

Draft Minutes of the Twentieth Annual General Meeting of the British Clavichord Society

Napier Hall, Hide Place, Vincent Square, LONDON SW1P 4NJ, 27th June 2015, 2.15pm

Members present: Susan Alexander-Max, Sheila Barnes, Peter Bavington, Alex Bell, Garry Broughton (Chairman), Christopher Gold, Claire Hammett, David Hitchin (Treasurer), Richard Ireland, Martha Leigh, Adrian Lenthall, Matthew Meadows, David Millard, Jillian Mitchell, Carl Rennoldson, Karin Richter (Secretary), Oliver Sandig, Huw Saunders, Geoffrey Allan Taylor, Judith Wardman, Elizabeth Wells, Katie Willis, Paul Willis, Paula Woods.

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Carey Beebe, David Butcher, Terence Charlston, Braham Claridge, Sally Fortino, David Griffel, Ulla Kite, Robert Lawrence, John P. Lester, Byron Mahoney, Brian and Audrey Mattinson, Charles Mould, Simon Neal, Anthony Noble, Veronica Read, Eve Richards, Colin Roberts, Peter Stephens, Koen Vermeij, Mimi Waitzman, Andrew Walker, Mary Wetherick, Brian Wishart, Beverly Woodward, Howard Woollin.

2. Minutes of the 19th Annual General Meeting, 28th June 2014 Proposed by Peter Bavington, seconded by Huw Saunders; the minutes were agreed and signed by the chairman.

3. Chairman's Report

'In this report of the activities of the British Clavichord Society over the past year, I would like to begin with my conclusion (after all, Mary Stuart was always saying "in my end is my beginning", and some years later T.S.Eliot added "the end is where we start from"). Nowadays, one has to tick boxes from "excellent" to "poor, could do better", but the box I would tick for the BCS is "doing our best in increasingly difficult circumstances".

The circumstances that limit the extent to which we can further the aims of the Society all stem from the current economic climate: steeply rising costs of venue hire, artists' fees, and other expenses incurred in promoting live recitals and other events can no longer be even partially offset by unpaid voluntary labour on the part of the Society's personnel, for the supply of such volunteers is quickly vanishing as fewer people are able to contribute the necessary time and labour. More pressing economic and social needs take precedence and the membership base is shrinking as people decide that the BCS is merely tangential to their list of priorities, when it comes to expenditure of the domestic budget.

And yet, I detect a marked increase in the number of clavichord recordings being issued outside the aegis of the BCS. Maybe the seeds sown by the activities of the Society over the last twenty years are bearing fruit in a way that indicates that the Society could gracefully decline and vanish with its aims finally realized. On reflection, however, I think there will always be a need for a focal point of clavichord information, research,

performance, and discussion, as is currently provided by the Society's Newsletter and by *Clavichord International*. I think we can be justifiably proud of the way our newsletter has fulfilled this role in 61 issues since No.1 in February 1995. Every one of those newsletters contains material which is still of value to today's clavichord enthusiasts and sometimes reminds us of developments we have yet to undertake. Let us take Newsletter No.1 as an example: at the end of John Barnes' article on the pedal clavichord he says "every organist should have one". Twenty years later, how many British organists do have one? Also in this first Newsletter, letters to the editor contained various exhortations such as "get the clavichord into schools. The instrument is hardly known amongst piano teachers." Well, we all know what has happened to music education over the last two decades... There is also a request for publishers to produce books of graded clavichord music; a partial filling of that gap was eventually achieved by Paul Simmonds, the first editor of our Newsletter, when he produced his *Workbook for the 18th Century Clavichord*, plus in cooperation with Sally Fortino, an anthology for the German Clavichord Society. There is still work to be done: as Paul says in his preface to his *Workbook*, "clavichord giants such as Wolf and Hüssler [are] still languishing in obscurity." Paul edited the first 20 issues of the BCS Newsletter, and his good work has since been carried on by Peter Bavington, assisted lately by Adrian Lenthall. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. You will have noticed that we have resisted the temptation to rush into wide-screen Technicolor...

Along with publications, in print or on-line, recordings, whether on compact discs or other digital carriers, enable BCS members and other enthusiasts to keep in touch with the sound of the clavichord even if they are unable to attend live events due to the fact that we necessarily have to promote these in areas where we can hope to get a reasonable size of audience. CDs by BCS members Terence Charlston and Carole Cerasi have been outstanding recent additions to the recorded clavichord repertoire. Making a recording is expensive, so another of our members, Julian Perkins, is reviving the 18th-century tradition of raising funds by subscription for his forthcoming recording of J. S. Bach's French Suites.

One of the clavichords Julian will use is based on the Bodechtel which belonged to Christopher Hogwood. His death last September was one of several grievous losses to the Society and of course to music in general, during the past year. He provided valuable help and support in the setting up of the BCS in 1994, and it is to be regretted that we were never able to promote a Hogwood clavichord recital; his engagement book was so crammed for years ahead with his exceptional range of music making that we could never find a suitable slot. Thirty years ago two long-playing records were de rigueur for clavichordistas: Colin Tilney's disc of Fantasias for D.G. Archiv and Christopher Hogwood's C. P. E. Bach for Oiseau-Lyre. I shall never forget his glee on coming across a reference to himself in the press as 'Christopher Hogweed'. We can still enjoy his playing of his

favourite instrument thanks to his recordings on CD of J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Handel, and Mozart.

Another pioneer of historically informed performance was one of our oldest members, Lady Mary Verney, who died in February at the age of 89. Although her recordings are on the fortepiano, she was 'hardly ever without a clavichord', as David Millard reports in the June Newsletter.

At the Annual General Meeting in 2006 I had the privilege of presenting Lynne Mirrey, one of our founder members, with a BCS Award marking her outstanding individual contribution to furthering the aims of the Society; now she too has gone, as has Malcolm Russell, a strong supporter of the BCS and founder of the East Anglian Academy of Organ and Early Keyboard Music.

Two outstanding European makers and authors have also died recently: Martin Skowronek, who made a clavichord after J.A.Hass for Gustav Leonhardt in 1967 (you can hear it on his famous 1988 recording of music by the Bach family and Christian Ritter), and Jean Tournay, whose writings in *Het Clavichord* and *Clavichord International* were notable for their wit, poetry, and depth of knowledge. He quoted the old proverb "mieux vaut battre sa femme que son clavicorde", and raged against anyone who wanted to amplify the sound of the clavichord: "ils trahissent... la nature même de l'instrument!"

Another loss to the clavichord world was the disappearance of two publications that regularly reviewed clavichord and other early keyboard recordings: Clifford Bartlett's 'Early Music Review' (but he has promised that the CD reviews will continue on-line), and the monthly 'International Record Review'. I am not sure we need to regret the disappearance of the latter since clavichord recordings were reviewed by a person who openly admitted he hated the sound of the instrument.

After Paul Simmonds' recital this time last year of Kuhnau, Reichardt, Zinck und Türk, the next BCS event was a recital by Miklós Spányi in the hallowed hall of the Art Workers Guild still haunted by the spirits of William Morris and Arnold Dolmetsch. Miklós is likely to be haunted by the spirit of C. P. E. Bach (about 50 CDs and counting) – did I detect a slight feeling of relief as he played works by Carl Friedrich Christian Fasch, Haydn, and Forkel, as well as C. P. E.?

Also in November the BCS once more supported John Henry's clavichord class at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in Greenwich, helping 12 students to discover the joys of clavichording. We did not have a stand at the nearby Early Music Exhibition because the clavichord has no chance of being heard amidst the general hubbub.

In March, at the Handel House, John Henry the teacher became the performer in what has become an annual recital jointly sponsored by the BCS and the British Harpsichord

Society. At the last minute he decided we had heard enough C.P.E.Bach and played James Nares (born in 1715) instead. John Henry even dared to play François Couperin on the clavichord as his encore.

As I mentioned earlier, it was rewarding to see that there were many clavichord events not directly organized by the BCS but involving BCS members. For example both Terence Charlston and Francis Knights were to be heard duetting with flautists in C.P.E.Bach; Julian Perkins seemed to be playing J.S.Bach all over the country, David Gerrard and Carole Cerasi provided yet more Carl Philipp Emanuel, and in Carole's recital he was contrasted with Haydn and Manuel Blasco de Nebra who was 18 years younger than Haydn, but died 4 years before C.P.E.

This recent proliferation of clavichord events may well have been due to the C.P.E.Bach anniversary, but surely the audience for the clavichord thereby increased. I hope that another anniversary, that of Johann Jacob Froberger, born in 1616, will be equally widely celebrated and appreciated by yet more listeners. We are actively looking for ways to celebrate this great musician whose importance as a clavichord performer and composer was acknowledged by Thurston Dart in his 1961 recording which was re-issued on CD in 1998 by J. Martin Stafford in association with the BCS. Of importance here is the news that Peter Bavington has reconstructed the clavichord shown in Mersenne's *Harmonie Universelle* of 1636, feasibly the type of clavichord Froberger would have played on his visits to Paris around 1650.

Other events to look forward to before we meet again at the next AGM on July 9th next year include a recital by Adrian Lenthall on 2nd August, and the 12th International Clavichord Symposium in Magnano, 1st-5th September. At the end of September Marcia Hadjimarkos, who played at our AGM in 2012, will give recitals in Lewes and at Hatchlands where she will play both clavichord and square piano.

A few days later the clavichord will appear along with a much rarer instrument, the tangent piano, when Linda Nicholson brings her 1767 Hass clavichord and her 1797 Schmahl tangent piano to the Art Workers Guild for the BCS's main autumn event on October 3rd. Our Handel House event next February will feature Steven Devine, who gave the AGM recital here two years ago, playing clavichord and harpsichord.

I hope you have all not only received, but filled in and sent back the BCS membership survey. We are extremely grateful to those who have replied and to those who have offered to help the Society in various ways. It is not too late to send in your response; the result will appear in the October Newsletter.

Before coming to the end, I must pay tribute to those who do all the hard work to keep the Society going: as well as Peter Bavington and Adrian Lenthall, whom I have already mentioned in connection with the Newsletter, they are: Derek Adlam, our President, whom you will have the opportunity to applaud after tea, Paula Woods, our Membership Secretary, Huw Saunders for the BCS Shop and Newsletter Distribution, David Hitchin,

Treasurer and Webmaster, for whom the phrase ‘a safe pair of hands’ could have been invented: we thank him for his immense efforts in keeping the BCS finances in order over the past ten years. Special thanks too to Karin Richter, our Secretary, and Judith Wardman, our events organizer, without whom nothing would happen. Committee members Christopher Gold, Ulla Kite, Byron Mahoney, David Millard, and Jillian Mitchell have provided valuable assistance.

Let me leave you with the tantalizing possibility that David Hockney’s painting of a clavichord could soon adorn the walls of Tate Britain and thus help to increase public awareness of our favourite instrument.”

After the chairman finished his report, Karin Richter proposed a vote of thanks to him for his work for the BCS.

4. Annual accounts and Treasurer’s report

The independently examined accounts for the year 2014 were circulated along with a written report from the Treasurer. Introducing the report and accounts, and also reflecting on his ten years in office, the Treasurer expanded on the information and made the following points:

- The Society’s bank balance in 2005 was about £8400, while it now stands at around £3800. This is due to the fact that a surplus could be built up in the early years of the BCS: our membership was larger then, we put on fewer events, and the cost of putting on events has risen considerably. Also, the current subscription of £22 for individual membership is less in real terms than the £15 we charged in 1994.
- The subscription to *Clavichord International*, which we offer as a service to our members, might be cheaper as a direct subscription through the Dutch Clavichord Society who publish it; however, taking into account the cost of international bank transfers, it is still a saving for our members. We have to be aware of fluctuations in the exchange rate; but over the years this balances itself out, and CI subs are not subsidized by the BCS.
- A deficit on the balance sheet should not be regarded as a loss, but an investment; subsidizing events and furthering the aims of the Society.

Judith Wardman commented that David Hitchin has always attended to the BCS accounts with meticulous attention to detail, and he has been a safe pair of hands, which is very much appreciated by all.

5. Election of Treasurer

Judith Wardman had agreed to stand for treasurer; proposed by Garry Broughton, seconded by Karin Richter. She was elected unanimously.

6. Election of Committee members

The following committee members had come to the end of their two-year term and were standing for re-election:

Adrian Lenthall, proposed by Karin Richter and seconded by Huw Saunders;

Huw Saunders, proposed by Adrian Lenthall and seconded by Judith Wardman.

They were elected unanimously.

7. Election of Examiner of the Accounts

Brian Blandford had agreed to stand again; he was proposed by Karin Richter and seconded by Richard Ireland, and elected unanimously.

8. Any other business

No other business. The meeting closed at 3pm and was followed at 4pm by a recital by Derek Adlam.