments including the Italian and French harpsichord, spinet, the English and Flemish virginals, and the fretted and unfretted clavichord. His ingenious portable pipe organs, which can be taken apart and transported in the back of a car, were a recent addition. The "Black Hole", a floor pad widely used by cellists, is another of his inventions. A couple of years ago he took part in a project to restore and install an early 19th century organ given by Richard Vendome to St George's Basilica in Gozo, and last November he went to Moscow to help set up an early keyboard instrument enterprise; makers of such instruments are almost unknown in Russia. His enthusiasm and physical stamina belied both his slight frame and his age.

A fine keyboard player, cellist, viol player and singer, David contributed widely to the musical life of the north east, and developed a strong association with NORVIS, the early music summer school based in Durham. Bolton kits formed the basis of the instrument making courses which he ran at Raymond and Mary Abbotson's beautiful house, Dovecote, near Kirkbymoorside. His sensitivity to the healing properties of music was nurtured by his association with the Abbotsons, and he was an active supporter of their Trust for Music Therapy. As a woodworker he was keen to plant trees for future generations; when Marion bought a field in Swaledale, he helped plant it with a thousand trees, and they subsequently donated the site, Midge Hole, to the Woodland Trust.

David Bolton was a modern polymath whose qualities are increasing hard to come by, an entertaining conversationalist whose company rarely left one's perspectives unaltered.

David Hugh Bolton, born Greenwich, London, 18th November 1930, died Acklam, Middlesbrough, 23rd February 2008. He is survived by his widow Marion, his son Peter and daughter Catherine.

[Richard Vendome 27.02.2008]

Obituary: Valda Aveling, keyboard player, born May 16 1920; died November 21, 2007

by Pamela Nash

[First published Tuesday December 18, 2007 in *The Guardian*]

The Australian-born harpsichordist and pianist Valda Aveling, who has died at the age of 87, was one of the most versatile keyboard players of her generation. Though major stardom eluded her, she was a bold artist whose adventurous repertory was matched by her eloquence on any keyboard, switching effortlessly from Byrd to Rachmaninov, and from Sweelinck to Bartok. Her friend the composer Stephen Dodgson formed the impression that "whenever she was playing the piano she wished she was playing the harpsichord, and whenever she played the harpsichord, she wished she was playing the piano".

Like the great Wanda Landowska, who had started championing the harpsichord from its revival in the early years of the 20th century, Valda was not only active before the emergence of a wider early music movement but also sought and supported works for it from living composers. On the clavichord, previously known only as a domestic instrument, she was the first to give amplified recitals.

The scholarship of performance practice struck her as irrelevant in the pursuit of musical expression. Nevertheless, she helped to pave the way for new generations of harpsichordists, and as a teacher inspired many students - of whom I was the last - to carry the memory of her indomitable spirit.

Born in Sydney, Valda showed prodigious talent at an early age. At 16 she received diplomas for both teaching and performing from the New South Wales Conservatorium of Music before coming to Britain to study the harpsichord and clavichord with Violet Gordon Woodhouse. Lessons at Nether Lypiatt, Violet's Gloucestershire home, introduced the young Valda into an extraordinary private world. Although, in later years, she revealed tantalisingly little about the eccentric Woodhouse entourage, Valda would frequently reflect on her mentor's charismatic musicianship.

In 1938, she returned to Australia to make her piano debut under Malcolm Sargent at Sydney town hall. In one celebrated concert in Manila, she performed three concertos: Tchaikovsky's No 1, Rachmaninov's No 2 and Beethoven's "Emperor", all from memory. Eventually, Beethoven was the only composer whose music she came to seriously dislike, finding "nothing light in it".

She toured for the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1947, but by the early 1950s had decided to foster her career abroad. Based in London, for the next 30 years she appeared at British festivals, notably the Proms, and throughout Europe, north America and in the far east. At Trinity College of Music, London, she taught from 1955 until the 1980s. It was there that I first encountered her warmth and disarming wit, qualities to be found in her just-released 1976 EMI recording of sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti. Acclaimed for the performer's "magical touch", it is also remarkable as a document of the now historical Thomas Goff harpsichord, with its flute, leather-voiced tone.

Other recordings featured instruments from the Victoria and Albert museum on *Musica Rara*, and pieces by Thomas Morley. Notable collaborations included those with Australian soprano Joan Sutherland and conductor Richard Bonyngne, and the oboist Evelyn Barbirolli, with whom she produced an acclaimed 1970s' recording of works by composers such as CPE Bach and Telemann.

With fellow Baroque revivalists George Malcolm and Simon Preston, and Australian pianists Eileen Joyce and Geoffrey Parsons, Valda relished performing the Bach concertos for two, three and four harpsichords, particularly under the direction of Yehudi Menuhin. She played continuo in recordings of the Brandenburg Concertos with Adrian Boult, and in Jacqueline du Pré's 1965 recording of Schoenberg's 1932 adaptation for cello and orchestra of a harpsichord concerto by the 18th-century composer Georg Matthias Monn. She also recorded with Luciano Pavarotti, Leontyne Price, Kiri te Kanawa and Renata Tebaldi.

Her favourite harpsichordist was Fernando Valenti, with whom she shared the same irreverent humour, and she also found a kindred spirit in the pioneering Czech harpsichordist Zuzana Ruzicková. Valda gave many premieres and BBC broadcasts of new works by composers such as Dodgson and Elizabeth Maconchy, and, in 1982, was awarded an OBE.

Her health began to decline in the early 1990s, and for the last 10 years of her life she was cared for by friends. She never married: she loved her cats and tending her garden, dominated by her imported eucalyptus tree.

She could be domineering, alarmingly candid, and, when she wanted to be, intensely Australian in her directness. She could also be unpredictable, and thought nothing of retiring to

her bed to watch television in the middle of her own dinner party. The concept of nervousness in performance meant nothing to her. In the words of Evelyn Barbirolli, "She was a dramatist: in life and in music, and in the best possible way."

A report on Piccola Accademia di Montisi by Gilbert Martinez

The first foray of the Piccola Accademia di Montisi in the Summer of 2007 must be counted by its fortunate attendees to be a resounding success. The vision of its director, harpsichord builder Bruce Kennedy, and his fellow organizers was brilliantly carried off and the offerings of the festival were on a uniformly high level and demonstrated an engaging sense of programming.

In a hilltop village in southern Tuscany, students, distinguished musicians, eager audiences and local residents were treated to splendid concerts in historic venues. A heat wave in mid July did nothing to stop a genuine collegiate atmosphere. Perhaps one of the most charming parts of the festival were the moments that were unplanned and happened spontaneously. For instance, the village of Montisi has only a few restaurants and these had to serve all the locals in addition to tourists and concert goers. One only had to venture outside of one's accommodation and find oneself eating lunch or sipping wine with Gustav Leonhardt or one of the other artists. In this sense the festival was truly of great benefit to the students and rising artists, who perhaps might not have such a luxury in a festival like Boston or Brugges.

Some concerts were planned in venues outside of Montisi, with a substantial drive involved. Since public transport off the hilltop village was limited, it was heartening to see musicians and concert goers making connections and seeing to it that no one was left behind. The atmosphere was idyllic, and served to underpin a sense of occasion and inspiration on the part of the artists.

A striking aspect of the festival was one of contrasts. Gustav Leonhardt and Alan Curtis represented the grand tradition with customary eloquence. Brasher, younger energy was represented by Skip Sempe and his rebel band, the Capriccio Stravagante. The first recital featured Leonhardt in a programme of D'anglebert, Bach, Frescobaldi and Couperin. The audience seemed to hold its breath as every detail of the music unfolded and teased the ear.

Leonhardt's technique was confident and he flawlessly controlled the peculiar qualities of the two instruments he used (a German instrument and an Italian style instrument, both by Bruce Kennedy) as well as the warm acoustic of the Chiesa S.S. Anunziata.

A brilliant emerging recitalist, Mahan Esfahani gave a noon recital of Scarlatti that had the same kind of magic that is reserved for musicians like Horowitz or Valenti. It is so rare to encounter a harpsichordist that is willing and able to assimilate the brio of the Landowska generation and fuse it with more recent schools of thought. In many ways his recital caused a sensation. Two concerts followed by Skip Sempe and colleagues. The noontime concert was perhaps the more successful of the two. It featured gambists Josh Cheatham and Julien Leonard with the music of Sainte Colombe and harpsichord suites of Chambonnières. A flock of tuneful sparrows caught inside the church added to the ecstasy and delicious melancholy of this concert.

The evening concert by *Capriccio Stravagante* was a bit of a disappointment. Torturous heat savaged intonation by the violinists and the ensemble seemed a bit stiff and under rehearsed. Only Pascal Bertin's effortless countertenor in Domenico Scarlatti's *Salve Regina* saved the proceedings.

Marco Mencoboni's *Cantar Lontano* performed a truly stunning programme of *corri spezzati* repertoire and *alternatim* chant of Lasso, Ortiz and Viadana. This ensemble of voices and instruments presented a liturgical vespers cycle with rare passion and total command of the idiom. It is a pity that such music can only be partially conveyed on a recording. The spacious, nay vast acoustic of Santa Anna in Camperena was exploited to the full. Every listener was treated to a different detail of complicated polyphony. Depending on where you sat in the nave of the church, shimmering fragments of counterpoint surged and billowed. This concert would have been the high point of any international festival, and the sounds and rapturous expressions of the listeners linger on the memory.

At last, Domenico Scarlatti emerged triumphant, in the world premiere of his Roman opera *Tolomeo e Alessandro* conducted by Alan Curtis and his splendid *Il Complesso Barocco*. It would be invidious to single out any particular soloist; each had a moment to shine. The opera itself was a revelation in how adept Scarlatti was at writing for the voice. This should come as no

surprise, given his upbringing. A bigger surprise is that the work is quite unlike anything his father wrote and demonstrates a unique and worthy composer for the stage. Maestro Curtis again went from strength to strength as a conductor, with immaculate pacing and coaxing delicious sounds from the orchestra, in particular exemplary accompaniment from his expert team of continuo players.

One is tantalized at the thought of the possibilities offered by this festival. 2008 will be eagerly awaited.

A Report on The Seventh Aliénor International Harpsichord Composition Competition, by Elaine Funaro

The competition took place 6-8 March 2008 at Salem College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA.

The world of contemporary compositions for harpsichord is richer by more than 100 new works with the completion of the seventh *Aliénor Awards* competition. The quadrennial event solicited composers from around the globe to creatively fulfil the theme "Art of Writing for the Harpsichord – Extending the Possibilities" by using François Couperin's *L'art de toucher le clavecin* as inspiration. The March 7-8, 2008 festival was held in conjunction with the Southeastern Historical Keyboard Society (SEHKS) meeting at historic Salem College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Judges for the preliminary rounds were renowned performers and educators Jillon Stoppels Dupree, George Lucktenberg, and Don Angle. Two separate concerts presented twelve honourable mention winners, six finalists in the Solo Harpsichord category and three in the Duo category with harpsichord and another instrument. This year's duo finalists were each for violin and harpsichord. Winners were chosen by audience ballot at the conclusion of each half of Saturday's performance.

In the Duo category the winning composers were:

1st place:

Ronald McKean, *Sacred Harp Dyads*
(baroque violin & harpsichord)

2nd place:

Alex Shapiro, *Slip* (violin & harpsichord)

3rd place:

Graham Lynch, *Auspicious Cranes*
(violin & harpsichord)