

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog  
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photo by Rachel Clements

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

A seventh issue from us, and best wishes to you all. Goldberg takes centre stage this time with an article about his own compositions, plus one about the famous variations by Bach, so I hope you enjoy reading these. If I could have pulled off these variations at age 14, I would

have been quite pleased with myself. We have some more about Ahlgrimm and her legacy.

Another exciting feature is a report (see cover photo) on a new arrival – in the form of a harpsichord – for Elaine Funaro. I recall Kingston’s “small but beautifully formed” instrument at the Eastman School of Music being one of the nicest ones I’ve played, but this is a special one, as you can well see. We have included news of a Pleyel copy made by Paul McNulty, but we have room only for a teaser; there will be more on it next time.

In keeping with the idea of new-ness, Part II on new works for harpsichord is included, with some items you can play today. Please

do let me know if you enjoy having music to play included with *Harpsichord & Fortepiano*.

Another very useful article by Paul Irvin has a hands-on approach. You may have to get out the nail scissors to modify your own dampers! I must say reading Paul’s very useful articles often causes me to move from room to room as I leave my computer to look at a damper or jack and then dash back to the computer to read the next line. I certainly hope you find it as thought-provoking as I did.

I leave you with the tantalizing news that we will have some interesting work on Valotti in the next issue, along with some more on the making a Pleyel. If you are starting a worthwhile project, embarking on your first, or creating a list of your ultimate music studio (I mean instruments, not recording devices, by the way), then please drop me a line. For future, I’d like to encourage contributions on works for two people to play, either at the same keyboard or at two keyboards.

Sincerely,

Micaela Schmitz

## LETTERS, NEWS & VIEWS

Dear Editor,

[In response to Garry Broughton’s review of my book *Isolde Ahlgrimm, Vienna & the Early Music Revival*:

While I am grateful for Mr. Broughton’s acknowledgement of the importance of the subject of this book, and his general acceptance of its thesis: that Isolde Ahlgrimm’s contribution to our early music revival has been largely and unjustly omitted from all major discussions of it, his review contains wrong assertions and serious mischaracterizations of my own position in several key areas. He has chosen to focus on many slight and inconsequential details, and it is difficult to understand his reasoning in singling these particular ones out, since in nearly every case his assertions are incorrect or misleading.

To take them in order: his criticism (unsupported) – that my own account of the genesis of the Capriccio Suite by Richard Strauss is not strictly accurate – is incorrect: it was based directly on Isolde Ahlgrimm’s own recollections of 1989-1992. The earlier (1960) document reproduced in the book stemmed from Ahlgrimm too: these were the notes she had written for the projected LP release on Philips of her recording of the work, which in any case never eventuated. So, if there is a discrepancy (and I don’t think there is any significant one), then it stems from recollections by Ahlgrimm from 30 years apart of events that had occurred nearly 20 years before the earlier one. In citing the standard work by Norman del Mar, I was simply referring to a detail of which Del Mar apparently had no knowledge: that Strauss actually made Ahlgrimm’s waiting until the war ended to perform it in public a condition of

the dedication. This came from her. Otherwise, Del Mar had it largely correct, probably based on correspondence with Ahlgrimm.

Second, although Mr. Broughton's discussion of Ahlgrimm's genuinely pioneering use of historical forte pianos is welcome and correct, he errs by lumping together Ahlgrimm's two Ammer harpsichords with the instruments from the same firm that were produced after World War II. The book makes very clear that, although these were not historical copies, they were nevertheless very different from (and superior to) the products of the post war period. Anyone who listens to the Philips recordings on which they both appear will realize that this is the case. The association between the Ammer brothers, Alois & Michael and Dr. Ulrich Rück, whose collection formed the nucleus of the German National Museum is also referred to in the book, but ignored by the reviewer.

Most egregious is the assertion that, in detailing the achievements of Isolde Ahlgrimm I have somehow done so at the expense of Gustav Leonhardt, who throughout the book is uniformly praised as the most important harpsichordist of the twentieth century. He is also one of my own mentors and someone I am pleased to know personally. If Mr. Broughton has extrapolated through his reading that I have (or Isolde Ahlgrimm had, for that matter) anything less than the greatest admiration for Leonhardt's achievements, which are so extensive and influential as to be beyond question, then he is reading things into the text that simply are not there.

There was some controversy over the circumstances of the first harpsichord performance of The Art of Fugue in Vienna back in 1952, but the event occurred a long time ago and I related Ahlgrimm's version of it as it was told to me in 1989-1992, 40 years after the fact. My raising the question of financial security and contrasting Ahlgrimm's situation after 1956 with Leonhardt's own was in no way meant to be disrespectful (to either party). It was introduced merely to offer an explanation of how greatly Ahlgrimm's fortunes changed after her 1956 divorce, after which she no longer had access to the financial support that had made her career possible up to that point, directly affecting such things as the instruments she had available. She lived, both during the war and in the years after 1956, on very little.

Contrary to Mr. Broughton's assertion I do not state on p.81 (or anywhere else) that Leonhardt performed The Art of Fugue in 1950 (he did not), but simply that he arrived in Vienna in that year and played "a few public concerts". This misreading (and the apparent discrepancy it

creates with the account two pages later) is used by the reviewer to scold me as author and Ashgate as publisher for the "very large number of cases of bad, or rather, non-editing", culminating in his admonition that "Ashgate should be deeply ashamed of this production". He then abdicates responsibility for listing them individually, but those to which he does refer are either due to his own misreading (as is the one cited above), fictional or just plain nit-picky. This seems to me very strange indeed and projects a tone of invective that is quite at odds with his general conclusion about the book.

In reintroducing my own teacher's legacy to a wider public (and I agree with the reviewer that the lack of first-rate re-releases of her recordings is regrettable, a situation for which I hold Universal Music, present owners of her recordings responsible) I am pleased to accept the inevitable criticisms that the mere act of offering anything at all in the lions' den of public discourse must produce. I would certainly embrace the idea of my own fallible attempts being improved upon in the future by others, and would hope that they would benefit from what I have done here. The subject certainly warrants it and I am pleased that, at least, this reviewer has acknowledged that.

- Peter Watchorn (Cambridge, MA)

Dear Editor,

I wish to report on a workshop in Rome I attended. From 5-10 December 2009 the first "Forte festival Piano" took place at the National Museum in Rome, which included concerts, lectures, masterclasses, workshops, visits and more. An important item was the presentation of the book *La cultura del forte piano. Die Kultur des Hammerklaviers 1770-1830* (Ut Orpheus, Bologna, 2009). A useful lecture by Renato Meucci was entitled "Bartolomeo Cristofori e i primordi del pianoforte in Italia" and there was a workshop, coordinated by Massimo Salcito, on keyboard music by Andrea Gabrieli.

During each day of the Festival, Bart van Oort led a forte piano masterclass for students. During the masterclass van Oort analysed Mozart and Haydn's music which tied in well with a public performance he gave. An original Viennese forte piano of Joseph Böhm 1825 was used as well as a copy of a forte piano by Johann Andreas Stein from the end of the eighteenth century and particularly praised by Mozart in his letters. Other tutors included Michela Senzacqua and Claudio Veneri.

- Emiliano Giannetti