
WEKA News

Newsletter of the Western Early Keyboard Association

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ABOUT THE WESTERN EARLY KEYBOARD ASSOCIATION

Since 1998 the Western Early Keyboard Association (WEKA) has sought to serve the early keyboard community in thirteen western states but welcomes members from all areas of the U.S. and Canada and the world! WEKA welcomes enthusiasts, both professional and amateur, of the harpsichord, the clavichord, the fortepiano and the organ. WEKA seeks to promote mutual interests by fostering communication and sharing resources. Join us and meet other players, teachers and instrument builders. Make new friends who play your instrument, share expertise and teaching methods, and generate new ideas for increasing performance opportunities.

WEKA is grateful for the guidance and support of our sponsor, MusicSources, Center for Historically Informed Performance, Inc., 1000 The Alameda, Berkeley, CA 94707, 510-528-1685, info@musicsources.org, <http://www.musicsources.org>

WEKA MEMBERSHIP DUES UPDATE

Membership dues are due by June 1st of each year for a one-year membership. Members who pay dues after June 1st will have less than a one-year membership. The annual meeting is free to all who have paid dues for the current year. Please see the membership form in this newsletter to renew membership or to join WEKA. Please help keep WEKA a viable organization by supporting it with your membership dues.

President's Message

By Barbara King

The Western Early Keyboard Association has as members a diverse group of people. We are harpsichordists, clavichordists, fortepianists, organists, dancers, musicologists, and composers, just to give some labels. We are also teachers, students, performers, and audience. Some of us are professionals and some of us are amateurs. What binds us together is our mutual enthusiasm for "early" music and instruments. WEKA provides us with a vehicle for keeping "early" music alive by sharing expertise and experiences and giving mutual support to one another's activities.

It seems arts organizations always operate "close to the edge," and I do not think WEKA differs in this respect. What is needed to keep WEKA a viable organization? I would say there are three basic elements: money, a variety of high-level programming, and active participation by the members.

I urge all current and future members to pay their dues in a timely fashion. Dues are not prorated. Dues for 2009-2010 are due June 1. The several categories of membership are on the membership form included with this newsletter. Dues are the support WEKA has for programming and, of course, miscellaneous other necessary expenses. Cutting back on programming is a death knell for organizations. Just as high-level programming requires money, it also requires member participation. This means people are needed as organizers, participants, and audience. An organization with only a few involved is in trouble. Involvement does not have to be determined by where you live. Currently WEKA seems to have two centers of activity: the San Francisco Bay area and Seattle. But, there is no reason WEKA cannot have other regional centers, such as Tempe, Portland, Sacramento, and southern California. Volunteer to form your own local groups. Have afternoon soirees, master classes, performances, and more. Tap your creative, energetic sides!! These activities must be done if

we are to keep the music we love alive. WEKA can help on a regional level with advice from the Board and with financial support.

MusicSources is WEKA's fiscal sponsor. MusicSources' artistic director, Gilbert Martinez, and administrator, Sandra Petty, continue to do much to help WEKA. This help has been much appreciated but perhaps not acknowledged as often as it ought to be. The use of the MusicSources facility for our biennial June conferences has been invaluable. Given the help WEKA receives from MusicSources, I urge Bay Area members to support their concert series and master classes and to take advantage of the many services provided by the organization. Information about two upcoming MusicSources concerts is found elsewhere in this newsletter.

There will not be a June WEKA event this year, but an exciting September event is in the works. David Dahl (retired Professor of Music and University Organist Emeritus from Pacific Lutheran University), Kathryn Habedank (affiliate artist at Pacific Lutheran University; instructor of harpsichord; and Director of Early Music Concerts), harpsichordist Jillon Dupree (WEKA's secretary) and I met on April 22 to begin planning this event, which will be held in Tacoma, Washington. Check out the initial plans in the article on page 3. I am certain we are planning an event to make it worthwhile to travel from afar.

Don't forget to check our website (<http://www.wekaweb.org/>) for the latest information involving our members and WEKA, and to send email to our Google Group (wekagroup@googlegroups.com) to share information with WEKA members.

Last but not least, I want to acknowledge the excellent work of both our newsletter editor, Michelle Futornick, and our new treasurer, Susan Fisher. Newsletter time helps us get our acts together and tie up loose ends. Michelle's professionalism, expertise, and patience are much appreciated. Susan Fisher is performing an important job extremely well and is an excellent source of good advice.

Exciting WEKA Event in September

By Barbara King

On April 22, a planning committee consisting of Kathryn Habedank, David Dahl, Jillon Dupree, and Barbara King met and formulated initial plans for a WEKA conference to be held in Tacoma, Washington, on September 19 and 20, 2009. David Dahl, Director of Music Ministries at Christ Church, Episcopal, in Tacoma arranged for us to use Christ Church facilities for a modest cost on September 19. He had previously scheduled a September 19 evening four-hands organ concert to be given by two Italians: Fabio Ciofini and Jordi Verges. Their concert will serve as the culminating event of the first day of the planned two-day WEKA conference.



The 1750 organ at Christ Episcopal Church in Tacoma, Washington. (Photo by Myron E. Thompson)

The Christ Church Parish has the following instruments: 1750 Italian organ from Naples, builder unknown, on loan from Martin Pasi, 5 stops, C-c", short octave, quarter comma meantone, A=415; and a 1979 John Brombaugh pipe organ, Kellner tuning. The Calhoun 1962 Italian harpsichord can be borrowed from Pacific Lutheran University. In the course of our presentations we expect to have three other stunning instruments: a virginal, a clavichord and a fortepiano.

The morning of September 19, Fabio Ciofini and Jordi Verges will lead sessions on four-hand keyboard repertoire, the 1750 Italian organ, and organ continuo. We plan to have a superb instrumentalist for the continuo portion. The two Italian organists have appeared together several times in Seattle and at Christ Church, Episcopal, and are reported to be wonderful and engaging musicians.

In the afternoon, Dr. Janet Pollack of Colorado State University will present a session on *Parthenia*, which contains music by William Byrd, Dr. John Bull, and Orlando Gibbons. *Parthenia*, a musical epithalamium (wedding "poem"), has several interesting aspects including musical symbolism, which Dr. Pollack will demonstrate on a virginal.

The planning committee would like from the WEKA membership proposals for another one-hour-and-fifteen-minute session involving the harpsichord or fortepiano. Submitted proposals should be short: a roughly one-paragraph synopsis of the presentation along with a brief biography of the presenter. There will be a small honorarium. Please send proposals to Jillon Dupree at jillon@msn.com no later than May 15.

On Sunday, September 20, a 3:00 pm early music concert at Pacific Lutheran University is definite. This has been arranged by Kathryn Habedank, Director of Early Music Concerts at the university.

We hope to precede the concert with a fortepiano presentation and a visit to the Paul Fritts & Company pipe organ shop.

The planning committee will again meet on May 18 to begin finalizing events. In a timely way, information regarding the schedule of events, lodging, and transportation will be sent out to help those who will be traveling from other areas.

What will a wonderful two-day conference in Tacoma cost you? A fortune? No! The dues of WEKA members will support this event. Obviously, travel, lodging and some food must be covered individually. But, the conference itself will be a fabulous bargain. So, pay your dues, mark your calendars, and travel to Tacoma in September!!



21st Street Bridge and Tacoma Dome at night. (Photo Credit: Tacoma Regional Visitor + Convention Bureau)

Upcoming Events at MusicSources

For complete information about MusicSources and its programs go to:
<http://www.musicsources.org/events.html>

Phoebe Jevtovic Alexander, Sunday, May 3, 2009

“An Evening at the Dorset Garden Theatre”

Phoebe Jevtovic Alexander, soprano; Gilbert Martinez, harpsichord, with members of Galileo Project MusicSources’ Artists-in-Residence perform music from the 17th-century English theatre, including works by Locke, Grabu, Humfrey, Blow, Clarke, and Purcell. Goddesses, lamenting queens, witches, and pining lovers gone mad all take center stage.

Bertrand Cuiller, Sunday, May 31, 2009

MusicSources is pleased to present the West Coast debut of French harpsichordist, Bertrand Cuiller. A prize winner at the Bruges International Harpsichord Competition, Mr. Cuiller will perform selections from his recording of William Byrd, Peter Philips, and John Bull.

News from Northwest Washington

Seattle Soirée

By John Edwards

Jillon Dupree's instrument-filled living room was the perfect scene for a delightful WEKA afternoon "soirée" on March 1, 2009, in Seattle. After attending to our appetite for food and drink with delicious goodies, we adjourned to the music room to take care of our musical appetites. Seven players, both professionals and amateurs, performed variously on Jillon's beautiful Flemish harpsichord (Kevin Fryer, 2002 copy of 1624 "Colmar" Ruckers), with its restrained rich tone; her sprightly and more assertive Italian harpsichord (Zuckermann, rebuilt by David Calhoun); and her magnificent 1866 Collard and Collard (English) grand piano. The performers were Deborah Brown, Jillon, Tamara Friedman, John Gordon Hill, Kathryn Habedank, Mary Ann Hagan, and Barbara King. Others who attended included George Bozarth, Merrell Wiseman, Mike King, and yours truly (a beginner who came planning to perform "Benevolent Cuckoos" but chickened out when the time came!). But there was a lesson for this listener, so accustomed to listening to perfected recordings and concerts: the odd mistake is no deterrent to the great pleasure and enjoyment of friends making music. We all found the afternoon a splendid experience, to be repeated, and next time I will take the plunge, I promise.

Jillon Stoppels Dupree in Seattle Concert

By Barbara King

On March 24, early music lovers in northwest Washington had a rare opportunity to hear two of the greatest period music performers of today: viola da gambist Wieland Kuijken and recorder player Eva Legêne. They joined

brilliant harpsichordist Jillon Dupree at Seattle's Trinity Parish Church in a program entitled "Virtuoso Brilliance in the Baroque."



During intermission, Jillon Dupree demonstrated the harpsichord to the interested audience. (Photograph by Barbara King)

The trio presented a world-class performance both as soloists and ensemble players. The program included works by J. S. Bach, Telemann, Handel, J. van Eyck, and Abel. The excellent acoustics of Trinity Parish Church were enhanced by the wonderful instruments (and skill) of the performers. Jillon Dupree performed on her double-manual Kevin Fryer Franco-Flemish instrument. Wieland Kuijken's gamba was an unaltered instrument built in 1704 in Paris. Of unusual interest was the "Rosenborg recorder" used by Eva Legêne. The perfect balance of the instruments and the sensitive playing of the performers provided the audience a program of refined virtuosity and great elegance.

 **Barbara King in March 29**
Anacortes Concert

Baroque violinist Julie Weston, baroque cellist Nathan Whittaker, and soprano Linda Tsatsanis joined harpsichordist Barbara King performing “Mostly about Spring and Love”: music of the French baroque. The theme was set with Mascitti’s violin sonata *Psyché*, programmatically describing the trials of Cupid’s love for the mortal Psyché. Vocal works were by Le Camus, Lambert, and Boismortier. A cello sonata by Boismortier and the “premier concert” from Rameau’s *Pièces de Clavecin en Concert* were also performed. The concert was held at Anacortes’ Depot Arts Center, which was originally the terminus of the Great Northern Railway. The Depot was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The performers warmed up in the “baggage room,” and performed in the live acoustics of the “freight room,” featuring an original wall with graffiti from 1913.

 **Mahan Esfahani:**
WEKA-Sponsored Lessons in
Seattle

Mahan Esfahani gave individual harpsichord lessons to selected students at the Seattle home of WEKA member Jillon Dupree on April 13 and 14. Students paid 1/2 the lesson fee, with WEKA providing the other half. WEKA members were invited to observe the lessons. Students John Gordon Hill, Bob Hansler, Rose Whitmore, Sung Joo Kim, Mary Ann Hagan, and Merrell Wiseman were selected from the classes of Carole Terry at the University of Washington, Kathryn Habedank at Pacific Lutheran College in Tacoma, and Jillon Dupree.

Last year Mr. Esfahani presented a superb master class, co-sponsored by WEKA, at the University of Washington. This year’s lessons were equally rewarding and encouraging. Mr. Esfahani is currently a BBC New Generation

Artist and Artist-in-Residence at Oxford University, New College. He is gaining international attention as an artist of great virtuosity and sensitivity. Mr. Esfahani studied musicology and theory as a President’s Scholar at Stanford University, earning his degree in 2005; he took harpsichord lessons with WEKA Immediate Past President Elaine Thornburgh.

Concert Review: Davitt
Moroney: The Borel Manuscript
Benefit Recital for UC Berkeley’s
Baroque Music Endowment fund and
for MusicSources
October 18, 2008
St. Mary Magdalen Church,
Berkeley, California

By Sheli Nan

Charming, sophisticated, tongue-in-cheek yet backed up by flawless scholarship, the master storyteller, historian, and harpsichordist Davitt Moroney presented an afternoon of selections from the recently discovered Borel manuscripts, owned by the UC Berkeley Music library. After graciously acknowledging and thanking MusicSources, MusicSources’ Artistic Director Gilbert Martinez, and the UC Berkeley Acquisitions Department, the concert began.

Mr. Moroney is an accomplished harpsichordist, having recorded nearly 60 commercial CDs, has edited many scholarly editions of harpsichord music (with his own completion of the final unfinished fugue from *Art of the Fugue* by Bach), and is currently a Professor of Music, University Organist, and Director of the Baroque Ensemble at UC Berkeley. And, as anyone who has ever spent time with a lecturing professor will tell you, the man can talk!

His program began with a “suite” of dances in the key of CM by D’Anglebert. There were two pieces discovered in the Borel manuscript that completed the already known pieces in CM by D’Anglebert; these pieces are the Courante and the Gigue. The Courante is a perfect fit to the

suite as is the Gigue, which was marvelous in its lilting 6 and its uplifting nature.

With that in mind, there was only one faux-pas when it came to programming and that was the inclusion of the Passemesse (anon-Borel) that was inserted between two rather ponderous and affective Allemandes by Thomelin (c. 1640-1693). The more interesting historical theme that was shared with the audience was that Thomelin in many ways became the spiritual and actual “Father” of the young François Couperin. One can understand that the hope was that the Passemesse would give a listener’s break to the preceding and succeeding pieces. This first Allemande by Thomelin had moments reminiscent of an unmeasured prelude at times. The insertion of the Passemesse did not work because the intense and fascinating first Allemande by Thomelin required a moment of quietness so that the listeners could absorb the after-effects of the piece. This was jeopardized by the immediate performance of the substandard Passemesse. The second Allemande, recently discovered from the Borel manuscript, as Professor Moroney pointed out, was the lesser of the two Allemandes. The first act ended with a charming Courante Royale and Redouble that was just that. (anon) Charming.

After the intermission there was a lengthy plea for money on the part of Professor Moroney. In all fairness, when one assumes the position of University Professor, raising money is built into the job description. He was eloquent although repetitive in his themes for funds. Here are some of the salient points that were raised. Due to fundraising efforts, more teachers can now be hired to teach students privately at UC, rather than just taking money from a temporary fund that waxes and wanes yearly. He also spoke highly of the Baroque Orchestra that he has been able to fund, which is the first University Baroque Orchestra where students actually perform on early instruments. He pointed out that what has to be done with many violins is that one needs to “break the neck” in order to create the “baroque neck.” Academic humor at its best. He requested funds

from large donations to \$45.00 to provide for a new set of strings for an instrument.

This pitch was well served before the audience of the MusicSources crowd, and one knows this audience to be generous and forthright. It would have been really fortuitous if there had been three times the number of people in attendance.

The second half of the concert began with a Pavanne and Courante by Joseph de La Barre. La Barre was organist to the king. Musicians are the cross-over linguists of all times and places, and in the La Barre pieces this marriage of French composition with English form presented stately, well-ornamented pieces with a distinct capacity for pure ornamentation in both hands. Professor Moroney’s playing was perfectly balanced between his hands. English Musick is a dream for those in serious search of balance in articulation. Sometimes it is relentless in its quest for stepwise progression and it requires of the listener a suspension of resolution as it requires of the listener a faith in the eventual cadence.

There is some speculation that the La Barre Pavanne and Courante were performed before the King.

The third piece in the second half of the program was by La Comtesse de Bieule (born in 1660). Moroney spoke of the variety of compositions that have since been discovered, many by women composers. There are now approximately 400 new compositions of which 85 are by women composers from circa 1640-1730. It warms the heart to know that women composers are now recognized and acknowledged, both in the past, in their own time, and in the future. The piece by La Comtesse de Bieule was a totally delightful, lucent, and sophisticated tune adorned with many ornamented cadences. Moroney’s playing has brought the composer to life once again as her voice radiantly showered notes into the churchly air.

There is historic relevance to how music is perceived. Pieces are often named by the composer. There is an ambiguity in the

French language.... many pieces written....”de” before the names of the composers.

Pieces that are rediscovered, as Professor Moroney was quick to point out, are interpreted by today’s standards as pieces with historical meaning and occasionally contemporary meaning as well. These two qualities do not always go hand in hand and we saw examples of that with the Allemandes in D-minor by Dumont, from the Borel manuscript. Although the Dumont pieces have historical significance, and there were times that the harmonies in the Second Pavane were enjoyable, they were less interesting with many repeated patterns that did not evolve harmonically in a stimulating manner. Here one can sense the value historically although the musical moment might be lacking to the early 21st-century ear.

Next we listened to “Boemiene” (“The Bohemian”) by Louis Couperin. Professor Moroney pointed out that there were not many (if any) relevant dances with this name and yet three “Boemienes” were found in the Borel manuscript.

A note on the Borel Manuscript: it appears to be from the south of France. It is thought that because of its mixture of pieces, it was not the property “just” of the aristocrats at court but included pieces that were just plain fun and had redeeming social values much as folk music does. There are many reasons for this conclusion, one being that Borel most likely was doctor to the King, and he lived in the south of France as did the Comtesse Bieule and other composers represented in the collection.

The “Boemiene” has a gypsy like feeling to it reminiscent of the Volta. Perhaps an itinerant musician traveled through the south of France during this period and once again, musicians/composers, in their permeable state of altered communication, absorbed the affect and rhythms of one another in the creation of yet another dance.

Davitt Moroney is a local and national treasure. Apart from his scholarship, his ability to bring these pieces to life, his impeccable technique and flawless interpretations, coupled with his

intricate understanding of the underlying harmonies and pathways that he musically travels, Professor Moroney gives all of us a chance to relive our fondest desires as early and contemporary musicians and listeners.

The last two pieces on the program, anonymously composed, allude to the point above concerning popular music. The first, the “Mousquetaries,” with its ground bass, was so colorfully performed that one could imagine the knightly jousting in the heavy elegance of his armor. The “Postillon Ballet,” the final piece, conjured the courtly knight on one knee, shield and sword at his feet, gazing upwards at his love. A nice ending indeed to an extraordinary event.

Concert Review:
Signatures in Time and Place
The New Symphony by Sheli Nan
Performed by the San Francisco
Composers Chamber Orchestra,
Marty Stoddard, Conductor
November 08, 2008, Old First
Church San Francisco, California
By Allan Crossman

Sheli Nan’s “Romanesque,” the enjoyable first movement of her *Signatures in Time and Place*, radiates a sensual glow.

From the first measure, it’s all about tunefulness and color, as solo alternates with ensemble to create a memorable piece in somewhat the style of Respighi’s *Ancient Airs and Dances*—a fresh, modern update of early dance music. Every moment is both hummable and danceable, and the progression of instrumental color is clearly as central to the character of the piece as are melody and harmony.

“The Corinthian Order” is a dance piece—rhythmic and playful. The inspiration comes from Corinthian columns, but, as we hear, the columns seem to be in motion! The music is always melodic, the tunes constantly transforming into one another, creating a kind of tapestry of color, as instrumental voices

emerge and return to the texture, as though solo dancers in turn moving to the front. Closer to the end of the movement, we hear a more introspective passage, adding to the emotional range of the piece.

This is a festive mosaic of color, emotion, and gesture, all seamlessly woven into a memorable texture.

Allan Crossman has written for many soloists/ensembles, including the recent commission Icarus, a piano trio for the Bay Area's New Pacific Trio. Recordings can be found at <http://northsouthmusic.org>. His theatre score, The Log of the Skipper's Wife, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford and the Kennedy Center, with music drawn from Irish/English shanties and dances. He is Professor Emeritus, Concordia University (Montreal), and is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. For more information please see <http://acrossman.com>

Concert Review: James Johnstone Recital and Master Class April 18-19, 2008, Berkeley

By Susan Henderson Fisher

Early music lovers were provided a treat at MusicSources in Berkeley, California, the weekend of April 18–19 with the visit from London of harpsichordist and organist James Johnstone. The recital and master class were arranged by Gilbert Martinez, Artistic Director of MusicSources, and the master class was co-sponsored by WEKA and MusicSources.

Mr. Johnstone has performed and made recordings both as a soloist and as a member of groups such as the Gabrieli Consort and Players and Florilegium. He has performed as a recitalist in Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Poland, Denmark, Iceland, Spain, Israel, Colombia, and the United States. He also teaches early keyboards at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and at Trinity College of Music in London. Many of his recordings have won awards.

Approximately ten people attended the Master Class on Saturday with four of them performing. Mr. Johnstone was a very effective and encouraging teacher, communicated well with each student, and was generous with his time—the class lasted three hours.

Mr. Johnstone said his program on Sunday was eclectic since he had been asked to play on a number of different instruments available at Music Sources. He played three pieces by Orlando Gibbons and the Fantasia on 8th tone by Peter Cornet on the “Mother and Child” virginals built by David Van Ness (the octave spinet “Child” built by William James Unruh). The “Child” was played by itself at 4' pitch, and later Johnstone moved it over on the “Mother” so they could be coupled as 8' and 4'.

On the 17th-century anonymous Italian single restored by Robert Greenberg he played the J. Froberger Toccata in g and a Romanesca by Ercole Pasquini. He played the J.S. Bach Prelude, Fugue & Allegro in Eb major, BWV 998, a transcription from lute, and six short pieces by Antoine Forqueray on the French double by John Phillips. The Forqueray displayed the thunderous bass of the Phillips instrument, and the Bach was of course just wonderful Bach.

His playing was as varied in style as the instruments, now playful, now tender, now dramatic, now majestic, and always musical. His articulation and phrasing brought out the larger form and affect of each piece as well as the exquisite details. And to make it even more interesting, before each group of pieces he told the audience something about each composer and the music. Altogether a total musical treat for those attending and a wonderful way to spend two afternoons.

Music for Youngsters

By Anne Peterson

Each end-of-January, Anne Peterson's piano-teaching spot, The Music School, in Sunnyvale, California, puts on a very special show. In that show the teachers perform for the youngest of children, encouraging them to enroll for more musical delights at Music School.

This year Anne decided to share with them her octave virginal, the tiniest of harpsichords. It has four minimum-sized octaves, and Anne's also has the white accidentals and black naturals...a total reverse of a piano keyboard! It's great fun to see, and even more fun to hear!

Anne chose an Irish dance piece, so ancient it has no real end and was probably conceived before it was written down! It's called "Rula Rula" and sounds like skipping. Anne engaged her adult student, Hoa Dinh (whom most kids know as the Registrar), to play some extra bass notes on the piano.

What fun we all had, even if briefly. After the teachers have performed, the children always

march around the church sanctuary, and a teacher plays "Teddy Bear Picnic." After that, many made a beeline for Anne and her virginal! She had a chance to let many try playing a few notes and a chance to remind them, "This won't get louder no matter what, so just relax and listen to its lovely sound."



From left, Anne Peterson at the virginal; Hoa Dinh, The Music School registrar; Susan Ogren; and young audience members. (Photo courtesy Anne Peterson)

Guess what—as young as those kids were, they understood! They loved the chance to play something so unusual, too. Every year, Anne tries to do something to broaden young horizons. This year it sure worked.

Instrument Available

Double manual French Zuckerman kit, built circa 1975 by Katherine Roberts Perl, available for long-term rental starting in July 2009.

Range: FF-g3, with two 8' registers and a 4' register.

Disposition: 415/440, transposing.

This instrument has wooden jacks and was refurbished in 2004 by Katherine Roberts Perl. The transposing mechanism was added by Kevin Fryer.

Music stand, long and short sticks, harpsichord cover and complete stringing schedule included.

Please e-mail or call Lillian Gordis for more information at:

liliangordis@yahoo.com or 510-524-4318.

Historical Keyboard Instruments, the Vocal Ideal, and Other Historical References

By Paul Irvin

For four hundred years European people knew what to expect when they heard a harpsichord. Then came a period of approximately one hundred years when the harpsichord was not used. Consequently, when the harpsichord revival began there was no one alive who had ever heard the sound of the harpsichord when it was a mainstay of the musical culture, and 20th-century people's first encounters with the sound of the harpsichord came from the early attempts at restorations of historical instruments and the sounds of the "Revival" harpsichords (Pleyel, Neupert, Sperrhake, etc.).¹ These early 20th-century expectations of what a harpsichord sounds like have slowly evolved with the interest in reproducing historical harpsichord models, but are still largely descended from a broken knowledge of the historical sound.

In the Baroque era the vocal qualities of the singer were seen as the ideal model for the sound of musical instruments. The more closely any instrument could replicate the qualities of the sung voice, the more "perfect" an instrument it was considered to be. This comparison of instruments to voices is still heard fairly frequently today.

For most bowed string, woodwind, and brass instruments this vocal quality is accessible for the player to control, with practice. It is not, however, significantly under the control of players of keyboard instruments that pluck, strike, or hammer the strings. But that does not mean that it is not possible to approach this vocal quality with keyboard instruments. Other non-keyboard instruments activate their tones by plucking and striking: psaltery, hammered dulcimer/pantoleon, lute, guitar, harp, etc., and the sounds of these instruments can serve as a model of what can be aimed for with their keyed variants. Successful versions of these non-keyboard instruments are constructed and played in a way that focuses on creating a clean, stable, well-focused, sustaining tone without drawing attention to the method of starting the sound. Much practice is spent so that the finger, or the pick, or the feather, or the hammer is not heard in the sound. If they were it would spoil the comparison to a tone started by a good singer.

With harpsichords and clavichords, players can try to play the notes in a singing manner, but there is very little they can do to affect the actual vocal quality of the tone itself. That accomplishment is the responsibility of the instrument builder. A harp that can only produce plink, plank, plunk would not be considered a successful instrument, especially next to one that can go pling, plang, plung. The fact that there are harps of both kinds means that the quality of the sound is not a direct consequence of the basic design and dimensions, but of other, more subtle details. Reproducing the basic shape will produce an identifiable instrument; controlling the factors that produce a good sound will make the instrument musical. There is no evidence, of which I am aware, that historical harpsichords and clavichords were distinct from the other instruments in not trying to achieve this vocal ideal. Consequently, it would seem reasonable to expect these vocal qualities to be present in the sounds of our modern copies and restored antiques, and to expect these qualities to be a major goal in trying to create a musical and historical sound.

Besides this historical vocal ideal, other historical references can be used to get hints as to the expected sound and resources of historical keyboard instruments. Some of these possible references are the sounds of other instruments of the same period used with keyboard instruments, the needs of the music, the musical requirements of various instrumental groupings, the sound needs of the typical historical venues,

¹ "Harpsichord. A keyboard stringed instrument in which the strings were twanged by quills or bits of leather." From *A Pronouncing Pocket-Manual of Musical Terms*, Dr. Thomas Baker, New York: G. Shirmer, 1915.

the presence and absence of various features of the keyboard instruments, the historical performance usage of the keyboard resources, historical performance documents, etc.

Comparing historical evidence with typical modern features, sound, and performance practices raises various interesting questions:

Why do Baroque-era instruments such as bowed strings, woodwinds, and brasses share characteristics of a mellower-than-modern tone color and the vocal speech qualities promoted in historical literature, but most modern harpsichords and restored antiques do not display these characteristics?

Why are the characteristics of the plucked sound of most harpsichords so different than the plucking qualities sought in Baroque lute, guitar, and harp playing?

Why do many builders and restorers use wire that is significantly stiffer and different in physical characteristics than historical wire samples, and yet expect to produce an historical sound, especially when wire with closer-to-historical properties is widely available, and has demonstrably more favorable sound qualities?

Why does it seem so impossible now to recreate the known historical playing of clavichord with singers and other instruments?

Why were certain early fortepianos historically acclaimed as having “singing trebles,” when many of their restorations or copies are heard by modern audiences as sounding choppy and short-lived?

Why have so many modern players expected an even, and usually light, touch across a keyboard, and usually between keyboards in doubles, when neither period organs nor clavichords were built with that homogeneity? Nor was (or is) evenness of response an expectation in any other string, woodwind, or brass instrument.

Since the historical evidence appears to indicate that the lower manuals of 18th-century French doubles were usually played with both 8's and the 4' engaged², and few modern performers appear to follow this, how is the historical intention of the music being preserved?

Since François Couperin advised in his “L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin” that a very young student should only play on a spinet or a single-manual that is extremely lightly quilled so that they do not develop a hard and pounding touch, what does this imply about the effort needed for the normal voicing of the 18th-

² François Couperin, for instance, notes in one of his “pièces croisées” (“Les Bagatelles,” Ordre 10, p. 62 of the original edition [*Pièces de clavecin, deuxième livre*, Paris 1716-1717]) that for this piece the manuals should be uncoupled and the 4' turned off. The need for this instruction would seem to imply that at least for most of the other pieces in this body of work, and quite possibly other French repertoire, that the usual registration of a double was with the keyboards coupled and all the registers turned on. This default registration of the lower manual would seem to make it musically important for the upper 8' to be voiced strongly enough not to be completely overwhelmed by the usual three voices of the lower manual. The lower manual with three registers playing would naturally be the “grand/forte clavier,” and the upper manual with only one register would be the “petit/piano clavier”; there would be no need to weaken the voicing of the front/upper 8' since this terminology is one of keyboard resources and not of 8' strengths.

See also Harald Hoeren's article, “Remarks on Harpsichord Building and Harpsichord Repertoire in France from 1650 to 1780” in *The Harpsichord and Its Repertoire, Proceedings of the International Harpsichord Symposium, Utrecht 1990*, Edited by Pieter Dirksen. Utrecht: STIMU Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1992, pp. 87-95.

century French registers? What does this imply about the amount of effort needed to play the lower-manual with everything usually turned on?

Why are firm-clothed, rectangular flag dampers used on most new and restored harpsichords now when virtually no historical dampers have ever been found with this type of material or shape?

Why did all Ruckers 8' jacks and many Italian ones use double dampers when very few modern builders use them in their copies? What may be different in the sound or the damping expectations?

Given the modern popularity of the back plucking 8' register as the primary 8' sound,

1. Why were over a hundred years of Ruckers singles (and many other makes) always built with only a front plucking 8'?
2. Why was the front 8' the only 8' register chosen to be conveniently located on its own keyboard in doubles, when most modern players would rather be able to access the back 8' easily for solo use?
3. Why didn't most of the large grand harpsichords made outside of France have a back plucking 8', but rather 8' registers in the first two plucking positions and the 4' plucking in the back? What might this imply about performance usage in these instruments?
4. Why does the 18th-century French evidence collected so far indicate that the lower manual was usually played fully registered and coupled, with no evidence for the common modern custom of registering the lower manual with just a solo back 8'?

Why is the front 8' often voiced so quietly now, when the historical designers deliberately positioned it to stand alone against all the resources of the lower manual?

Why is this balance so different than typical two-manual organ assignment of resources?

Given the infrequency of modern use of the 4' register,

1. Why were most historical iron-strung singles fitted with a 4' rather than using another 8'?
2. Why was an 8' register lever conveniently fitted for the player in historical 1x8' 1x4' instruments if the 4' was not intended to be played alone?
3. Why do several historical doubles have the 4' as the only register on the upper manual if it were not used as a solo stop?
4. If the 4' sound is better avoided, why were so many octave instruments built?
5. Why were 4's rarely found on brass strung harpsichords, except in doubles?
6. Why was the 4' seen historically to be worth the extra work of building an extra bridge, nut, and curved hitchpin rail when it is nowadays voiced so quietly as to contribute so little to the sound of the instrument, and then played so infrequently?

Why is it so difficult to get most harpsichords to blend with instruments they are supposed to be accompanying, a difficulty not encountered by other accompanying instruments like the lute, cello, bassoon, or organ?

Why do most engineers recording trio sonatas, for instance, feel the need to turn down the harpsichord's recording level so that it is very difficult to hear the harpsichord's musical line in comparison to the other instruments?

Of what musical contribution is a harpsichord played with other instruments when all that is often left to hear above the other instruments is a tinny jangle? Why does such a large instrument seem to contribute so much less low fullness of sound than the smaller cello?

Why were the Ruckers so unconcerned, compared to us, that virtually all their “copies” varied noticeably in shape and dimensions from each other? Why didn’t this affect their reputation?

If copying exact dimensions is so important in building in order to get the right sound, why did historical builders all seem to base their designs on convenient sizes of their local unit of measure, rather than using whatever arbitrary distance was found to give the best possible sound?

In the pursuit of making good and/or sellable harpsichords, why did historical builders never appear to copy other builders as we do? (not counting the historical forgeries and reusing of Ruckers parts to create new “Ruckers,” etc.)

Can a harpsichord that is GG-d”, 2x8’, no buff stop, single-flag-dampered jacks, and a bridge moved almost an inch closer to the bentside really be considered a “copy” of an historical instrument of C-d” (historically enlarged from its original C/E-c”), 1x8’ 1x4’, split buff stops, with mouse-ear dampers, doubled on the 8’ jacks? How many wrong impressions of the sound and musical resources will people have when they are told by a highly respected professor of the university collection that this is a copy of a 1640 Ruckers harpsichord?

With the lack of any evidence that historical performers tried to match their harpsichords to their repertoire, as modern players often do, what instrumental qualities were the historical players paying attention to in their performances?

There are other discrepancies between historical and modern practice that can be observed if we look at the evidence impartially. Some of the reasons for these differences will vary depending on the region and time period considered; some may never be answerable with much confidence. Even though we live in our own time with its assumptions and expectations, if our goal is to recreate historical sounds and to replicate historical performance practices, then investigating the reasons for these discrepancies can lead to further insights about both past and present. If we do not consciously and deliberately use the historical ideals and evidence as criteria to judge our modern attempts at reproducing historical sound and performance practice, we will be left subconsciously judging with the only other criteria we have, i.e., our modern tastes and expectations, and the result will be a variety of well-intentioned, but circular and self-fulfilling, results containing many contradictions.

Humankind has achieved a fairly confident understanding of the four billion years of history of the earth, and of the evolution of life, with no written record and proportionally far less data than what we are attempting to use with early keyboard research. If a broader system of examining features and their interrelationships can be used, as was employed with those much larger geological and biological endeavors, we should be able to significantly further our understanding of the keyboard sounds enjoyed only four hundred years ago.

Paul Irvin earned a B.A. in Chemistry in 1969. He stumbled into the challenge of building early keyboard instruments in 1970. Over sixty harpsichords and clavichords later, with visits to many historical keyboard collections and additional studies in acoustics, neurobiology and sense training, Paul is still exploring sound, sound production, energy management, and how humans form perceptions and acquire skills. He has written a variety of articles and book reviews for various publications in North America and Europe, and has a successful business of early keyboard instrument building, rebuilding, and service for a worldwide clientele, with enough instrument orders to see him well into retirement.

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