

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCAt)

the works performed.

Pamela Hickman

Heaven & Earth in Little Space, Adrian Lenthall (clavichord), recorded 2019-20

Plus fait douceur PFD CD 01 (2020), 68'

Seasonal music has become very much associated with text – Christmas with choral music, for example – and Adrian Lenthall has taken the unusual step of making an entire disc of instrumental Christmas music for clavichord. Of course, much of it is chorale-based works from the 17th and 18th centuries, but the net is spread very wide, with more than five hundred years of music by 20 composers from some ten countries. The earliest works are from the 15th century, and the latest is from a few years ago, a Nativity suite by Geoffrey Allan Taylor receiving a premiere recording. Other works are from the Pastorale tradition, including a Capriccio by Frescobaldi and works by C. P. E. Bach, Kobrich and Scarlatti (Sonata in C, K513); J. S. Bach, with four works, is best represented.

None of the pieces is much longer than five minutes, but the careful layout of the programme means that it can be listened to as a varied and continuous sequence, where brief excursions into the 20th century provide some moments of stylistic variety. Some works are grouped together, as in five short settings of 'In dulci Jubilo', by Zachow, Sicher, Vetter, J. M. Bach and Mareschal.

No fewer than four clavichords are used, copies by Peter Bavington, Andrea di Maio, Richard Taylor and Anon after instruments dating from c.1620 to the 1780s. The differences between them are interesting (soundboard size increases with time, which is a major factor), and the disc is also a useful demonstration of this historical progression, well recorded as it is.

Adrian Lenthall plays with taste and elegance, bringing out the subtle differences between the various composers and the four instruments. He neglects to mention anything about himself in the CD booklet (nor are a producer or engineer credited), but for the record he is a very experienced clavichord specialist, as can be seen from his website www.adrianlenthall.co.uk.

Francis Knights

REPORTS

Collections and Collectors

The Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies

Conference and 40th Anniversary meeting at Oberlin Conservatory of Music on 23-26 October 2019 brought together lovers of historical keyboards and their music of all levels from around the world on the theme 'Blending Past and Present: Collections and Collectors'. Attendees examined the past, present and future state of this world of historical keyboard instruments, and what is needed to sustain it into future decades and generations. Founded initially as an association for organ performers and scholars in 1979, Westfield has an ambitious mission that allows for varied programmes, workshops, conferences and international study tours. Over the last 40 years they have expanded to embrace harpsichords, clavichords, and pianos from all times and places. In keeping with the conference's theme, attendees had the opportunity to visit various important local collections. The Riemenschneider Bach Institute at nearby Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music held an open house featuring some of their rare holdings of editions, and conference attendees visited the new Paul Fritts Opus 42 organ at First Lutheran Church in nearby Lorain, visited the Memorial Art Museum or the Caldwell Collection of Viols at the home of Catharina Meints.

The Keynote addresses were given by Annette Richards (Cornell) on Portraiture and music in the late 18th century, while Thomas Forrest Kelly delivered a fantastically engaging and thought-provoking closing talk ranging across the centuries. The papers were given in two afternoon sessions, and included Fanny Magaña and Jimena Palacios Uribe on the collector Antonio Haghenbeck, Elly Langford on combination keyboards and Kenneth Slowik on the history of the keyboard collection at the Smithsonian Institution. John McKean discussed the *Augsburg Wegweiser* organ treatise while Jacob Fuhrman discussed publications of the Genevan Psalter and Anne Laver talked about organist Alexandre Guilmant and his American student William Carl.

Masterclasses were hosted by three fantastic performer/scholars, including Christa Rakich (organ), David Breitman (fortepiano) and Eduardo Bellotti (harpsichord), whose talented students showed impressive adaptability to trying and implementing suggestions. Best of all, I found, was hearing the scholarship backing up the suggestions so clearly stated by each of the professors. Lecture-recitals were given by Christina Fuhrmann and Dylan Sanzenbacher (Bach), Matthew Bengtson (choosing the appropriate instrument), and Susan Youens with baritone Thomas Meglione and David Breitman (piano) discussed and performed Schumann songs, capped off with a glorious performance of *Dichterliebe*.

Concerts included performances by Erica Johnson (organ), Jonathan Moyer (organ), Christa Rakich (clavichord), Mark Edwards (harpsichord), David

Breitman (piano), Andrew Willis (fortepiano) and Robert Bates (organ), using a variety of historic instruments and copies. Edoardo Bellotti paired instruments and paintings in the Allen Memorial Art Museum (organ, harpsichord and clavichord), finishing with an improvisation on the *Partite sopra Folia*.

Panel discussions on the present and future state of historic keyboard instruments included business practices, training, restoration and conservation, and the future of historical music performance. Among the various wonderful historical keyboard associations extant today, the Westfield Center maintains a distinct character, thanks in part to its broad statement of purpose and no doubt thanks to the energy and vision of the executive director, board and members. The October conference exemplified this. Surely this enthusiasm will carry Westfield and this world of historical keyboard instruments and performance onward.

Anne Beetem Acker

NEW SOUNDS FOR VIRGINALS

The harpsichord based on historical models is a preferred instrument for new music – solo, chamber, orchestral, with or without electronics and extended techniques. Most composers write for a generic five-octave instrument, i.e. without specifying a historical-geographical type. Sometimes the use of different manuals or stops is explicitly mentioned. While the soundworlds of (for example) a small Italian single 8' and a big French 8'8'4' are vastly different, few composers seem to have a clear sound ideal in mind when writing for the harpsichord. Virginals and spinets do not appear to function (yet) as pertinent categories in the context of new music composition for historical keyboard instruments. While a very small repertoire of genuine contemporary virginal music has come into being (Francis Knights in Cambridge is compiling a catalogue), many pieces are labelled 'for virginal or harpsichord', or allow performance on either instrument type.

In January 2019, I started an artistic research project at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp on new music for harpsichord, and in February I conducted a workshop concerning harpsichord composition and improvisation, exploring the specific instruments owned by the school. One year later, I ran a second workshop around new music for virginals. Both multi-day workshops were embedded in the conservatoire's annual NextDoors project week, and were targeted at students and fellow researchers, mostly attracting piano, harpsichord and composition

students. This year's five-day workshop greatly benefitted from the trust and open-mindedness of local maker Jef Van Boven, who kindly provided his mother-and-child muselaar after Ruckers. The participants did not have any active experience with virginals, although some of them had encountered it in concerts.

On the first day I provided some information about virginals in general and the available muselaar in particular, and played and showed some examples of its historical repertoire. The participants had the chance to try out the instrument afterwards. The following days, ideas for compositions or improvisations were initiated and developed, with an informal showcase of the work-in-progress on the last day.

Many interesting and creative ideas emerged from the group, which was very actively involved. Approaches pursued ranged from 'conventional' use (building upon the historical repertoire, or triggered by particular sound characteristics, or linking it with an existing contemporary composition) to innovative, experimental, 'extended' ways of using the instrument and its different components, with or without the use of extra tools.

In one duo improvisation on the mother and the child, two piano students applied some less conventional and extended techniques, such as softly hitting the case with the front lid (creating a funny 'creepy' effect), or quickly releasing the keys, making the quill and damper fall down on the strings with speed (resulting in rhythmical-harmonic effects). Another student cultivated harmonics on the mother instrument, with a reminiscence of the *Dies Irae* created by tapping the strings with a touchscreen pen when pressing down the keys (with the jackrail removed). A joint performance of another harpsichord student and myself involved conventional playing on the child while trying to evoke a 'Japanese' and meditative atmosphere, and extended techniques on the mother and child, such as sliding a hank of horsehair on the soundboard and strings (to imitate the sound of wind) and softly hitting the strings with it, going over the strings with a brush, and making a soft rattling sound with a pencil on the tuning pins.

In conclusion, this workshop facilitated inventing, testing, developing and applying some new approaches in virginal composition and improvisation. Presumably, some extended techniques were applied for the first time on virginals. The mother-and-child-type of instrument in particular offers a multitude and variety of creative playing options and expressive possibilities, while sensitivity towards and considerate incorporation of the micro-sounds and noises proper to the instrument provides an extra dimension. A video of the presented work can be found at <https://youtu.be/KZXmbdSVc6M>.

Liselotte Sels