

WEKA News

Newsletter of the Western Early Keyboard Association - Summer 2006

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Officers for 2006 - 2008

Co-chair: Elaine Thornburgh
Co-chair: Barbara King
Secretary: Jillon Dupree
Treasurer: Sheli Nan

Committee Chairs for 2006 - 2008

Nominating: Gilbert Martinez, Jillon Dupree and Nancy Metzger
Program: Janice Clark, Sheli Nan and Kathy Perl
Outreach: Sheli Nan
By-laws: Nancy Metzger and Elaine Thornburgh
Newsletter: Michele Futornick
Publicity: Anders Kugler
SEHKS and MHKS Liaison: Nancy Metzger
Westfield Center Liaison: Carole Terry
Website: Kemer Thomson

The WEKA Conference - June 7, 2006

by Barbara King

Only superlatives can adequately describe the daylong WEKA conference held at MusicSources in Berkeley, CA. The several varied sessions were informative, inspirational and superbly presented. The approximately thirty early keyboard enthusiasts who were present enjoyed renewing old friendships and making new acquaintances. Thanks must go to those who so carefully planned and executed the events of the day: **Elaine Thornburgh, Jillon Dupree, Gilbert Martinez, Elaine Funaro, Charlene Brendler** and ??? who served the delicious gourmet food, others???

Jillon Stoppels Dupree, with the aid of Carla Moore on baroque violin, presented a wonderfully organized overview of "The Harpsichord as Continuo – Its Roots in 17th Century Ensemble." Jillon said continuo was a favorite subject of hers, and her enthusiasm and expertise were most evident. She defined basso continuo, gave its origins (evolving from the late 16th century practice of improvisation), and said learning to play continuo is really a process starting with an understanding of four-part harmony and eventually leading to spontaneity and flexibility in performance. She described the continuo's function as a support harmonically and musically for the solo voice(s). Jillon emphasized the importance of expressivity and "shaping the phrase." She demonstrated numerous means by which the soloist's motives and dynamics can be reflected. Importantly, Jillon urged the continuo player to experiment, be creative and enjoy the inevitable differences of each performance.

Elaine Thornburgh has decided she will describe herself as a "professional interpreter of historic music," thereby eliminating the need to explain what she does as a musician. (She probably convinced a number of us to do

the same!!) Her presentation, "Early Keyboard Compositions as Written Out Improvisations," was quite inspirational. She explained that all professional musicians in earlier eras could improvise; anyone who could not was an amateur. As Elaine said, "how humbling!!" She asked, "What is our role in performance, since much of our repertoire is rooted in improvisation?" She indicated composers were immersed in their own styles. We have to have a broad understanding of styles. To keep the music we play fresh, we still need that sense of surprise and the thrill of what is happening. To raise our level of performance, we must "lock into inventiveness" and seize "inspiration of the moment." We need not have every performance of a piece absolutely consistent. Elaine expertly played samples from Frescobaldi, Byrd, Froberger, François Couperin and J. S. Bach. One of the instruments Elaine used was an authentic antique, probably from the second quarter of the 17th century, Italian in character, and found by **Laurette Goldberg** in a trailer park.

After a fabulous catered lunch, **Gilbert Martinez** of MusicSources played video excerpts of Alice Ehlers' cameo appearance in William Wyler's *Wuthering Heights*, Gustav Leonhardt as J. S. Bach in Jean Marie Straub's *Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach*, Alan Curtis as Gesualdo in Werner Herzog's *Death for Five Voices*, and two TV interviews featuring **Laurette Goldberg**, MusicSources and the Philharmonia Baroque. These video clips were quite entertaining, amazing and well worth watching! Plus, Gilbert had some very interesting aside comments.

The final presentation of the day was a most creative and beautifully performed concert by **Elaine Funaro**: "Harpsichord to Haikus." Elaine used haikus written by Jack Kerouac, when he lived in Berkeley fifty years ago, and played contemporary pieces epitomizing them. Elaine demonstrated the harpsichord is an instrument of today. Composers of three of the pieces were present: **Janine Johnson**, **S. E. Mosher** and **Sheli Nan**.

Dessert and wine finished a great day. An informal general meeting was followed by a brief board meeting.

Minutes of General Meeting
June 7, 2006
4:25 p.m. – 5:10 p.m. at MusicSources

The WEKA advisory board, officers and committee chairs for 2006 – 2008 were presented. (Note listing on page 1 of the newsletter.)

Suggestions for WEKA Conference in Two Years

Fortepiano presentation, possibly by Charlene Brendler or John Khouri

Program dealing with clavichord/organ

Focus on transitions, e.g. how music changed from harpsichord to fortepiano; possible presenters Charlene Brendler or Linda Burnham Hall

How instruments influence composers

Elaine Funaro discussing how to relate to and play contemporary music; what is different from early music, what is the same

What does one do when handicapped? Explore all sorts of handicaps.

WEKA's June 7 Program

Sheli Nan expressed the concern that not enough people attended a really elegant, well-planned event. In the future more contact with potential attendees is needed. Members need to spread the word with personal contact. Students need to be contacted via organizations such as MTAC. Publicity is needed.

Suggestions for Regional Meetings

Continue with workshops in San Francisco Bay area; fall workshop with Alan Curtis

Workshops for mid-teens; MusicSources has established a Laurette Goldberg scholarship; have a committee to evaluate performances, with awards, but not a competition

Have a performance competition; have a composition competition

Harpsichord maintenance session; field trip to harpsichord builder's workshop (Kathy Perl could be a liaison in SF area); have three harpsichords, three different tunings, demonstrate with music the differences

Have builder discuss research, e.g. John Phillips; plan now, as builders need to plan ahead to have instruments on hand

Miscellaneous Comments

Kemper Thomson has the WEKA website up and running.

Look outside of SF Bay area for presenters, e.g. Lisa Crawford

Look for big names as presenters, e.g. Davitt Moroney

Ally with other organizations, e.g. Westfield Center

Actively solicit younger members

Minutes of WEKA Board Meeting

June 7, 2006

5:10 p.m. – 5:55 p.m. at MusicSources

Nominating Committee

Needs to get more people involved

Advisory Board not to exceed twelve people

Gilbert Martinez will take on the task

Program Planning

Need program "point person"

Sheli Nan will serve as "point person"

Regional youth days in SF Bay area and Seattle area; align with MusicSources, Music Teachers' Associations in California and Washington; have T-shirts for participants

Have a youthful presenter, e.g. Mahan Esfahani

Alan Curtis to SF Bay area in October

Treasurer's Report (Sheli Nan) and Financial Issues

2005– 2006: approximately \$3000 income with \$1100 - \$1200 spent through June 7

New dues deadline: February 15

WEKA should partner with MusicSources when people of international reputation present recitals; similarly, with master classes

Important to be fair to all presenters no matter what their personal wealth might be

Offering flat fee (\$350) considered fair

Alan Curtis has agreed to do a recital at MusicSources in October for "gate" – Gilbert Martinez will contact Alan Curtis about also doing a master class; Elaine Thornburgh will write a publicity piece for Gilbert Martinez

Five-Year Plan

MusicSources creating five-year plan

MusicSources an umbrella organization for several groups; does not have fulltime staff

Important question: Where does WEKA want to be in five years?

Five-year plan could be focus of Seattle meeting

"Sheli Nan's 'BAROQUE CABARET' was one of the most interesting and authentic concerts at the Berkeley Baroque Festival and Exhibition in Berkeley, California."

Working on a shoestring every minute Sheli Nan was standing on her ear to keep the Baroque Cabaret entertaining and engaging, unlike some of the other formal concert offerings. The first half of Sheli's concert was touching. The way all of the players really took the trouble to totally learn the music, and play their respective instruments very idiomatically to play her music, and frankly the convincingness of the performances was half of the success. A good example of this was Andrew Fouts who performed the premiere of "Johann's Hidden Hollow", Sheli's adult fairy tale for Baroque violin and voice. For long periods I was thinking that the music could have been written at various different historical periods. I literally was not 100% sure that Ms. Nan had written everything. Then came the second half of the program featuring "SAGA – Portrait of a 21st Century Child" – the new opera by Sheli Nan; Act One. First the subject for so many Americans is about as close to home as a head-on collision out on the interstate, or maybe a heart attack. Second, the performers (baritone Joe Vincent Parks, soprano Katy Daniels, and soprano Ayalet Cohen, under the direction of Amanda Moody) as the characters were completely engaged and convincing. Third the artistic concept held together like a Puccini opera, seamless in personality from start to finish. Frankly in the past I had only heard miniature and narrowly idiomatic harpsichord and virginals pieces by Ms. Nan, performed while in NYC. I never suspected that she could produce such a thing of monumental concept as this opera. It did

occur to me that the whole act was rather monochromatic in its message and tone, but that is exactly how any one act of Puccini or Monteverdi is so even that has to count as an accomplishment. I have no doubt that she will produce second and third acts that are contrasting and similarly successful as subsequent acts. And the whole story is uncomfortably close to home for many American families in the present. That is the most authentic part to which I alluded. Let us not forget that the original audience for L'Orpheo trashed the house repeatedly until he rewrote a softer ending.

Willard Martin
Master Builder and Music Historian
June 2006

Please send your current e-mail address to tsviandilana@mindspring.com so future newsletters can be e-mailed to you!

WEKA Website

Kemer Thomson (kemer@cox.net)

<http://www.harpsichord-sd.com/weka/>

Next *WEKA News* Deadline: September 1, 2006
Send material for publication to mfutorninck@yahoo.com
Michele Futornick, 1521 Fernside Street, Redwood City, CA 94061

Please clip and use this form.

Join WEKA!

Please renew or join by February 15, 2007.

Membership Form for 2007

Name **Street Address**

City **State & Zip** **Phone** **E-mail**

Membership: New _____ **Renewal** _____

Newsletter Preference: Postal Mail _____ **E-mail** _____

Annual Dues: \$35 Regular / \$25 Senior (over 65) / \$15 Student _____

Additional Joint Membership: \$10 ea., SEHK and/or MHKS (circle) _____

Additional Contribution _____

Additional \$5 for Alienor Competition (new music) _____

Life Membership: one-time \$300 _____

Total Enclosed _____

Credit by Visa or MC. Make checks payable to MusicSources, WEKA account. (MusicSources, a separate entity, is the fiscal agent for WEKA.) Send to WEKA, 1000 The Alameda, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Card # **Expiration Date** **Signature**