

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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LETTERS, NEWS & VIEWS

Reviews of The Early Keyboard Workshop, June 13-16, 2008, in Stonington, Connecticut, the home of Zuckermann Harpsichords International.

Dear Editor,

I attended the ZHI Harpsichord workshop this last June. I attended last year as well. I have a Zuckerman harpsichord, affectionately called a Z-Box, which I built from a kit in 1966. Forty-one years later, with the help from the workshop, I re-strung, re-voiced and decorated my harpsichord. The workshop was a wonderful experience which allowed me to immerse myself and my wife Constance into a weekend of Bach, terrific concerts, good technical advice, and excellent lectures. It was such a wonderful weekend that I did it again this last June. It was another immersion and another great weekend. The concerts alone are worth the trip. The lectures and hands on learning are invaluable for harpsichordists on any level; beginners, builders and virtuosi. I look forward to a third workshop. I may even build another harpsichord. The workshops also motivated me to resume my, lessons and to do my practice. At the next workshop I expect to take advantage of the master classes.

— Carmelo Bellia

Dear Editor,

I'm one of the people who attended the ZHI workshop along with my husband John. We thought it was wonderful. He attended mostly as a courtesy to me because I wanted to go, and as long as we were going to Connecticut from California he might as well be part of the workshop. John is an artist and the hook was that he might do a lid painting on one of my harpsichords.

I think we might have been the least knowledgeable people there. We may have been the only people without a Zuckermann, too. We have two harpsichords, one nice French double by Richard Kingston, and the other a more questionable little Italian which I got for a fire sale price. It was in hopes of doing something with the Italian that we really made the trek.

The workshop was just great. We had been told ahead of time that if there were any specific things we wanted to talk about to let them know

and they'd be included. Included they were. And it wasn't just about showing us stuff. If we discussed how to do something, we got to do it hands on. If we talked about wrapping wires, we wrapped wires under supervision and got to do it multiple times until we felt confident. The same thing happened with carving plectra. Both Richard Auber and Ed Kottick made us feel like we weren't idiots when we asked questions so basic you'd think we'd been living under a rock.

I'm embarrassed to say that after playing the harpsichord for five years, I'm still tuning with an electronic tuner, and trying to pretend that I don't. At this workshop, we talked about tuning temperaments and then we actually got to go practice doing it by ear. And we managed to do a fairly respectable job of it too. This is something I have never been allowed to actually try under supervision before. It's a great feeling to do it more or less successfully.

We had one class on the last morning that was almost a "throwaway" class, in that it wasn't directly harpsichord related in a nuts and bolts way, but Janet Smith's presentation about getting publicity for whatever you're doing was extremely valuable. I was a press secretary for a state senator for 20 years, so I'm not exactly a novice, but I got a number of really good ideas including a couple of fabulous worksheets out of that session.

It was a hard decision, but I didn't really take advantage of the performance classes, simply because there were too many new things to be learned about harpsichord maintenance. (The wonderful technician who services my harpsichord lives 900 miles away, so I really need this knowledge.)

John got some really good ideas from the painting class, and has realized that it's an undertaking that will require a good deal more study on his part, but he's much more confident about tools and materials.

The concerts were also timely and gave us valuable insight into the performers' specialties. The camaraderie among the group was present from the first night, when after having met each other for about 20 minutes, a bunch of us decided to go off and have dinner together. The several on and offsite meals provided were also a treat.

And as a grand finale, there was a fireworks show after the final reception on the last night. Oh wait- that was a thunderstorm.

— Alex and John Ives, Sacramento, CA

March 12-14, 2009, SEHKS and**MHKS Conference:**

“Keyboard Music and Colonial Philadelphia”. Proposals by end of October 2008. Visit http://www.sehks.org/SEHKS_MHKSPhippy2009call.pdf for information.

21-24 May 2009

38th Annual AMIS Meeting Stearns Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan www.amis.org/meetings/index.html

Peter Watchorn is working on a project to record all of Bach. *He writes:*

I am recording all Bach's harpsichord works as well as all of John Bull's (with a brilliant young harpsichordist I have been teaching for a few years, Mahan Esfahani). You will find more information at my CD label www.musicomnia.org

In terms of Bach I have recorded: English Suites, Well-Tempered Clavier (Book 1), Inventions & Sinfonias, Toccatas, 17 Concerto arrangements after Vivaldi, Telemann, Marcello etc., and Sonatas for violin and harpsichord (with Emlyn Ngai, baroque violin). This year I will record Well-Tempered Clavier (Book 2), French Suites, and Clavierübung Parts II & III (Duets). I am also co-artistic director (with Thomas Folan) of Publick Musick, a period instrument vocal and instrumental ensemble that has recorded Lutheran Masses and Cantatas 45, 62, 140 & 192. With the Boston Bach Ensemble (conductor: Julian Wachner) I have recorded the Christmas Oratorio and performed all the motets (not yet recorded commercially). All of the above are available through Musica Omnia.

In addition, his book about his own teacher, Isolde Ahlgren (1914-1995) just appeared through Ashgate Publishing.

Crackdown on illegal downloads (?)

You can read the whole thing online, but it appears that in the U.K. there may have been a “pilot attempt” to threaten discontinuation of broadband service to users suspected of illegal downloads. There were thoughts that perhaps the matter would be taken to the European Parliament on grounds of privacy. So far it has reportedly included customers of Virgin Media, but Virgin Media and the British Phonograph Industry are claiming that they are only “in talks” thus far.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virgin_Media#Crackdown_on_illegal_downloads

MGG is complete

Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: “the largest music encyclopaedia in the world. After fourteen years and 29 volumes, Bärenreiter-Verlag and J. B. Metzler's joint project has reached its conclusion. On around 25,000 pages, over 3,000 authors have put together the entire knowledge about music at the beginning of the 21st century, and made it accessible. From the publication of the first volumes, the encyclopaedia has been recognised far beyond German-language countries as a standard reference work.” www.MGG-online.com

A new website for early music is

www.earlymusicguide.com

The people who run the site warn that it is not complete yet and they would like you to help them by submitting information prior to their launch. Contact them at news@earlymusicguide.com

**The 37th Annual Meeting of
The American Musical Instrument Society**
-report by Anne Beetem Acker

The 37th annual meeting of AMIS convened in May at The Cantos Music Foundation in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Both organizations proved themselves vibrant and adaptive, loyal to serious study and preservation of instruments and music of the past, while making use of modern technologies, and wisely moving the “past” closer to the present. Attendees represented many countries and institutions, demonstrating once again international scope. At the closing banquet, the prestigious Curt Sachs award honouring lifetime achievement towards the goals of the society was given to research scholar and author Herbert Heyde of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Cantos has an important and growing collection of keyboard instruments including a ca. 1560 Doanusa Benismis spinet harpsichord, a 1591 Transuntino harpsichord, a 1771 James Logan/Neil Stewart spinet harpsichord, and a 1791 Dulcken piano. In addition they have an excellent selection of 19th-century pianos and an extensive collection of 20th-century electromechanical keyboards and synthesizers. Formerly the Chinook Keyboard Centre, Cantos has exhibited tremendous energy, vision and growth during its scant eleven years of existence and shows no sign of slowing down.

Presentations and concerts this year were high quality and of unusual breadth with the usual sprinkling of engaging concerts,

capped by a trip to the Banff Centre for the Arts situated in the spectacular Canadian Rocky Mountains. Talks of particular interest to the keyboard world included a discussion by Ken Eschete of a novel conservation method using a layer of hat felt to cover worn hammers on an 1854 Erard still used for performing. Pedro Bento of Edinburgh presented his work on methods builders used to cope with the limited space available for the topmost notes on harpsichords. Dr. Stephen Birkett and this writer presented an analysis of keyboard actions using high-speed video photography techniques. Finally, Gordon Rumson gave an interesting lecture demonstration on a rare Emmanuel Moor Duplex Coupler Piano. Concerts employed a ca. 1857 Bosendorfer, the James Logan spinet, the Dulken piano, and a dazzling array of historic electronic keyboards and synthesizers. As always, the meeting was overall time well spent in all regards.

*Indefatigable Musicians win
Fenton House Competition*

News from Mimi Waitzman

Musici Infaticabili, or the Indefatigable Musicians, lived up to their name when, after weeks of preparation and two elimination rounds, they took First Prize (£800) in the Finals of the Early Keyboard Ensemble Competition at Fenton House held on 29th May. The members of the group, Marta Goncalves (flute), Claire Bracher (viola da gamba) and Erik Dippenaar (harpsichord), impressed the jury of early music

specialists with their sensitive and stylish rendition of an 18th-century French suite. Audiences were able to hear this gifted young trio perform again at a Celebratory Gala Concert on August 14th. The Competition was the first of its kind to be held before an audience in this 17th-century National Trust House. Finals Night featured the five groups that the jury had previously selected from a field of 12 in the first round and all used an 18th century English harpsichord from the Benton Fletcher Collection for their auditions. The Competition's Audience Prize (£200) was awarded following a ballot, to the charismatic musicians of The Little Baroque Company (Helen Kruger, violin; Kinga Gábor Jáni-Szabó, cello; Laura Tivendale, harpsichord).

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/
thamesandsolentevents](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/thamesandsolentevents)



Fenton house-winners