

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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## Remembering Joan Benson

Peter Brownlee

Joan Benson (9 October 1925 – 1 January 2020, illus 1) had a life-long love affair with every note she played on the clavichord. She had an extraordinary sensitivity which expressed itself in everything she did. It was a way of life for her, and although raised a Protestant, she would become perfectly at home with the Buddhist habit of ‘clearing’. Little to nothing stood between Joan and her intention simply ‘to be’ at the clavichord. She was brilliant and eccentric in a most charming and endearing way. She also embodied a convergence of exactly the right elements which enabled her to do what few others could. She would attribute it to karma.



Illus. 1 Joan Benson.

Joan's recent death made international news within 24 hours, thanks to the medium of modern technology, a medium which simultaneously fascinated her and caused her equal concern for a world which she viewed as increasingly frenetic and noisy. Be that as it may, her musical formation began noisily enough in New Orleans, a city famous not only for jazz, but its high decibel levels. No instrument more incompatible with this environment than the clavichord could be imagined. In contrast, a seemingly insignificant event on Christmas Eve during her childhood left an indelible impression on her. Joan was fascinated by the tiny, round tones sounded on bells by little brass angels propelled in a circle by the heat of four small candles. She believed this to be the beginning of her awareness of the ethereal, intimate voice of the clavichord which she wouldn't experience for nearly twenty years. The seed had been planted however, and it bore fruit when she pursued piano studies at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Here, she heard a clavichord for the first time. She recalled at once the first hint of its voice produced by the old *julpyramid* (angel chimes) her Swedish grandparents brought to America.

Following the completion of her Bachelor's degree in Cambridge, she continued piano studies at the University

of Indiana, where she distinguished herself by winning the Kate Neal Kinley International Award for 'outstanding powers of artistic communication'. This is not surprising, given that she had already studied with Percy Grainger, Boris Godowsky and Melville Smith. Joan was also establishing herself as a concert pianist playing Chopin, Liszt, Schumann and other repertoire familiar to mid-century audiences. One will observe that the composers with whose music Joan would later be closely associated were not included in her repertoire.

But this was about to change. Joan had long admired the playing of Edwin Fischer, and following the completion of her Masters degree, she left for Europe to begin studying with him. Without question, he was the most important of her teachers, as it was he who provided the groundwork for her future emergence as one of the most distinguished musicians of her time. Fischer didn't believe Joan's hands were well suited to the works of Liszt and Brahms, but rather those of the Baroque and early Classical eras. Joan responded to the new regimen he devised for her, and she credited him with teaching her how to develop a technique which amplified finger sensitivity and increased finger independence. This required great patience and time, but she was eventually rewarded with the ability to sculpt each note with complete awareness and ease. Little did either of them realise that this was the beginning of Joan's transition to the clavichord. Of all her distinguished teachers, Joan spoke most often of Fischer - a measure of the esteem and gratitude she held for him.

Fischer brought Joan as far as he could. By that time, she was already a veteran of the concert stage, but she didn't want to return to America as a pianist. During her time with Fischer, she thought increasingly more about her encounter with the clavichord back in Cambridge. She made inquiries and decided to remain in Europe to pursue clavichord studies with Fritz Neumeyer. He was the centre of gravity in Germany in the sphere of the clavichord, and also in the direct genealogy of

Bach students. This was a long and impressive line of succession which Joan delighted in reciting quickly in perfect chronological order. (Her mind was terrifically sharp up to the very end, at age 94.) ‘Uncle Fritz’, as Joan affectionately called him, started her from the ground up and though kind, he was strict in his tutelage and never compromised. She was once again a ‘beginner’, but Fischer’s exercises prepared Joan eminently well for clavichord studies, and soon Neumeyer was able to teach her the subtleties of tone production, timing and articulation. Her lessons were given on an antique clavichord in perfect playing order, which she said was indispensable in developing a wide palette of phrasing that clavichords built in the mid-20th century are less able to produce. She often said that ‘The best teacher is a good instrument’.

After three years of studies with Neumeyer, Joan thought it wise to seek out another perspective on clavichord playing and wasted no time in engaging Marcario Kastner in Portugal. He took a fatherly attitude towards Joan, looking after her, making sure she had comfortable lodgings, and providing her with complete access to the extensive library of original treatises and unpublished scores which he had spent years collecting. She adored him for his kindness and generosity. Neumeyer had given her a refined and reliable clavichord technique, and Kastner provided her with a complete grounding in historically informed performance. He also introduced her to Iberian keyboard literature spanning 400 years, which had previously remained largely unexplored. Some of these same works appeared on her debut recording a few years later.

By 1960, Joan was ready to return to America and booked passage on a steamer from Lisbon to San Francisco for herself and two clavichords. Soon after arriving in California, she was introduced to the head of the music department at Stanford University, Putnam Aldrich, a student of Wanda Landowska. He found Joan’s playing a revelation. She made him aware that the specialised technique designed for the Pleyel harpsichord was completely alien to the university’s Alec Hodsdon clavichord, which had lain neglected on a shelf for a long time and was in need of repair. The result of this meeting was the installation of Joan Benson as Stanford’s first professor of clavichord, in fact the first such position anywhere in North America. Her debut recording was released the following year and was described as ‘one of the best classical LP’s of the year’ by *Saturday Review* magazine. It received worldwide attention and signalled the beginning of Joan’s career, which would continue until her death on New Year’s Day of this year.

Stanford University provided Joan with the ideal environment to pursue her passion for musicology which

began under the guidance of Kastner. She became the American equivalent of Fritz Neumeyer in that if one wanted to study the clavichord, one went to Joan Benson. Keyboard players weren’t the only ones who studied with her, however. Singers, guitarists and other instrumentalists sought her out because they recognised her extraordinary powers of communication which transcended the specifics of any given instrument. Joan’s warmth, openness and willingness to assist the sincere student to play at his or her best ability made her a superb and beloved teacher. She invariably began the clavichord novice with the simplest of exercises, stressing listening with absolute concentration, only then becoming aware of the entire *gestalt* when the ideal tone was finally achieved. She was unpretentious, spontaneous, completely unselfconscious and very much in the moment. This had the effect of putting the student at ease to the extent that one’s ego could easily go into abeyance, at least for the duration of the lesson. For the right person, she was a superb teacher. but anyone who had the good fortune of studying with her certainly left her tutelage a much better musician.

During her time at Stanford, Joan continued frequent tours in London, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Geneva, Brussels, New Haven, Boston, New York and other venues. These tours gave her frequent opportunities to visit museums and private collections, not only to concertise, but to study old clavichords closely. She became an expert in the theory of clavichord construction, and an invaluable resource for the increasing number of clavichord builders in the United States who frequently sought her advice.

At the height of her powers, Joan developed an aversion to recording, due to her dissatisfaction with the recording technology available at the time. She thought it inadequate to capture the subtlety of nuance and shading which she rightly counted as the clavichord’s most salient qualities. Years of practising Buddhism had accustomed her to a quiet, meditative life which heightened her already-keen sensitivity to sound, and she saw little merit in presenting the clavichord in a medium which didn’t capture most of its subtleties. In later years, when recording the clavichord with greater precision became possible, she didn’t trust her hearing sufficiently to justify making more recordings. These circumstances resulted in a modest discography, but she would continue to publish, lecture and teach to the very end of her long life.

We can be grateful that Joan finished dictating her autobiography to her former student, Sandra Soderlund, before time ran out; it is hoped to be ready for publication on the first anniversary of Joan’s death. There was just enough time for Joan to rewrite the first two chapters which she read to me over the phone, but the rest will be left to Sandra to organise. Joan solicited my opinion.

‘Wonderful!’, I replied, ‘Is it finished?’ She laughed and said, ‘It will be finished when it sounds like Proust!’ Such was her humour but also her difficulty in being content with the final version of anything she would leave to posterity, especially her recordings. She brought the same scrutiny to her playing throughout her long concert career, and she can rest assured that her recorded legacy will continue to introduce people to the finest clavichord playing for a long time to come.

As well as her 2014 book *Clavichord for Beginners*, Joan’s articles included many contributions to the International Clavichord Symposium proceedings and *Clavichord International*, and her major recordings were issued by Repertoire Records (1962), Orion (1976), Titanic (1982) and Focus Recordings (1996); ‘The Joan Benson Collection’ (Clavier Classics) was issued in 2019. Below are tributes to Joan from colleagues, students, family and friends.

#### *Upon hearing Joan Benson play live for the first time*

I went to University of Chicago once to hear Joan play the clavichord. I was in my twenties. I was transfixed by everything - her, the instrument, the music. At the end of many curtain calls, I got up and stepped in her way, and begged her to play one more piece. She put out her hand and touched my hair and my cheek. She smiled but didn’t say anything. And then she was gone. I will never forget that moment. I thought she was a goddess.

Mitzi Meyerson (Berlin)

#### *A small souvenir of Joan Benson*

Browsing in a record shop in New Orleans around 1973, I noticed a very curious photo on an LP cover. Curious, because the lady in the photo was holding a very small clavichord, without a lid. Though I could not quite believe what I was seeing, I knew exactly what it was, having studied the treatise from the mid-fifteenth century on which it was based. It was, indeed, the very first clavichord that was reconstructed from the model of Arnault de Zwolle. This was fascinating. The recording in question was a recital played exclusively on the clavichord (alas, not on the instrument on the cover), with Renaissance repertoire, Froberger and C. P. E. Bach. The playing was really rather extraordinary - she did not sound in the slightest like anyone else because there was an uncommon freedom of musical movement and sensitivity to playing the clavichord.

The performer was Joan Benson, and from then on I continued to enjoy her recordings whenever I could find a new one. I managed to contact her by phone in 1974, and she put me into contact in with the clavichord

maker in Palo Alto who had made her Arnault de Zwolle clavichord. I received it in 1975, and it followed me to Oberlin and to Paris, where I still have it.

On one of the recordings of Joan’s own Broadwood fortepiano, there is a mechanical noise from the pedal from time to time, which lends a singularly ghostly atmosphere. She most certainly understood many things before others did, both in Europe and in America. After years of travelling the world and presenting solo recitals in distinguished venues, she settled into a life that was quiet. This is exactly the kind of visionary musician that reminds one that a quiet career can be just as rewarding - if not more - than a noisy one.

I only knew her from her recordings. I never met her and will always regret that. The first page of her masterful guide to the clavichord and clavichord playing, *Clavichord for Beginners* (2014) reads: ‘I dedicate this book to Buddhist masters who have taught me to see each moment as a fresh beginning’.

Skip Sempé (France)

#### *Benson plays Mozart*

The programme announced a set of variations by Mozart. Joan read the sentimental text to us in a soulful manner before sitting at the fortepiano and beginning to play. As the variations unfolded, there were a few snickers. They increased as she brought out the wit and satire in Mozart’s music. Without overstepping the bounds of taste, she soon had all of us in the audience laughing heartily.

Sandra Soderlund

#### *Joan and her technician, Bjarne Dahl*

Joan’s playing truly had an extraordinary magic. She developed a oneness with the clavichord that was completely unmatched by anyone else in the 20th century, and frankly, nowhere near approached by another. She developed that oneness through extraordinarily hard, solitary work over many years, guided by her unflagging determination and profound intuition. She visited literally every historic clavichord in museums and collections around the world, giving concerts on as many as was possible. Instead of ‘projecting’ her music to her audience, she drew them in, an experience of unforgettable sensitivity and intimacy.

Here, I’ll just add one humorous anecdote: once, in California, I met Joan’s long-time instrument technician and restorer, Bjarne Dahl. He told me an anecdote that was representative of how he had learned to deal effectively with the hyper-sensitive Joan. Once, when he was preparing an historic fortepiano for her performance,

he had to replace a string, and so in the process remove and put back its tuning pin. But when he referred to the latter as 'pounding in it' Joan immediately became deeply worried, asking if it wasn't unsafe to do that with this antique instrument. Bjarne then reassured her, 'now Joan, that's just piano technician's talk. What we really do, is that we take the pin, and then we just tap it in!'. Joan, greatly relieved, then agreed to let Bjarne do this. But, as he told me, 'Joan then toddled off, and once she was safely out of earshot, I then took that tuning pin, and I *pounded* it in!'

Timothy Tikker

*A noted clavichordist discusses lessons with Joan Benson*

Soon after coming into possession of an 18th century clavichord, I found a clavichord teacher with a similar 18th century clavichord. Keen to play C. P. E. and J. S. Bach, I was sure I'd need only a few lessons. How wrong I was! She sat me down, not at her mighty Lindholm, but a small fretted clavichord made from a kit, where she played singled notes of very differing quality, one at a time, to demonstrate variations of touch. 'Every note must be beautiful!' she told me, followed by 'playing clavichord is like standing naked in the town square!'

For several weeks, I struggled to master the touch, one note at a time, while she'd call out from the next room (where she was ironing clothes) to tell me how I was doing. Ugly, nope.. ugly.. nope, there, beautiful! I was getting it, but I had no idea what a taskmaster the clavichord could be! Suddenly, a ray of hope appeared; Joan Benson's Pasquali and Haydn recording. Notes like pearls strung along silk thread, each as even, smooth and round as the next, never an ugly tone. And what an array of thoughtfully placed articulations! I was befuddled. How does she do it? I will always be indebted to Joan Benson for revealing the clavichord's magnificence. And if ever I stood high as a clavichord player, it was on her shoulders.

Steve Barrell

*A clavichord maker expresses his admiration*

Joan Benson, America's first true specialist on the clavichord and early piano, chose these instruments as being the most attuned to her expressive talents. After studying in Europe with Edwin Fischer, Fritz Neumeyer and Macario Santiago Kastner, she decided to exclude the harpsichord and modern piano, and to play only literature which she felt could convey the finest shading. She played the works of many composers normally unfamiliar to modern listeners, and delighted in delicate, super-quiet pieces demonstrating the subtleties

of both clavichord and fortepiano. Joan brought new-found inspiration to these pieces; choosing the right instrument, the right touch, and the right dynamics always brought joy to her audiences. Her performances offered refreshing surprises. She chose to perform only in intimate spaces rather than concert halls, and insisted that all conditions were under her personal control.

It was obvious that she was always giving everything to the composer. She personalized all that she played. Comments include 'the best Haydn I've ever heard', and 'no one has ever tried Mozart that way'. I helped Joan with her Northwest tours, tuning and transporting her instruments, and lately with her numerous Seattle medical visits. We were close friends for forty years. She was charming, brilliant and eccentric. God only made one Joan Benson, and she now joins the heavenly choir on a stage of stars.

Jack Peters (Seattle)

*Another colleague expresses her admiration*

When Joan Benson's article 'The Interplay of Clavichord and Modern Piano' was read in absentia during the 11th International Clavichord Symposium in Magnano, Italy in September 2013, her concluding paragraph 'In our violent world, it (clavichord) can provide an artistic oasis', strongly captured my heart. Soon afterwards I reached out to her with my Lindholm CD (LMCD-1902, 'The World of the Clavichord, Discovering a "Concealed" Realm'). Then came an email from her saying, 'Not only did it bring a closeness to Magnano, but it also brought a special closeness to you'. We hoped to meet in person, and this opportunity arrived within a year when Joan made a special trip to attend my clavichord workshop, kindly arranged by Carole Terry at UW, Seattle and to my organ recital and a clavichord workshop in Tacoma arranged by Jon and Naomi Shiga Wohlers through Christ Church and the American Guild of Organists.

She certainly was The Queen of the Clavichord Missionary of the 20th century, and I promised her to keep her spirit alive in my modest role in the 21st century. In order to better fulfill this mission, I asked her to please give me a private lesson after all the events. Her observation was that if I paid more attention to my pinky fingers, my playing can still be improved. WOW! What wonderful advice! Ever since then her quiet voice welcomes me when ever I open my clavichord lid. May Joan Benson's special spirit continue to watch over us from Heaven.

Tomoko Akatsu Miyamoto (Ferris University, Yokohama)

### *Cousin Joan*

Joan was my dad's first cousin, but we saw her only occasionally when we were growing up. My memory of her was as this beautiful, free-spirited and slightly temperamental woman who was unlike anyone else I knew - a Buddhist who wore flowing clothes and ate brown rice, played an esoteric instrument, and wore gloves and ear muffs when she traveled. Alone. Very exotic in my suburban child's eyes.

I didn't really get to know Joan until I was an adult and that's when I came to appreciate her eccentricities. It was hard to believe she was the same generation as my parents. She approached life so differently from them. Not in the most practical way, but always with curiosity and enthusiasm. She was ageless. We shared many an hour commiserating about our love lives ... hers was far more interesting than mine. Now that she's gone, I'd guess that more than one of her younger flames has been shocked to learn her real age!

Joan had incredible stamina. She loved being out in nature, whether hiking a wooded trail or rambling along the coast, always wearing her floppy blue hat, tied atop her head with a scarf in case the wind should come up. On our visits to Oregon, my sister and I enjoyed several memorable hikes with her, which were always inspiring and at times exasperating. Even in her eighties, Joan would forge ahead, despite the hour and even as we suggested turning back, sometimes going just to the edge of her limits or slightly beyond. On one memorable occasion, we'd stayed the night at a motel at one of her favorite beaches. She went for a 'short' walk the morning of our departure, but did not return for several hours. My sister and I had been scouring the beach looking for her and growing a bit concerned when finally that blue hat appeared way off in the distance. Though I was briefly livid, it was hard to stay mad at her. She was exhilarated by her walk along that beloved stretch of beach and I admired her ability to lose herself fully to the beauty of her surroundings. On our final visit with Joan, in September 2019, we took one last hike together, a mile round trip up to the Heceta Head Lighthouse. It was slow going, but Joan was determined to get to the top and back, which she did, urged along by many hikers who passed along the trail. She was still living life to its fullest and inspiring me to do the same.

Gail Ostergren

### *A famous harpsichordist recalls her first Benson recital*

I have only known three or four musicians of her calibre in my life. Someone who cared so deeply about even the most subtle nuance. She was extreme in that regard. And thorough. It was while I was performing the *Art*

of *Fugue* that I saw a Joan Benson clavichord recital announced. She was going to be playing the most simple pieces from the Anna Magdalena Notebook. I was quite miffed. Here I was, the first harpsichordist to perform the *Art of Fugue* in America, and she was playing these baby pieces? How could she even get credit for that? But I went, and from the first few notes I was stunned. She had a mastery of execution such as I had very rarely heard. And every time I heard her it was the same. It was amazing. And it came from her idiosyncratic being. No one else could do what she did.

Margaret Fabrizio (Stanford University)

### *In gratitude*

Joan Benson has been a transforming influence on my clavichord playing, in several areas. Although I have since 1995 owned a marvelous clavichord by Paul Irvin, it was in the one lesson I had with her three years ago that Joan Benson set me on a path of more fully understanding the breadth of what the instrument could do and how to achieve it. The one simple, yet essential, insight I gained from that lesson at her home in Oregon was to explore greater nuance from the clavichord. When I returned home, I realized that my clavichord was not as responsive as would be needed, so I began experimenting with filing the sides of the tangents (reducing their mass) so the tone could be more easily controlled. With much filing, the tone began to resonate down the length of the soundboard, and was controllable at all dynamic levels, so finally I could achieve the greater nuance I had always desired, but which had eluded me; it was Joan's encouragement that made me believe it was possible.

The next important insight I gained from Joan was in the area of technique. From her book *Clavichord for Beginners* I read that she advocated a backward-pulling motion of the finger (without moving the finger on the key). I began experimenting with this, and found it was a much more efficient and controllable method than my fortepiano technique of the fingers going directly down. The third way Joan Benson has been a strong influence comes through her performances and recordings. The intensity of expression - emerging so obviously from a place deep within her - will in my opinion enshrine her forever as the 'Queen of Clavichordists'. I am deeply grateful to Joan Benson for her dedication to exploring the depths of nuanced expression, and for her generosity in imparting her insights to those of us who aspire to continuing along the path she so nobly forged. Thank you, Joan.

Carol lei Breckenridge

### *L'unique Joan Benson*

Joan was 'one of a kind'. Whenever we encountered her, it was as if someone had deposited on earth an eccentric but wonderful creature from another planet for our edification, illumination, and joy. Rarely have we met a human being who kept so much of her humanity during her entire life in the face of all odds. We will miss her.

Dean Kramer and Claire Wachter (University of Oregon at Eugene)

### *The lesson*

My introduction by Buddhist friends to Joan Benson and her music resulted in three hours of lessons with her in June 2019. Knowing of Joan's Buddhist practice, I approached my preparations of Bach and Froberger like a Zen novice forming answers to a *koan*. Joan Benson's impressive career and dedication to her art were a bit intimidating. Like a Zen master's stick, her 'STOP!' burst my inflated sense of having prepared worthy answers. To soften that shock, her instructions, both serious and grandmotherly, were prefaced with, 'Now, my dear...'. She placed her finger on musical problems with the same precision and sensitivity that she brought to playing a cantabile line on the clavichord. The experience was profound.

Joan's teachings went beyond the keyboard. Invoking her Buddhist masters to whom she dedicated her book, *Clavichord for Beginners*, she 'taught me to see each moment as a fresh beginning' with every note. There are no better words to sum up Joan's life as a teacher than her own: 'I hope for you all - and as you see, it takes that patience. It takes that listening. It takes that wanting to be who you really are'.

Thomas Mock (possibly Joan's last student)

### *The fearless and adventuresome Joan*

In the later years of her life, my cousin Joan asked me to help her with financial and legal matters. And so, I made several trips to Oregon to sit with her, plan, make decisions, and get it all properly documented. But truly, this was not her *forté*. She loved being outdoors, soaking up the beauty and enjoying the quiet. It should come as no surprise that we'd end up wandering along a beach or meandering in some gardens and saving the work for another day. One May afternoon, we encountered fairies dancing in a wooded meadow and a female Bacchus overseeing the celebration. I was content to watch from afar, but not Joan. She was fearless that way, asking questions and putting herself right in the center of things. Before I knew it, there she was, walking stick (*thyrsus*) in hand, wearing the goddess's vast headdress,



Illus.2 Joan in Bacchic dress.

and hamming it up. She was giggling and thoroughly enjoying herself and it was contagious. My favorite photo of her (illus 2) is from that moment. It's a special reminder that being inquisitive and choosing to be more than an observer, opens up the realm of possibilities. Looking back, this willingness to embrace what came her way, explains a lot about Joan's wonderful and sometimes crazy travel adventures. Ultimately, we did get her affairs in respectable order, but that was not nearly so fun!

Karen Ostergren

### *Joan Benson's remarkable powers of interpretation*

One of the first things I learned about Joan at my first 'Joan concert' was that she had a way with finding the emotion in the music and really living that emotion – really experiencing it. Her face would change from very happy to very sad and everything in between as she played. I knew her performance on LP sounded connected to her emotions, but did not know how visibly that would manifest in concert.

I was writing some pieces for Joan and her Goff clavichord in the last few years and when showing them to her I really struggled to make music with them. She said 'let me have a go', and I can't even relay how vividly the music came to life within the first phrase she played. In no time the tempos and the order of movements were adjusted and finally made some sense. This ability of hers was uncanny - like dipping into a deep and invisible source.

A few fun facts about Joan Benson: Joan worked on a clavichord amplification system with Béla Bartók's son, Peter Bartók. Joan was present at Ravi Shankar's first (and very small) London concert in 1956. Joan traveled Europe and the Middle East, basically on her own, from 1953 until 1961, taking lessons from many prominent teachers, and near the end of the trip teaching piano

herself in Lebanon. By the end of the trip she had bought two clavichords and they shared her bunks on an almost empty boat back to San Francisco. Joan visited Abu Simbal in Upper Egypt in 1960 or 61 (when the Aswan Dam was under construction) and was able to see one of the colossal heads of Ramses II, eye-to-eye as the head had been cut from its height up on the torso, and had been placed on the ground in preparation for its move up the hill and out of the way of rising waters. Joan was a certified teacher trainer in Qigong since 1997. Joan loved to look at flowers, and loved to look at them so close up that she would put an eye right up to, and almost inside them, making a sort of microscopic experience. She had me try this too - a highly recommended activity.

Joan was a wonderful interpreter of contemporary compositions. Many composers have written music for her going back to the 1950s and she often included a David Loeb, Brent Galian or Griffith Rose piece in her concerts. I'm still personally puzzled by this one: Joan had no recollection as to why the Verwolf clavichord in her house was not the one she owned and recorded on in the 1960s and 70s! On a personal note - I will miss the sound of Joan's laughter - it was a sound of pure and unrestrained joy.

Barry Phillips (composer and record producer)

### *The extraordinary Joan Benson*

I remember Joan dearly, as a very original, refined person and musician, trying to teach a normal public to *listen* to music and not to *hear* it. With my students at the University of Oregon, we could enjoy many remarkable events and listen to sounds and to repertoires we could not imagine. Her instrument was so soft that coming from the normal world, one could not hear her first piece, and then, people started hearing her and at the end, had the feeling of a normal sound level. Going back to the outside world was painful for the ears! When I invited her to Switzerland for a couple of concerts, she impressed the listeners very much and started a kind of fashion around the clavichord. She was really one of the most interesting people I ever met in the world of music.

Guy Bovet (Switzerland)