## INTRODUCTION

A word from our Guest Editor - MEDEA BINDEWALD

### INTERVIEW

- A Farewell to Finchcocks  
  RICHARD & KATRINA BURNETT interviewed by MEDEA BINDEWALD

### FEATURES

- On the Beat: directing from the Continuo  
  ANDREW LAURENCE-KING

- Instrument Choice in the Performance of 18th-Century Parisian Keyboard Repertoire  
  GIULIA NUTI

- Jacob Kirkman: portrait of a little known Composer  
  MEDEA BINDEWALD

- Facing the Future: a personal experience  
  KATHARINE MAY

### INTERVIEW

- Hendrix joins Handel in W1  
  CLAIRE DAVIES interviewed by MEDEA BINDEWALD

### BOOK REVIEW

- 'Jacob Kirkman, Harpsichord Maker to Her Majesty'  
  DOUGLAS HOLLICK

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Handel Exhibition

- Summer Events in Holland

Please keep sending your contributions to info@harpsichord.org.uk

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Welcome to Sounding Board No.10

It is almost a year since the last edition of Sounding Board, but I am sure you will agree that it has been well worth the wait. You will find much of interest on a range of topics relating to the harpsichord world.

We are very grateful to Medea Bindewald for accepting our invitation to be Guest Editor for this edition. You may not be aware but part of the Guest Editor’s job is to cajole and encourage friends and colleagues to write an article for the magazine. Very early on Medea suggested that the overall theme could be ‘On the Move’ ie focusing on ‘changes’ and she enthusiastically set about contacting possible contributors.

Following on from this idea, the articles in this issue cover: recent changes at two museums; changes made to transform a well-loved harpsichord; our changing perception of performance practice in the late 18th century, and with the focus on ‘On the Move’ - the impact of the historical practice of Tactus-beating when directing from the continuo.

We are most grateful to Medea and to all the contributors who so freely gave of their time and expertise. We thank you all.

We do hope you enjoy this the 10th Edition of Sounding Board. Your letters and comments are always welcome. Please continue to write to us about this and/or any harpsichord related matter.

Edna Lewis
Co-ordinating Editor & Secretary BHS

Please send your comments & your contributions to info@harpsichord.org.uk
INTRODUCTION

From our Guest Editor, Medea Bindewald

Welcome to the 10th issue of Sounding Board which I have been invited to supervise as a Guest Editor. The general motto of this issue, ‘On the Move’, was chosen deliberately in order to leave plenty of room for interpretation, and as a result you will find a variety of very different approaches to that theme. Some refer to it in a rather practical sense; others invite us to question and revise our assumptions on different aspects of historically informed performance practice. A prominent place in this issue has been allocated to a homage to Finchcocks Musical Museum (Kent, UK) on the occasion of its closure at the end of 2015. I was delighted that the former owners and directors, Richard and Katrina Burnett, agreed to share some of their memories. This article, as well as a contribution about changes and developments at Handel House Museum London (now Hendrix and Handel in London), are kept in the format of an interview. I am most grateful to Andrew Laurence-King and Giulia Nuti for their profound and enlightening articles ‘On the Beat: directing from the continuo’ and ‘Instrument Choice in the Performance of late 18th-Century Parisian Keyboard Repertoire’ respectively. With my article on the composer Jacob Kirkman I intend to raise awareness of both the repertoire of accompanied keyboard music as a whole and Kirkman’s music in particular. Katharine May contributed a lovely report about a successful overhaul of her harpsichord, performed by Michael Peter Johnson. At the end of this issue, you will find a book review of Charles Mould’s and Peter Mole’s new publication ‘Jacob Kirkman, Harpsichord Maker to Her Majesty’, reviewed by Douglas Hollick.

Being an editor has been both a challenge and a wonderful experience, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank all who contributed to this issue. These are first of all the authors of the articles, who in spite of their busy schedules as performers, teachers and researchers made time to write for Sounding Board. A huge ‘thank you’ also goes to Tony and Rosemarie Darwen and Jeremy Leaman for their help with proofreading, and to Richard Taylor for his donation towards the purchase of the right to publish images of copyrighted material from the National Archives (London, UK). Last but not least, I would like to thank Co-ordinating Editor Edna Lewis, who in addition to being responsible for the lay-out of the articles was always happy to give feedback and general advice regarding all sorts of questions.

I hope you will enjoy exploring the contents of this issue!

Medea Bindewald

Having played the harpsichord since she was eight years old, Medea Bindewald belongs to the small group of ‘native speakers’ on this instrument. She performs in Germany, Britain and other European countries and has been invited to play at Kultursommer Rheinland-Pfalz, Festival de Música Antiga Barcelona, Tage Alter Musik Bamberg, Schlosskonzerte Bad Krozingen,
Heidelberger Frühling, Bruchsaler Schlosskonzerte, live radio programme TonArt (WDR3 German Broadcast), Horniman Museum London, Handel & Hendrix in London and at the conference-festival The Historical Pianist (Royal Academy of Music London), amongst others. She has a duo with violinist Nicolette Moonen (artistic director of the Bach Players) and a trio, Vermilion, with Nicolette Moonen and viola da gamba player Susanna Pell. From 2003 to 2010 she taught at the University for Music and Theatre ‘Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy’ Leipzig. Her CD Jacques Duphly Pièces de Clavecin (Coviello Classics, 2014) was awarded 5 de Diapason by the French magazine Diapason. An interview with Medea as ‘Musician of the Month’ can be found at the Handel & Hendrix in London website [http://handelhendrix.org/medea-bindewald/](http://handelhendrix.org/medea-bindewald/). For further information see [http://www.medeabindewald.com/](http://www.medeabindewald.com/) or [https://www.hellostage.com/Medea-Bindewald/show](https://www.hellostage.com/Medea-Bindewald/show).

Medea playing the 1756 Kirckman harpsichord at Finchcocks. This instrument is now part of the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection (credits: Stuart Hollis).

Medea’s much acclaimed CD, a selection of pieces from Jacques Duphly’s ‘Pièces de clavecin’ including pieces that feature an additional part for the violin, - with Nicolette Moonen, violin. Coviello Classics COV 91404. To listen to a sound sample or to buy a copy of the CD, [https://hyphenpress.co.uk/products/music/jacques_duphly_pieces_de_clavecin](https://hyphenpress.co.uk/products/music/jacques_duphly_pieces_de_clavecin).
A Farewell to Finchcocks

Finchcocks closed as a Musical Museum on 31th December 2015. One last Open Day was held on Easter Sunday 2016, and 99 instruments went to auction at Dreweatts & Bloomsbury on 11th May. This step enables the former owners and directors of the museum, Katrina Burnett and Richard Burnett MBE, to move on and continue on a smaller scale. Sounding Board Guest Editor Medea Bindewald, who made one of the very last recordings at Finchcocks last year, would like to honour their achievements by looking back – and ahead. Richard and Katrina Burnett kindly agreed to answer Sounding Board’s questions.

Medea Bindewald (MB):
For how many years have you been running Finchcocks Musical Museum?

Richard and Katrina Burnett (R & KB): 45 years.

MB: Please tell us when and how it all began.

RB: It all began in 1968 when I bought a Clementi grand piano at the suggestion of musician friends. Before this I was pursuing a career as a modern concert pianist, and Katrina and I were living in a tiny house in Pimlico in London a few yards from the river Thames. But once I started collecting, a whole new world opened up before me. I rapidly found that the instruments for which the great classical masters wrote were not just the pale prototypes of the modern piano, but exciting and colourful and stylishly made instruments that answered the needs of the music in a most satisfying manner. I am, I’m afraid, a natural collector, and once the bug got hold of me, there was no stopping me. Instruments came to me in many ways. Some had to be diligently sought out; some just fell into my lap. I began giving concerts on early instruments and I would take them round in an old ambulance. I also did a tuning course at what was then the London College of Furniture. Our little house began to fill up.

Then I met up with Derek Adlam, who was at that time Curator for another Collection; he was wanting to branch out as a maker and restorer, which required larger premises, so we began to hunt for somewhere suitable, and after quite a long search we found Finchcocks.

KB: For readers who have never been to Finchcocks, it is a Grade 1 manor house built in 1725, ten miles from Tunbridge Wells, in Kent. It looks very imposing, but it has a comparatively modest interior and it also possessed outbuildings which could be used as workshops. As soon as possible Derek and his parents moved in, soon to be joined by a team of craftspeople; the company, Adlam Burnett, Historical Keyboard Instruments Ltd., was established and work began. As Derek writes in his introduction to the catalogue of the recent auction, in the next decade the firm “produced 79 new virginals, harpsichords, clavichords and reproductions of early pianos; it carried out 34 major restorations of historic instruments.”
Perhaps it took us a little time to realise how suited the house was for a collection of musical instruments. Its tranquil setting, surrounded by parkland, made it ideal for music, and the main hall, with its high ceilings and oak panelling, had marvellous acoustics and was suitable for recordings as well as concerts. This hall could seat up to 100 people, but felt quite comfortable with only a handful. The upper floors provided accommodation, and down below was the spacious cellar which could be developed later into a bistro-like restaurant.

MB: The collection comprised historical instruments dating from the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. The main focus was on early pianos, but chamber organs, harpsichords, virginals, spinets and clavichords could be found as well.

RB: The Collection soon expanded and at one point numbered over 100. Pianos ranged in date from 1769 (a small square by Zumpe and Buntebart) to 1875 (an "orchestral" square by Frederick Mathusek); in between there were Viennese, French and English instruments of all shapes and sizes, some shaped like pyramids, lyres or dog kennels. There were four chamber organs, including the magnificent Byfield of 1766, built for James Grant of Castle Grant in Scotland. Harpsichords included a two manual by Thomas Blasser dated 1744, a single manual by Joaquim José Antunes (Lisbon 1785). The earliest keyboard instrument was the outstandingly preserved virginal by Onoforio Guarracino (Naples 1668). There was also a smattering of barrel organs, barrel pianos and music boxes. As many as possible were restored to playing condition.

MB: Visitors were encouraged to touch and play the instruments. Could you please give a brief summary of what was the concept of Finchcocks Musical Museum?

KB: We first opened Finchcocks to the public in 1976, and right from the start we developed the Open Days, when anyone could visit without booking, look round the house and collection, listen to a demonstration-recital and play themselves if they would like to. We also began to welcome groups – at first just in the summer months, but as time went on the “season” became longer and longer. We found that almost all our visitors wanted to hear the instruments, not just look at them, and of course some of them were pianists and were longing to play them.

RB: Looking back over the years, this is what I wrote about the “concept” in 1978, not long after we began to open regularly. “Aim to be accessible to all musicians – to all players of early instruments who want to experiment: to research students, schools and to anybody interested in finding out about instruments.” That’s about it really.

MB: In 2008, Richard was awarded the M.B.E. for his services to music. Can you tell us a bit more about this?

KB: Perhaps I had better answer this one! Yes indeed. Richard was awarded the M.B.E eight years ago. This was very nice, and the medal was given to him by the Queen herself.

Perhaps an important part of running Finchcocks was to make it fun. We found that for some people the idea of visiting a house full of old pianos sounded rather dry and intimidating. Although some of our visitors were highly informed musically, others had no idea at all about period instruments; but they had chosen to visit us, and we considered them our guests, and we wanted them to enjoy their time with us. Richard was not only a fine professional musician, but also a born entertainer, with a great sense of humour. I think he should be very proud of how he brought the
Richard Burnett playing the Pleyel piano of 1842  
(photo credit: Finchcocks)

Collection alive, not only with his playing but his stories and jokes, and managed to keep his presentations totally fresh for so many years. Despite today suffering from nasty arthritis and almost total deafness, he was still performing with verve in the 2015 season.

MB: He was indeed! I had the privilege to witness one of his presentations last year. Apart from yourselves, who were the most important people involved in the museum’s life?

KB: It has gone through various stages. To start with, in the 1970s, Finchcocks was a community of craftspeople – a very gifted and international team of makers and restorers, led by Derek Adlam, and many of whom have since pursued their own important careers. When the Adlam Burnett company sadly wound up after a decade, two of the team were to become Curators of the Collection. Bill Dow, with his wife Marion as House Manager, held the post for more than twenty years. Alastair Laurence then took over until December 2014, combining this role with that of owner and director of John Broadwood and Sons, so that once again there were instrument builders and restorers in the workshops.

RB: Musicians have always been central to the life of Finchcocks. We have been so lucky in being surrounded by musician colleagues who have joined in the music-making as friends and colleagues, and will be willing to perform and communicate to every sort and every age of audience. Recordings have also played an extremely important part. The earliest recordings were by Colin Tilney and Christopher Hogwood. Then came a number by the great virtuoso clarinettist, Alan Hacker, the violinist Ralph Holmes, and chamber ensembles such as London Baroque, the Salomon and Fitzwilliam String Quartets. I made quite a lot of solo recordings. Although we later founded our own label, The Finchcocks Press (which also published books, including my own “Company of Pianos”), the lion’s share of recordings were made by the West Country firm, Saydisc/Amon Ra, which produced more than seventy titles, most of which were recorded at Finchcocks, in their Early Music Series. Their director, Gef Lucena, recalls vividly the pains as well as the pleasures of recording at Finchcocks, when the “wind howled under the enormous oak doors, a chimney cowl squeaked and creaked, spring lambs bleated and the old wood-framed pianos needed constant tuning”. Luckily this series is still available today from Nimbus (we hope without the squeaks and creaks).

KB: The encouragement of young musicians has always been immensely important to us. We had a very lively educational programme, with school visits and concerts for and by children. This was sponsored by ‘The Finchcocks Charity for Musical Education’, which we set up in the mid 1980s. We have always much enjoyed the talented youngsters who have become associated with us in a more personal way and some of these are now our closest colleagues. Steven Devine, who turned
up on an Open Day, aged 12, is now a well respected conductor and harpsichordist, and somehow managed to combine a variety of roles at Finchcocks with a highly successful international career. Over the past few years we have relied on a splendid support team of fine professional players and teachers who have been in the front line of carrying forward the “Finchcocks spirit” and who we look forward to working with in the future.

We must also never forget our back-up team, the stewards, volunteers and Council members, and those who run the house, the restaurant, the shop, the gardens and the office, and who also have coped with weddings, and fairs and functions and all the aspects which have kept Finchcocks afloat as a business, and without whom nothing over the past years would have been possible.

**MB:** *A great number of concerts and other events have taken place at Finchcocks over the years. Can you recollect events that were particularly memorable? Please name a few highlights of Finchcocks’ musical past.*

**KB:** Oh my goodness.... There have been so many. When we look through our scrapbooks and photographs of the past, we are amazed how much we managed to pack in. We started our Festival in the mid 1980s, in September, but the concerts were so popular we had to extend these to a Midsummer Music series and a Christmas series. We remember many beautiful and moving concerts by many wonderful musicians. Some of our projects were quite ambitious. We have always been fascinated by the eighteenth century pleasure gardens (and have put together an extensive collection of prints on the theme), and in 1996 we presented a ‘Recreation of Vauxhall Gardens’, which involved concerts in the house and gardens, plays, exhibitions, lectures, and a very temperamental air balloon, with everybody in eighteenth century costume. Another project was a small-scale production of Gluck’s opera, “L’Orphée”, which proved that this beautiful work speaks more directly to audiences without scenery, dance sequences, and, above all, without an interval.

Words and music programmes have always featured in our programmes. Both Richard and I have worked in the theatre a great deal, and in 1979 we presented the first performance of “An Evening with Queen Victoria” which I had written for the splendid comedy actress Prunella Scales as the Queen, supported by tenor Ian Partridge and Richard at the piano. This then went on to tour the world for the next 28 years, and kept us out of mischief when Finchcocks was closed in the winter months.

Fast-forwarding to 2015: a highlight was the fine recital given by Melvyn Tan on our Viennese fortepianos, which was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3. But perhaps, most of all, some of the Open Days in our final season, when the whole house was alive with music, as people of all ages and all musical abilities, explored the potential and made friends with the instruments of the past. This we will really miss.
**MB:** A core collection of 14 instruments that you decided to keep will now be known as the “Richard Burnett Heritage Collection”. Could you provide a list of these instruments for our readers? Will they be heard in or hired out for concerts?

**RB:** There were a lot of arguments about which ones would be essential to keep as you can imagine. We don’t know if we have got it right. 12 was meant to be the maximum but a couple more crept in. Here is the list for you. We have tried to select good playing instruments which represent different periods.

2. Harpsichord. Kirckman 1756
3. Clavichord. Lindholm 18th c.
4. Rosenberger Vienna c.1800
5. Fritz Vienna 1815
6. Graf Vienna 1826
7. Broadwood 1801
8. Broadwood 1823
9. Clementi 1822
10. Pleyel 1842
11. Erard 1866
12. Longman Square 1780
13. Clementi square 1824
14. Walter square c.1800

We will hope these will be available for concerts, recordings, courses and other events as soon as possible. Our first concerts are booked for December 2016.

**KB:** The auction on 11th May was exciting. Although it felt rather as if we were selling our children, it was very special to see them setting off to their new homes - to museums, collectors, musicians and private people in many countries. We are delighted that three instruments have been acquired by the Horniman Museum in London, and especially pleased that Medea has been playing there in June. One of the main aims of the auction was to bring funds to the ‘Finchcocks Charity for Musical Education’, which will support the maintenance of the core collection and the musical and educational events it promotes. It is also especially important to assist the training of a new generation of tuners and restorers, as without this technical help these instruments cannot be heard properly. The Finchcocks Charity is committed to sponsor this, and we are working on schemes to develop this. If you are interested, do please get in touch.

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*Acquired by the Horniman Museum London: the 1668 virginals Onofrio Guarracino, Naples (photo credit: Dreweatts & Bloomsbury Auctions)*

*Now part of the “Richard Burnett Heritage Collection”: the 1756 Kirckman harpsichord (photo credits: Stuart Hollis)*
We end this article with a photograph of Finchcocks opening its doors to the world, and we thank Medea and Sounding Board so much for giving us a chance to talk to you. I will hand over to Richard for the last word.

RB: The most important thing is for these wonderful instruments to be playable and played, and to recreate as far as possible the sound-world of the great classical composers. I always think that to visit a museum of musical instruments without music is like going to an art gallery with one’s eyes shut.

MB: Thank you so much for sharing this all with us. I wish you all the best for the future.

With the help of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Horniman Museum south London acquired the following three historic instruments from the Finchcocks Collection: the Italian virginals by Onofrio Guarracino, a square piano by Adam Beyer, London, 1777, and a late 18th-century English chamber organ, c.1790, possibly by Robert Gray. A four-year project will conserve and fully document the instruments. 


Our thanks to Dreweatts & Bloomsbury Auctions for kind permission to reproduce the photographs from their catalogue.
Andrew Lawrence-King questions the modern concept of a 'conductor' in the performance of Early Music, suggesting historically more appropriate ways of directing early-17th-century works. In this article, he explains how time was perceived before the invention of accurate mechanical clocks, how it was defined and measured. He introduces us to the historical practice of Tactus-beating giving practical advice and sharing his personal experiences in leading Early Music ensembles. These insights will be of interest, not only to continuo players but to anyone involved in performing Early Music.

Nowadays, harpsichordists are often expected to play continuo and sometimes to direct from the keyboard. The word ‘conduct’ derives from the medieval Latin *conductus*, literally ‘led together’: poetry and music with a regular, steady metre derived from walking in religious processions, an ideal rhythmic foundation for polyphonic ensembles. The semantic association with social behaviour, ‘good conduct’, was reflected in musical philosophy: measured musical rhythm remained a metaphor for moral propriety well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Modern ‘stand-alone’ conducting remains a glaring anachronism in today’s Early Music. Even amongst player-directors there has been less research into the aims and methods of period ‘conducting’ than into the hand positions and fingering for playing instruments. But just as the sound of baroque instruments is created by (historically informed) playing techniques, so the performance of an early ensemble will be influenced by directorial technique, as well as by interpretative intentions.

As ensemble director, today’s harpsichordist may well have additional responsibilities to prepare materials, organise rehearsals, give coaching comments and make artistic decisions. That overall responsibility is the subject of such treatises as Mattheson’s *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739) and the anonymous c1630 *Il Corago*. This article focuses on the practicalities and purpose of leading during the actual performance, on beating time and measuring music, in the context of early-17th-century Italy, of Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Caccini, Viadana, Cavalieri, Agazzari and their contemporaries.

1 Original is available online [http://imslp.org/wiki/Der_vollkommene_Capellmeister_(Mattheson,_Johann)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Der_vollkommene_Capellmeister_(Mattheson,_Johann)) and there is a modern transcription edited by Friederike Ramm (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2008). A summary in English with commentary by the present writer is currently being serialised online: [https://www.facebook.com/PerfectMusicalDirector](https://www.facebook.com/PerfectMusicalDirector)

2 Fabbri & Pompilio (eds) *Il Corago o vero alcune osservazioni per metter bene in scena le composizioni drammatiche* (Florence: Olschki, 1983). In seicento music-drama, the *corago* was the theatre's artistic director, leading a management team of music-, dancing-, and sword-masters, scenic designers, etc

TIME
Our intuitive feeling is that Time flows perpetually onwards, ‘like an ever-rolling stream’. This Time provides a standard with which we can measure the accuracy of a clock, the time when the sun reaches its zenith, or the tempo of a piece of music. None of that was possible, or even philosophically conceivable, before the acceptance of the theory of Absolute Time, proposed by Isaac Newton in Principia (1687). Three centuries later, we are still so comfortable with Newton’s model that it is difficult for us to imagine anything else. What we learn of post-Einstein concepts of Quantum and Relativistic Time seems counter-intuitive, paradoxical: most often we simply ignore it. Similarly, it requires great imaginative effort to consider what pre-Newtonian Time might have felt like. But as performers of pre-Newtonian music, we must accept that Frescobaldi’s (1615) toccatas, seicento madrigals, Monteverdi’s (1607) Orfeo and the (1610) Vespers are music of an earlier Time.

Time was defined by Aristotle (4th cent. BC) as “a number of movement, in respect of before and after”. This ancient formulation shaped the consensus model until the publication of Principia and remained influential long afterwards. The intuited quality of Aristotle’s Time is that it does not flow of its own accord; rather, it is driven by movement. This perception was consistent with religious beliefs, with historical science, and with period practices of time-measurement.

The perfect, God-given clock was the cosmos itself, seen to move around a static Earth. The circling stars showed the years, the moon marked the months, the sun’s momentary pause at the zenith defined local noon. In microcosm, the human body indicated seconds (approximately) with the heart-beat. Mechanical clocks attempted to measure intermediate intervals of time. Galileo observed the pendulum effect in 1588, investigated it more profoundly in 1602, and in 1641 designed a pendulum clock. Huygens built the first such clock in 1656. Around the year 1600, the best clocks could show some approximation of a second, but were only accurate to within about 15 minutes per day. Not until the late seventeenth century did clocks became accurate enough for mean solar time (averaged over several days, as measured by a good clock) to replace solar time (measured instantaneously by a sundial) as the civic standard.

Galileo could time the slow swing of the chandelier in Pisa cathedral against his own pulse. But for his experiments on the acceleration due to gravity, he needed split-second timing,

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4 Isaac Watts Man frail and God eternal, better known by its first line, Our God, our help in ages past in The Psalms of David imitated (London, 1719). In contrast, early seventeenth-century poets characterised Time as moving irregularly, either flying or limping, bringing catastrophic change in a single moment, as in the first scene of Cavalieri’s Anima e Corpo (Rome, 1600) “Il tempo fugge, la vita si distrugge”[Time flies, life is destroyed].

5 ἀριθμὸς κινεσῶς κατὰ πρῶτον καὶ ήσυχον, in Physics 4.11 219b1. Kinesis can be translated as ‘movement’ or ‘change’.

6 See online https://andrewlawrencekeming.com/2015/01/13/quality-time-how-does-it-feel/

7 The geocentric model is still employed in modern-day teaching of Astro-Navigation, see Mary Blewitt Celestial Navigation for Yachtsmen (Adlard Coles: London, 12 editions, from 1950 to 2011)

8 See the Galileo Project’s online introduction at http://galileo.rice.edu/sci/instruments/pendulum.html
far more precise than any period clock. The solution was the Galilei family’s expertise in music. The renaissance art of divisions can sub-divide a minim (say, one second) into eight semi-quavers, facilitating timing to within an eighth of a second.

The entire complex of mensural music operates like a system of clockwork cogs, driven from the slowest-moving notes. Each note-value is divided in two (or sometimes three) to create the next smaller note-value. For practical use, this high-precision notational system needs calibration to real-world Time, within the Aristotelean definition of Time as Movement. Whereas period clocks were calibrated to cosmic time by means of observations of the noonday sun, seicento music was calibrated to the microcosm of the human pulse, made manifest in the down-and-up Tactus movement of an outstretched hand. The complete Tactus movement, down and up again, corresponds to a semibreve. Divided in duple metre this produces approximately one minim per second. In principle, the Tactus hand is omnipresent, at least symbolically, since musical Time can only exist in the context of movement. In theory, any mention of battuta (which in this period means ‘beat’, not ‘bar’) refers to the presence, symbolic or actual, of that Tactus hand. In practice, we see Tactus used for training and individual study, to guide ensembles and facilitate rhythmic complexities, in concerted madrigals and solo toccatas.

The philosophy of the Music of the Spheres related practical music-making to the human body and to celestial harmony. Similarly, Aristotelean Time connects Tactus with the heartbeat and with the perfection of the Primum Mobile, the slowest-moving sphere from which all other rhythms are derived. Since the nineteenth century, musicians have used man-made metronome time to measure music; but Galileo and his contemporaries used music to measure divine Time. This paradigm-shift is consistent with the language of baroque treatises, in which musicians seek the ‘correct’ tempo. Romantic notions of tempo vacillating with rubato or determined by personal, artistic choice make no sense in a seicento context where music measures Time itself. One might as well say, “Claudio says it’s five o’clock now, but I prefer it to be later!”

Shakespeare directs us to “Keep time! How sour sweet music is / When Time is broke, and no Proportion kept!”. A baroque Tactus-beater did not dictate a personal choice nor ‘interpret’ time, but rather embodied the stability of the cosmos, wielding the authority of the Hand of God. For Dowland, rhythmic steadiness is a moral imperative: “Above all things, keep the Equality of Measure. For to sing without law and measure is an offence to God himself.”

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10 Galileo claimed his observations were accurate to within one tenth of a pulse. Joakim Linde has created an simulation of Galileo’s experiment with gravity and music, online [http://www.joakimlinde.se/java/galileo/index.php](http://www.joakimlinde.se/java/galileo/index.php)
11 See Frescobaldi ‘Preface’ to *Toccate & Partite* (1615), discussed also below.
12 See Dante *Paradiso* Canto XXVII (early 14th cent.) “The nature of the universe, which holds / the center still and moves all else around it, / begins here as if from its turning-post... It serves as the measure for the rest”.
13 For further discussion by this author of intuitive feelings about Time circa 1600 see online [https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2016/04/24/the-power-of-tactus-a-hands-on-approach/](https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2016/04/24/the-power-of-tactus-a-hands-on-approach/)
14 Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act V, Scene v (c1595)
15 Andrea Ornithoparchus, his *Micrologus* (1519/1535) translated by John Dowland (1609)
RHYTHMIC FREEDOM
Tactus and Aristotelean Time establish the context for early seicento experiments with guidare il tempo, ‘driving Time’, a practice as fraught with philosophical risk as Phaeton’s mythological attempt to control Apollo’s chariot. Caccini makes rhythm a high priority: “Music is Text and Rhythm, with Sound last of all; and not the other way around!” His oft-misunderstood sprezzatura is not rhythmic freedom, but speech-like vocal production. In all his realised examples of monodic song, the Tactus is changed only once, in response to an obvious cue in the text. What he terms senza misura is also applied just once. This special effect is notated by Monteverdi as a vocal line floating freely above a continuo-bass in Tactus, a practice we recognise from Leopold Mozart, Chopin and 20th-century jazz.

Frescobaldi’s famous Rules are certainly not a call for rhythmic anarchy. For ensemble madrigals and solo toccatas, he specifies particular situations in which the Tactus might change, and recommends the Tactus-beat (an actual hand in madrigals; a symbolic, organising presence for keyboard solos) to facilitate those changes. For Peri too, the freedoms of dramatic monody are not rhythmic but contrapuntal. And singers do follow the rhythm of the bass.

TACTUS
There is an apparent contradiction in historical evidence between written sources that assign rhythmic guidance to continuo-players and period iconography, which overwhelmingly favours singers as Tactus-beaters. The paradox is resolved if we keep in mind that Tactus-beating seeks to maintain the ‘correct’ Time, not to impose some individual’s arbitrary choice. It is obviously convenient for a singer to use a free hand to make the consensus Time visually apparent. Continuo-players’ hands are already occupied, but they can indicate the same, mutually agreed Tactus by audible signals, adjusting their realisation of the bass-line according to the changing demands of the moment. Agazzari confirms that keyboards and other ‘fundamental’ instruments “sustain and guide the entire ensemble of voices and instruments”.

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16 The word guidare, to guide or to drive a vehicle, is used for musical direction by both Agazzari and Frescobaldi.
17 Giulio Caccini Preface to Le Nuove Musiche (Florence 1601/2)
19 See online https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2015/10/23/frescobaldi-rules-ok/
21 Agostino Agazzari Del sonare sopra’il basso con tutti li stromenti e dell’uso loro nel concerto (Siena, 1607). Six generations later, in Part II of C. P. E. Bach’s Versuch (Berlin, 1762), keyboard-players are still being taught to lead ensembles not with hand-gestures, but with audible signals within the continuo-realisation.
The near-ubiquity of Tactus-beating by singers is highlighted by period instructions for exceptional cases where it is absent. In theatrical music it would spoil the illusion for singing actors to beat time, so Monteverdi indicates that his *Lettera Amorosa*, a monody in theatrical style (*in genere rappresentativo*), should be performed *senza battuta* (not ‘in free rhythm’, but ‘without beating Tactus’). Il Corago agrees that dramatic monody should not have Tactus-beating, and for large-scale theatrical ensembles recommends that the principal continuo-player should show the Tactus. Mersenne describes a one-second Tactus shown by movement of the long-necked theorbo; many later sources recommend violinists to tap their feet in *vraie mouvement*, the ‘true movement’ of French dances.

Although some theorists describe more complex possibilities, by far the most typical Tactus-movement is a simple down-up with the palm outwards. (See illustrations). The character of the movement is smooth and pendulum-like with temporary stillness at each extreme, rather than sharply delineated as in modern conducting. Consistent with information on period posture from fine art, etiquette, dance and swordsmanship manuals, the Tactus hand has minimal tension, but is structurally integrated with the entire body to give a feeling of relaxed strength. Treatises on baroque Gesture characterise the preparatory position as a command for silence and attention; the downward sweep demonstrates authority. The opposing directions of movement feel subtly different, embodying the concept of *arsis* and *thesis*. In slow ternary metre, the down-stroke occupies two beats, the upstroke one; in faster ternary metres, three (or even six) beats are accommodated within a single stroke.22

Whilst the Tactus-beat is constant, word-accents vary from moment to moment, so that the accent may, or may not coincide with the Tactus. This can be compared to fine poetry, where the word-accents of each individual line are in artistic tension with the regular structure of the underlying poetic metre.23

**TACTUS EFFECTS**

In modern-day music-making, Tactus-beating in rehearsal and performance fosters concentration on rhythm, helping singers realise Caccini’s priorities of Text and Rhythm over Sound. The use of a slow Tactus-beat (rather than faster-moving subsidiary beats) facilitates Proportional changes (in which the Tactus remains constant) and creates a calm atmosphere, with an almost hypnotic effect. Such calm and concentration enhance communication: promoting team-spirit within the ensemble, rapport with fellow-performers and with listeners. The possibility of subtle flexibility within the steady, long beat aids delivery of the words, facilitates breathing, and encourages a sense of ‘groove’: rhythms that are regular and reliable, but skilfully shaped into the long/short of agogic structures or

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22 See George Houle *Meter in Music 1600-1800* (Indiana, 1987) for further discussion of Tactus-beating.
the powerful surge of dance-metres. The pendulum-like movement of Tactus emphasises the ‘horizontal logic’ of polyphony rather than the verticality prized by modern recording producers, suggesting a slow start to bow-strokes (Leopold Mozart’s ‘initial piano’) rather than choppy accents.

In experiments with Mersenne’s one-metre, one-second pendulum beat, we found that this is a very different experience from playing to a metronome click. The momentary stillness at each extreme of a Tactus- or pendulum-stroke offers room for subtle timing of the note’s onset, but these subtle freedoms cannot be accumulated beat after beat to create an accelerando or rallentando. Early seicento tempo-modifiers, indications of allegro, adagio etc, suggest subtle modification of the prevailing Tactus, changes of character more than of speed, akin to a jazz-player’s ‘on the front of the beat’ or ‘laid back’. Large changes, doubling or halving speed, would be shown by changes in note-values; moderate changes by proportional signs. For example, triple-metre music could be notated in crotchets under duple mensuration signs, giving an intermediate speed between slow Sesquialtera and fast Tripla.

WHO IS THE CONDUCTOR?
The responsibilities of musical direction and Tactus-beating do not have to be taken by the same person. Historically, polychoral music had multiple Tactus-beaters, one singer within each spatially separated vocal/instrumental ‘choir’, as we see in the frontispiece to Praetorius Theatrum Instrumentorum (1610). In many projects I direct, my role is to run rehearsals and give coaching comments, but I delegate Tactus-beating to a singer, percussionist (combining visual and audible signals) or to any musician ready to wield a big stick, Lully-style (as a visual signal, and/or struck audibly against the floor). Similarly, the historical rolled-up paper works well both visually and audibly. For training, and in rehearsals, I often ask every musician to accept personal responsibility for maintaining steady rhythm. Each individual answers the question, “Who’s the conductor?” with “I am!” and beats Tactus, for and with the entire group. For any musician, Tactus-beating is a useful aid to individual preparation. In ensemble performance, Tactus would usually have been shown

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24 Caccini uses the poetic vocabulary of ‘long’ and ‘short’ syllables to indicate what other sources refer to as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ notes.
25 Leopold Mozart Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule (Augsburg, 1756)
26 See the opening ritornello of Act II of Monteverdi’s Orfeo (1607), discussed online https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2015/02/16/tempus-putationis-getting-back-to-monteverdis-time/
27 For a documentary film demonstrating this rehearsal technique during a Tactus-based production of Monteverdi’s Orfeo see online https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efAAE4j6f6o
continuously by a singer, but the modern practice of a keyboard-player showing the beat as and when needed is not inappropriate.

**LEADING FROM THE CONTINUO**

Nevertheless, the more important means of communicating Tactus from the keyboard is audible, by means of clearly structured, powerfully rhythmic continuo-realisation. Period sources consistently advise placing the bass-note on the beat, avoiding polyphonic or decorative elaboration, playing *grave* (in a low register, seriously, significantly)\(^{28}\). To this I would add: make every audible event (e.g. harpsichord key-releases, the arrival-point of arpeggios etc) rhythmically accurate, show the phrasing of the bass-line with the entire instrument ‘vertically’, rather than playing overlapping ‘horizontal’ polyphonic lines.

Anyone who directs from the keyboard will be aware of the need for ensemble members to watch more carefully, since conducting gestures will be less frequent. If time-beating is not continuous, the leader must be even more disciplined to ensure that preparatory beats are given in precisely the desired tempo. I encourage ensemble musicians to be actively involved with those preparatory beats, so that they play their first notes as if ‘getting onto a moving bus’. I frequently remind those musicians with the simplest, slowest-moving part that they have a special role in ‘conducting’ with their playing, since in baroque music soloists follow accompanying parts, not vice versa.

My personal experience has led me gradually to relinquish more and more elements of modern conducting in favour of Tactus-led music-making. This presupposes rehearsal training for all ensemble members in showing and observing Tactus, and empowering a stick-holder, percussionist or singer to show Tactus in performance. With modern orchestras, my practice has been to give conventional ‘across-up’ crotchet beats as preparation, switching to ‘down-up’ minims for the first bar or so, combined with frequent reminders to ‘think in minims’. With specialist ensembles (and increasingly often, with modern ensembles too, once rapport and trust have been established), I’ll use ‘down-up’ Tactus for everything. It takes some time in rehearsal for musicians to become accustomed to making confident entries from slow preparatory beats, and there is always a temptation for the director to ‘play safe’ and sub-divide, but the sound and feel of a Tactus-led entry are unmistakeably different. Of course, in addition to what is said in the rehearsal room, in performance the player-director can and should communicate all kinds of encouraging messages by head movements, eye-contact and body-language. Baroque

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\(^{28}\) John Florio’s *Dictionarie* (London, 1611) translates *grave* as ‘grave, solemn, important’. For a resume of early continuo treatises, see Franck Thomas Arnold *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-bass* (1931).
gesture offers a historical vocabulary of expressive hand and facial movements to convey every possible emotion. The index finger vertically across the lips is thoroughly appropriate for piano. My personal taste for a subito forte is to alert the ensemble with sharp eye-contact, but not to spoil the audience’s surprise with a conductor-gesture. The role of Tactus-beater and/or keyboard-leader is to facilitate the musicians’ direct communication with the audience, not to present their own show front-and-centre.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Early music education often takes place within mainstream music conservatories, where text- and rhythm-work tend to be subordinate to sound-production, in contrast to Caccini’s baroque priorities. Current training for ensemble directors rarely (if ever) attempts to reconcile historically informed artistic goals with period ‘conducting’ techniques. There are very few of us teaching ‘historically informed conducting’.

Unfortunately, the study of continuo and early-career experiences for continuo-players are dominated by the anachronistic demand of playing continuo without ‘guiding the whole ensemble’, guidance being given by a soloist, or (worse still) a stand-alone conductor. This encourages a continuo style that follows rather than leads, overloaded with decorations and gratuitous variation, and deliberately lacking rhythmic commitment. Arpeggios are richly varied, but have no clear rhythmic shape; there is too much flowery decoration in the upper register, and a lack of solid bass on the beat. A continuo-team operating in this mode illustrates Agazzari’s warning against ‘soup’ and flocks of ‘chattering sparrows’.29

Within a mixed continuo-band, harpsichordists in particular should keep in mind that Agazzari classifies keyboard instruments as ‘fundamental’, playing simply and grave, leaving lutes, harps etc to add decorative flourishes. All too often today, we hear the opposite allocation of roles. The more that I direct from the continuo, the more my own continuo-playing has become more structural, less decorative. And what might appear to the innocent listener to be decoration is more often my subtly disguised direction, using a linking phrase to clarify the duration of a rest, or the precise swing of a proportional change.

The question I would pose to any Early Music conductor is: does modern conducting make any difference to the result? If they answer, “No”, then the response is: why do it? and why be paid a premium for such anachronistic posturing?! If, however, they boldly answer, “Yes, it does make a difference”, then logically, the resulting difference must be unhistorical. If some desired element of interpretation cannot be achieved with Tactus-beating and requires modern conducting techniques, perhaps that element is historically inappropriate. Meanwhile, as this article seeks to show, the required historical information is readily available. We know what Monteverdi’s Time was, and we know how to beat it.

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29 See online https://andrewlawrenceking.com/2013/10/08/sparrow-flavoured-soup-or-what-is-continuo/
Instrument Choice in the Performance of late 18th-Century Parisian Keyboard Repertoire

Giulia Nuti’s CD ‘Les Sauvages: Harpsichords in pre-Revolutionary Paris’ features much of the repertoire discussed in this article: sonatas by Eckard, Hüllmandel, Mozart, Schobert, and Tapray. It was recorded on a historical instrument by Pascal Taskin, built in Paris in 1788. In October 2014, the recording was awarded a ‘Diapason d’or’.

Introduction

This article considers the harpsichords in use in Paris in the last third of the 18th century. Throughout this period, harpsichord and piano co-existed and both were accepted as possible instruments on which to perform keyboard repertoire. Yet there is an interpretive lacuna, deriving in part from the establishment of a piano hegemony, in part from an underestimation of the prevalence and preferred status of harpsichords in pre-revolutionary Paris that applies to contemporary performances of late eighteenth century French works for keyboard.

The complexity of the devices fitted on French harpsichords to give the instrument increased expressive capacity was rivalled only by English harpsichords. Most harpsichords built or transformed after 1760 had a compass of five octaves and a variety of registers for producing different sonorities: two 8-foot keyboards, a 4-foot register, most probably a peau de buffle register and possibly a lute stop, as well as a dog-leg mechanism for changing registrations with the genouillères, whilst still keeping the hands on the keyboard. The desire of Parisian harpsichord owners, from c. 1760 onwards, to have such a harpsichord is detailed in the accounts of the extensive revision and rebuilding of many extant harpsichords to bring them up to the levels of responsive, expressive – as well as dynamic – capability demanded by the keyboard repertoire of the period.

The development of both harpsichord and pianos was generating a demanding keyboard repertoire, some of which could be performed interchangeably on either keyboard, but some could not. The repertoire of the clavecinistes remains tied firmly to the late French harpsichord and its sonorities, brilliance and precision; at the same time, some

1 The research for this article, which forms part of a wider research project on instrumental choice and performance on late French harpsichords, was supported by the Research Department of the Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, Lugano. I am most grateful to the Département de la Musique de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France for access to late eighteenth century printed music and manuscripts.

contemporary compositions did not require those capacities and can be performed on either keyboard instrument.

**Keyboard instruments in Paris**

Towards the end of the 18th century Paris enjoyed the works of a musical tradition that granted the harpsichord a central place in its repertoire. Small, intimate concerts, where the keyboard instrument would have been heard with the utmost clarity, were flourishing in the salons of the aristocracy. In order to establish what keyboard instruments were to be found in Parisian households after 1760, inventories of the time and more modern listings derived from other sources can be consulted.

Bruni, in his *Un inventaire sous la terreur* of 1795, includes the date of construction or of ravalement of the instrument for most of the harpsichords he lists: 12 of the harpsichords owned by wealthy Parisian families were built after 1760, and a further three were ravalé after 1770. Another seven families owned an undated harpsichord but did not buy their pianos until the 1780s, so presumably before then they would have played their harpsichord. Five households bought pianos between 1769 and 1774; four of these were made in London. All other pianos listed were built after 1779. A comparison of the number of harpsichords listed in the city with the number of pianos there in 1778 (23 harpsichords of recent construction or alteration, five pianos) confirms the French preference for the harpsichord as keyboard of choice throughout the 1760s and 1770s at least. Parisian musicians all had at least one harpsichord, but none are reported to have owned a piano except for Armand Louis Couperin who, in 1789, had “an English forte piano”.

The inventories of the workshops of Parisian keyboard instrument builders also illustrate the types of instrument that were in demand (either being repaired or newly built) in Paris during the second half of the eighteenth century. The lists, all dating from after 1760, have

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5 Bruni, *Un inventaire sous la terreur*.

6 Hubbard, *Three centuries of harpsichord making*. 
been transcribed;\(^7\) a study of these inventories confirms that many harpsichords were being rebuilt between 1760 and 1790, and it is not until the late 1780s that pianos begin to outnumber harpsichords.\(^8\)

**Repertoire**

*Clavecin, cembalo, pianoforte*

The ambiguity of the terminology in use to refer to keyboard instruments, at this time, is not accidental. *Cembalo, clavecin, flügel*, even *harpsichord* refer to both harpsichord and piano.\(^9\) Furthermore, it is well known that ‘cembalo’ and ‘pianoforte’ often appeared together on the title pages of keyboard works from the late eighteenth century.\(^10\)

A brief comparison of title pages of music published in Paris in the 1770s does, nonetheless, suggest a growing preference for piano. At the beginning of the decade, it was most common to see ‘Sonates pour le clavecin ou piano-forte’ on the title pages of keyboard works published in Paris;\(^11\) by the time Hüllmandel was publishing his Opus VI, however, he was writing his ‘Sonates pour le piano forte ou le clavecin’. The order in which the instruments appear on the frontispieces is not always casual. This can be seen clearly in the keyboard music of Jean-Louis Adam (1758-1848): up to and including his Opus 4 he writes ‘pour le clavecin ou le pianoforte’, yet from Opus 6 onwards he writes ‘Sonates pour le pianoforte avec accompagnement…’, dropping the *clavecin* entirely.\(^12\)

*Les clavecinistes*

The most significant late composers who wrote specifically for the *clavecin* were Jacques Duphly, Claude Balbastre, and Joseph-Nicolas-Pancrace Royer. Although written in the ‘latest’ style idiomatic for the harpsichord, pushing the harpsichord’s express capacities to the absolute limit, disappointingly few of them published music much beyond the 1760s: Royer’s *Pièces de clavecin* date from 1746; Duphly’s four books of harpsichord pieces appeared in 1744, 1748, 1756 and 1768 respectively; Balbastre published two collections of *Pièces de clavecin* in 1748 and 1759. Bernard du Bury, the last harpsichordist to the King, received his royal pension from 1779; presumably, until then he was still working. Yet he only published one book of *pièces de clavecin* around 1737: the pieces are written in the

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8 Only four Taskin grand pianos are extant today; the earliest dated piano is from 1787, now at the Musikinstruments-Museum of the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung in Berlin. See John Koster, ‘Two early French grand pianos’, *Early keyboard journal*, 12 (1994), pp.7-37.


10 See, for example, Badura-Skoda, *Interpreting Mozart*, for a discussion of the implications.

11 This is the case in, for example, Johann Samuel Schroetter’s op. II, Johann Christian Bach’s op. XVIII, Jean-François Tapray’s op. IV through to op. 24, Jean-Jacques Beauvarlet-Charpentier’s op. IV.

style of François Couperin, and do not represent the later style of harpsichord playing.

A remarkable piece, published in the 1770s, is Tapray’s Variations on Rameau’s *Les Sauvages*. Tapray’s exposition of the theme does not vary greatly from Rameau’s original; the notes remain the same, but the small changes Tapray makes to the ornamentation, as well as some octave doubling he adds in the left hand, greatly alter the effect of the piece. What Rameau notates as *pincé* become appoggiaturas from the note above, more classical in style; embellishments in the left hand are completely absent, and Rameau’s ornament signs are replaced with trills and written-out turns (see, for example, the ornament that falls across bars 7 and 8).

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# Les Sauvages, theme, from Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Nouvelle suites de pièces de clavecin* (1726)

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# Les Sauvages avec des variations pour le clavecin, Jean-Francois Tapray (1770)
Les ‘allemands’

From the 1760s onwards, German keyboard composers were also present in Paris; the writing of these émigré keyboard composers gave rise to a school of keyboard writing that has been said to have broken with the French tradition and, in doing so, to have paved the way for the popularity of the piano in France.  

Leopold Mozart describes the scene in Paris in a letter to Frau Hagenauer of 1 February 1764:

The whole of French music is not worth a sou. But the French are now starting to make drastic changes, for they are beginning to waver very much; and in ten to fifteen years the present French taste, I hope, will have completely disappeared. The Germans are taking the lead in the publication of their compositions. Amongst these [are] Schobert, Eckard and Honauer for the clavier.

A year later, in 1765, Baron Friedrich von Grimm wrote to Leopold Mozart that Schobert in particular ‘has completely destroyed the reputation of [A.-L.] Couperin, du Phly [Duphly], [and] Balbastre.’

However, even though this new style of composition was driving out the great claviciniste manner, there was nonetheless no apparent technical limitation for the performance of the new compositional style on the harpsichords that gave the greatest expression to the school of claveciniste composition. Indeed, the continued preference for the harpsichord in Paris at this time and the decline of publications written in the older style is, possibly, an indication that these German composers were also responding to the “new” expressive capacities of the harpsichord which was, in turn, developing at the same pace in order to meet the technical demands of this new keyboard repertoire.

Dynamic markings

Detailed dynamic markings begin to appear in the keyboard music composed after 1760; they can be found both in the sonatas by French clavecinistes as well as in the works of German émigré composers. The presence of dynamics in this repertoire has led some scholars to conclude that the harpsichord was no longer being composed for; yet this is at odds with the evidence of the number of harpsichords that were being adapted, built and bought in Paris (see above). Indeed, it could be argued that dynamic markings are found in printed keyboard music precisely in order to allow the pieces to be playable on the piano as well as the harpsichord: not so as to exclude performance on harpsichord, but in order to act

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as a guide for less experienced pianists. Eckard, in the preface to his op. I (1763), writes:

J’ai tâché de rendre cet ouvrage d’une utilité commune au clavecin, au clavicorde et au forté piano. C’est par cette raison que je me suis cru obligé de marquer aussi souvent les doux et les forts, ce qui eut été inutile si je n’avais eu que le clavecin en vue.

Yet rather than underlining an inability of the harpsichord to realize dynamics (as has been suggested by Badura-Skoda and others), surely Eckard is simply rendering his music open to all keyboard instruments.

The idea that a dynamic marking refers exclusively to the perceived volume of individual notes is also at odds with the aesthetic of the period. Each composer uses dynamic markings in a different way; closer examination of the scores reveals different approaches.

Eckard’s dynamics are clearly related to the structure of musical phrases. At times he uses forte and piano to create an echo effect; in other instances forte is used to denote the beginning of a phrase, and piano for the end of the phrase: his indications seem to be more rhetorical than expressive in nature.

Charpentier, in op. IV, uses $f$, $p$, and cresc. It is the placing of the cresc. that is particularly interesting: using a technique that has its roots in continuo playing, he gradually adds notes, first in the right hand, then in the left, an effect that gives the impression of a crescendo:

Schroetter, in op. II, uses just $p$ and $f$; Tapray, in op. XVII, uses legato, $p$, $pp$ and $f$, and in
op. 24 adds *dol.*, *cresc.* and *FP* to the range of dynamic markings. By far the most varied dynamic markings are those found in Hüllmandel’s Sonate; in the second sonata of op. VI, for example, he writes *cresc.*, *rinf.*, *p, f, mezf.*, *p.mo, f.mo*, and *smorz*.

Some works have indications specifically for the harpsichord which are not possible to perform on the piano. This is most noticeably the case in the work of Armand-Louis Couperin, his *Simphonie de clavecins* (c. 1775) in particular. David Fuller\(^\text{15}\) comments: “This work provides important evidence for the whole period, since it contains all the dynamic effects that scholars are wont to cite as proof that keyboard pieces containing them are meant for the piano.”

The following dynamic markings are written in Couperin’s manuscript:

1\(^{\text{st}}\) movement, Allegro Moderato et marqué: *p, f, cresc., Buffle, dim., poco f*

2\(^{\text{nd}}\) movement, Andante: *Baffle, P. Clav., p, f.te, cresc., smorz., ff.*

3\(^{\text{rd}}\) movement, Presto: *mez., f, smorz., cresc., coupé, ff*; there is a progressive crescendo marked in the last 13 bars, starting with *p*, then *f, cresc.*, ending *ff*.

The indications *Buffle* and *P[etit] clavier* in particular, can only be realised if the piece is played on a late French harpsichord; yet that *p, f.te, cresc., smorz.*, and even *ff* should be in the same movement demonstrates how this type of harpsichord was thought of as being capable of producing these very effects.

**Conclusion**

Much weight has been given to the detailed dynamic markings that started making an appearance in keyboard music from c. 1760; indeed, the presence of dynamic markings in the score is often given as the reason why performance on piano should be favoured over performance of the same music on harpsichord. The assumption is that these indications relate exclusively to the varying gradations of volume that can be achieved through touch; the piano is undoubtedly the instrument on which these subtleties can be achieved most effectively. Yet this type of dynamic variation is also possible on late French harpsichords; it can be heard most clearly on the *peau de buffle*. On the expressiveness of this register, Hüllmandel writes:\(^\text{16}\)

> Among the mass of inventions should be noted the buffalo skins, substituted for quills […]
> Leather can, by its flexibility, increase and sweeten the tone.

Recent empirical research undertaken by this author on a historical harpsichord by Pascal

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\(^\text{15}\) David Fuller (ed.) Selected works for keyboard, Part I: Music for two keyboard Instruments (Madison 1975), Preface.

Taskin (rahalé in 1788)\textsuperscript{17} has proved Hüllmandel’s assertion to be absolutely true: the \textit{peau de buffle} register does indeed allow the harpsichordist to achieve measurable and perceptible dynamic differences through variation of the player’s touch. Furthermore, a harpsichordist will also achieve different types of sound using a variety of performance techniques: timing, articulation, arpeggiation, the speed of the spread of a chord, overlegato, and other means. It is most likely that these composers were using dynamic signs primarily as indications for a range of expressive performance devices which included, but were not limited to, changes in volume of individual notes.

An ever increasing amount of evidence is coming to light that illustrates that throughout Europe the harpsichord was used for performance of keyboard works in the second half of the eighteenth century far more commonly than is reflected in today’s performances.\textsuperscript{18}

On hearing an English piano being played at the Tuileries in 1774, Balbastre is reported to have remarked to Pascal Taskin: ‘Never will this newcomer dethrone the majestic harpsichord!’ (‘Jamais ce nouveau venu ne détrônera la majesteux clavecin!’)

Certainly there is no suggestion that the ‘majestic harpsichord’ was technically inadequate to the demands of new compositions; this discussion of performance choice of keyboard instrument must be carried on in other terms and under other headings.

\textit{Giulia Nuti}

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\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.2\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Giulia Nuti’s CD ‘Les Sauvages: Harpsichords in pre-Revolutionary Paris’ Deutsche Harmonia Mundi/Sony, 2014}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{17} Jennifer MacRitchie and Giulia Nuti, ‘Using historical accounts of harpsichord touch to empirically investigate the production and perception of dynamics on the 1788 Taskin’ Frontiers in Psychology (June 2015).

\textsuperscript{18} See Peter Holman, \textit{Life after Death: the Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch} (Woodbridge, 2010); also “The harpsichord in nineteenth century England”, paper delivered at the 1\textsuperscript{st} International Conference on Historical Keyboard Music, University of Edinburgh, 2011. I am most grateful to Prof. Holman for giving me access to this text.
While Jacob Kirkman, the famous London harpsichord maker, is well-known today thanks to a great number of surviving instruments, and extensive research has been done into his life and work, most notably by Charles Mould and Peter Mole (see book review at the end of this issue), his nephew of the same name, a keyboard player and composer, has almost fallen into oblivion, and his music is rarely played today. Sounding Board Guest Editor Medea Bindewald has traced the composer and his music. She is most grateful to Stephen Kirkman, fifth great nephew of Jacob Kirkman, who has generously made available the material he has compiled about his ancestor. Since a portrait of a composer is of limited use without audible examples of his music, this article may be regarded as a prelude to the release of Medea’s recording of selected works by Jacob Kirkman.1

INTRODUCTION

There are countless composers of the past who are unknown today, whose works are not being published, and whose music is not being performed. What prompts us to pick out one of them and make the effort to contribute to the revival of a neglected repertoire? In the case of my research on Jacob Kirkman, I was initially motivated by the close connection to the harpsichord-making company of his uncle. Between 1780 and 1801, the keyboard player and composer lived at 20 Broad Street (now Broadwick Street) in London, next door to his uncle who occupied No. 19, whilst his brother Abraham lived at No. 18.2 It seems likely that Jacob Kirkman (the younger) accompanied the process of the harpsichord production over many years by trying out the instruments and commenting on them.3 The availability of both the surviving instruments of the Kirkman company and the extant scores of Jacob Kirkman’s keyboard music, offers a fascinating chance to re-create the composer’s sound world.

Major changes in musical taste in the vivid environment of post-Handelian London and rapid developments in instrument-making are the backdrop to Jacob Kirkman’s creative work. During this period, harpsichords and early fortepianos co-existed. This is reflected by a subtle change in the instructions on the title pages of Kirkman’s published keyboard works which indicate a significant development. Whereas the frontispieces of Kirkman’s earlier keyboard works indicate ‘Harpsichord or Piano Forte’, the reverse order of the indicated instruments can be found on the title pages of later compositions. In his last keyboard works, the harpsichord has been dropped entirely from the title pages. Whilst Kirkman’s personal instrument of choice can only be guessed at, the repertoire

1 Four sonatas and two ‘Lessons’ by Jacob Kirkman were recorded in October 2015 at Finchcocks Musical Museum on a 1756 Kirckman [sic] harpsichord and a 1795 Broadwood square piano. Nicolette Moonen played the violin part in the sonatas with accompaniment for the violin. The CD will be released later this year by Coviello Classics, depending on the success of a crowdfunding campaign.

2 See Charles Mould and Peter Mole, with contributions by Thomas Strange, Jacob Kirkman, Harpsichord Maker to Her Majesty (Raleigh 2016), p. 17. The houses have different numbers today.

3 Jacob Kirkman does not seem to have been actively involved in constructing harpsichords. When he moved into the house next to his uncle, his brother Abraham had been his uncle’s business partner for about 8 years.
invites keyboard players to explore a wide range of different sounds and colours. This variety is broadened by the fact that Jacob Kirkman also contributed to the unique and nowadays much-neglected genre of keyboard repertoire with a violin accompaniment.

ABOUT JACOB KIRKMAN’S LIFE

Jacob Kirkman was born on 3rd March 1746 in Bischweiler (today Bischwiller), a small town in Alsace north east of Strasbourg. His parents were Abraham Kirchmann (1704-1792) and Suzanna Saucourt (1708-1778).4 The Kirkman family originated from Switzerland. Jacob Kirkman’s great-grandfather, Hans Peter, a knitter of stockings, moved from Niederösch in the Canton of Berne to Bischweiler in the late 1650s. Though we do not know anything in particular about the motivation behind this move, it seems likely that he followed the invitation of craftsmen, who were welcomed to the region as the population of Alsace had been significantly reduced by the Thirty Years War.5

In the 1730s, Jacob Kirkman’s uncle of the same name emigrated to London where he became foreman to the harpsichord-maker Hermann Tabel. After Tabel’s death, he married his widow and took over the harpsichord-making business. Jacob the younger came to London with his older brother Abraham in order to join his uncle in the business, as Jacob the elder had no children of his own. Whereas Abraham became his uncle’s business partner, his brother Jacob succeeded in gaining some reputation as a keyboard player. In 1773, the latter was registered as an apprentice to John Keeble, organist and ‘Professor of Musick’ at St George’s, Hanover Square.6

He later became John Keeble’s successor at St George’s, but, according to Stephen Kirkman’s notes, he ‘tended to spend much time away from his duties in places such as Richmond and Brighton.’ He resigned from the post in 1802, because the Church Vestry would not give permission for any further leave of absence. Jacob the younger never married, but he had three children, each by a different mother. He died on 29th April 1812 in Upper Guildford Street, St

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4 Family trees of the Kirkman/Kirchmann family can be found in Charles Mould and Peter Mole, Jacob Kirkman, Harpsichord Maker to Her Majesty (Raleigh, 2016), p.7 and p.41. For a brief discussion of the various spellings of the family name see ibid., p.1.
5 ibid., p.4
6 The National Archives (Kew, England), Register of duties paid for apprentices’ indentures 1710-1811, ref. IR 1/27
Pancras. A probate office copy of his will, made in 1797 and proved in 1812, discloses that he was a wealthy man who made provision for his natural children.\(^7\)

Jacob Kirkman left various compositions for organ, harpsichord and piano. Among his keyboard works, published in the 1780s and 1790s, there are

- **Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte**
- **Four Duets. Three for two Performers on One Harpsichord or Piano Forte and one for a Harpsichord and Pianoforte** op.2
- **Six Lessons for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte** op.3
- **Three Sonatas for the Piano-Forte or Harpsichord with an Accompaniment for the violin** op.8
- **A Collection of Six Voluntaries for the Organ, Harpsichord, and Pianoforte** op.9
- **Four Sonatas for the Piano Forte** op.14 and
- **Four Progressive Duettinos for Two Performers on One Piano Forte** op.16.

In joint authorship with John Keeble, Kirkman also published ‘Fourty Interludes to be played between the verses of the Psalms’. Copies of some of the printed scores can be accessed at The British Library. There are no modern editions that are dedicated exclusively to the publication of Kirkman’s music, but the third of his ‘Lessons’ as well as some organ voluntaries appear in collections of 18\(^{th}\)-century piano sonatas, and 18\(^{th}\)-century English organ music, respectively.\(^8\)

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\(^7\) See The National Archives (Kew, England), *Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers*, ref. PROB 11/1534

manuscript book by Kirkman was sold at Sotheby’s in 2006 achieving a hammer price of £540. Apart from Kirkman’s own compositions, it contains extracts of piano sonatas by Muzio Clementi. It is difficult to deliver a statement about the popularity of Kirkman’s music in his time. However, the fact that his ‘Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte’ were published in more than one edition indicates some success. A contemporary review of Jacob Kirkman’s ‘Six Lessons for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte’ states:

“These lessons, after an attentive perusal, afford us the pleasure of praising to a high degree; much of the master is discoverable in many parts, and genius almost throughout.”

This is followed by a detailed description of all six ‘Lessons’, the main objection of the reviewer being the ‘organic stile’ of some of the pieces. It becomes clear that he refers to Lesson II, IV and VI which are retrospective in form and style, revealing influences by Handel and Corelli. The rest of the Lessons represent more ‘modern’ two-movement keyboard sonatas which, in the opinion of the reviewer, are better suited for the harpsichord and the piano. In fact, it can be observed throughout Kirkman’s keyboard works, that he was able to ‘speak’ different musical languages. The style applied in his voluntaries, fugues or in the dance movements of some of his ‘Lessons’ certainly classifies as ‘baroque’ and contrasts profoundly with the lightness and simplicity characterising the texture of his sonatas. The review from 1790 leaves no doubt that potential buyers of a volume of harpsichord and piano music would have expected the latter.

A WORD ABOUT ACCOMPANIED KEYBOARD MUSIC

Accompanied keyboard music was very popular in England during the second half of the eighteenth century. The genre had evolved in France, where improvisatory and *ad libitum* practices had preceded the publication of Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville’s *Pièces de clavecin avec accompagnement de violon* (op.3) in 1738. Mondonville is usually regarded as the inventor of the genre that, in the decades succeeding his op.3, blossomed in France, constituting about 30 percent of all newly published keyboard music! Mondonville’s op. 3 was printed in London in 1753. Accompanied keyboard music was also composed or published in Italy and Germany.

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10 The two editions of the ‘Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte’, held by The British Library, are almost identical. The only difference can be found on the title pages: the first edition was ‘printed for & sold by the author, No. 18 Broad Street’, whereas the second edition names ‘James Blundell, no. 110 St. Martins Lane’ as publisher.


12 ibid., p.236 In this context, ‘organic’ means ‘suitable for the organ’.

13 See ibid., p.237


15 ibid., p.12
Composers who wrote pieces of this genre include Armand-Louis Couperin, Jacques Duphly, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Simon Simon, Carl Friedrich Abel, Johann Christian Bach, Joseph Dale, Felice Giardini, Johann Ludwig Krebs, Johann Schobert, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, just to name a few.

Within the repertoire for keyboard instrument accompanied by one or more other instruments, the role of the accompanying instrument(s) varies from providing a mere accompaniment (that in some cases could be added on an *ad libitum* basis) to taking on a more substantial part of the composition in the form of a more independent line. Often, the accompanying instrument has to switch between accompaniment and more soloistic passages which demand a different approach to playing. It is remarkable how the subordinate role of the accompanying instrument has led to a lot of negative judgments about the general quality of the compositions, comments criticising the uninventiveness of the accompanying part and its inferior role. This criticism must be seen as a result of convention and habits of listening. As this kind of repertoire is rarely performed in concerts today, most of us are indeed not used to listening to it, and what we hear may be the reverse of our expectations, especially regarding the allocation of roles in a duo harpsichord-violin (or violin-harpsichord, as we are more used to putting it). An unprejudiced and open mind is needed to appreciate a musical genre in which independence is not meant to be a criterion of quality. The role of the accompanying instrument is principally to support and enhance the keyboard part by adding colour and dynamics.

Compared to Kirkman’s ‘Six Lessons’, his three sonatas with accompaniment for the violin op.8 are technically less demanding for the keyboard player. The comparatively modest degree of difficulty of these sonatas suggests that they were used primarily in the context of domestic music-making. They may also have played a role in the musical education of young women. The violin part does not contain any soloistic passages, but leaves the top voice to the keyboard, often doubling it an octave below. What at a first glance seems to be an easy part presents its own challenges for the performer, such as finding the right tone-colour and volume in order to blend with the sound of the keyboard instrument. The performer of the accompanying part has to take on responsibility for shaping the phrases actively by adding swells, *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. At the same time, the accompaniment must be performed with discretion. In her article on French repertoire of this genre, Mary Cyr summarises the instructions given by several composers regarding the execution of the violin part as ‘to enhance the sonority of the solo harpsichord

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16 This does not imply that dilettante musicians generally were less capable players.
without drawing attention away from it.'¹⁷ This description captures the spirit of what is basically required from the accompaniment in this genre and can be transferred to any accompanied keyboard music outside of France.

CONCLUSION

The above-mentioned quote from the contemporary review of Kirkman’s lessons, especially the phrase ‘genius almost throughout’, delivers an assessment that is quite to the point. Although the review is full of praise, attesting to the composer’s ‘evident marks of good natural talents’,¹⁸ the little word ‘almost’ puts things in perspective. Kirkman undeniably knew something about composition, but the quality of his music varies. Besides, this repertoire was not intended for the big concert hall, and it is extremely unlikely that it will make its way into major present-day concert halls. Thus, it seems legitimate to ask in what way Kirkman’s music might be at all relevant for us today. I would like to conclude with a brief personal statement to answer this question.

Kirkman’s music is charming, entertaining and witty; some movements are utterly virtuosic, others as simple as a children’s tune. It is fun to play and pleasant to listen to. This is, from a performer’s and music teacher’s point of view, what makes it worthwhile to explore. As for public performances, finding appropriate venues is essential here. The intimate setting of a museum or an 18th century manor house must be considered the ideal place to bring music of this kind to life. From a more scholarly point of view, bringing Jacob Kirkman the composer to the attention of a wider public also means making a small contribution to painting a more complete picture of an era. Kirkman’s music is representative of the musical taste in post-Handelian London and ought to be acknowledged as a valuable legacy of musical culture in Georgian Britain.

Medea Binnewald

JACOB KIRKMAN Lessons & Sonatas
Medea Binnewald - harpsichord & square piano
with Nicolette Moonen - violin

CD by Coviello Classics, due to be released late 2016
recorded on a 1756 Kirkman [sic] harpsichord and
a Broadwood square piano of 1795 in October 2015
at what was then the Finchcocks Musical Museum. It
includes performances of music referred to in this article.

¹⁷ M Cyr, Origins and performance of accompanied keyboard music, p.26. M Cyr refers to the harpsichord as the preferred solo keyboard instrument in pre-revolutionary France. See also Giulia Nuti’s article Instrument Choice in the Performance of late 18th-Century Parisian Keyboard Repertoire in this issue of Sounding Board
Facing the Future: a Personal Experience

As we all know, harpsichords can keep their owners on the move. These demanding pets need a lot of care and attention, and the lucky members of the species benefit from the occasional pampering. The instrument of Sounding Board contributor Katharine May has just returned from a five week cure and much tender loving care, and now passes the most stringent harpsichord fitness check!

Like any other musical instrument, harpsichords can benefit hugely from a thorough overhaul. I’m not just talking about a couple of hours spent revoicing or regulating, or replacing the odd string, plectra or damaged damper. Over a period of time, strings deteriorate (tiny rust spots or unexpected breakings are warning signs), plectra can harden, and dampers become frayed and less effective. Deterioration can be slow and therefore almost imperceptible, occurring gradually perhaps over fifteen or twenty years, but nevertheless it’s worth keeping an eye out for some of the signs. I thought I would write about my recent experience of having my instrument overhauled which I hope will encourage others to help keep their instruments in good working condition, and give a new lease of life to a treasured instrument. And it’s no coincidence that this reassessment of my harpsichord coincides with exciting new plans for my own life.

I’ve owned my harpsichord since 1987. It’s a copy of a French double manual instrument by Henri Hemsch, and was made for me by the Derbyshire builder John Rooks whose own Ruckers copy had inspired me as a teenager to take up the instrument. Luckily, a Countess of Munster Musical Trust Award enabled me to buy it, and it’s been a trusty friend ever since. Claire Hammett has regulated it from time to time, while David Evans did a fantastic job widening the original accidentals which were precarious narrow. In 2000 it had its first major overhaul. Peter Bavington had it in his workshop for two or three weeks and completely restrung it. He did a brilliant job, with characteristically impeccable precision. So last year when I began to notice small rust spots and suffered a few unexpected string breakages, I wondered if it was time again to give...
my harpsichord a new lease of life and treat it to another restring. As I have also been making plans to move northwards to the beautiful Cumbrian countryside to realize numerous musical projects, it also seemed a timely decision. But who to ask this time? I have long been a huge admirer of Michael Johnson’s instruments. My first two teachers, Ruth Dyson and Robert Woolley, both owned one and it was always a privilege to play them. For me, his name is synonymous with top quality craftsmanship and superb harpsichords, which are true vehicles for the music, capable of expressing every musical thought and nuance. In fact one almost ceases to be aware of the instrument itself, so effortless are they to play, as anyone who knows his work will surely agree. Now retired from making instruments, Michael Johnson does still do some restoration work, although he is selective in who he works for, “the bonus of old age” he said. It seemed a very fanciful thought that he would be willing to spend his time and energy working on my harpsichord especially as he rarely works on instruments by other builders, but perhaps I had nothing to lose in at least asking him? To my surprise, he didn’t immediately reject the idea. In fact, he encouragingly asked to see some photos so that he could get an overall impression of John Rooks’ work. Fair enough. And after a few days I could hardly contain my excitement when he agreed to take on the work. Things seemed to be coming together just at the right time. So I duly delivered the instrument to his workshop in the idyllic Dorset countryside and left it in his expert hands, “for a month if possible,” he had asked. The next day I was happy to read his endorsement on Facebook: “Well, the instrument arrived yesterday afternoon and though I hope to improve on the way it speaks the craftsmanship is truly superb!” That was a good start for me. Over the next few weeks I would read regular progress reports, observations and comments about his work, and I was particularly impressed with his dedication to the project. I had a feeling that this would not just be a straightforward restringing but that he would be looking at all sorts of details, and giving it a holistic overhaul.

So his first job after removing all the strings was to clean 15 years of dust from the soundboard, with organic wholemeal bread, and it came up a treat. With tension now off the case, a small fracture opened up on the outside cheek. “You are keeping the old man busy,” he jested, and it was duly repaired. That afternoon I had another message.
“I have decided to replace the tuning pins and have just had an email from Vogel in Germany to say they have dispatched the new pins today. My reason is it will enable me to clean the boring of the old pins that were not that well done and get a better seating, the old ones came out too easy for my liking! The new ones also have holes and you will find that so much more helpful when you need to replace a string. The old pins you should keep, they are beautifully made and should stay with the instrument.” That was excellent news. Trying to replace a string (invariably in a hurry) without holes in the pin is a bit of a curse.

The next job was to create a completely new scaling. “You will get a new scaling chart that will be comprehensive. You will have for the first time the speaking lengths of the strings, because in order to get a scaling that would balance the tension I have had to measure all those. I have never taken any scaling from whom so ever, even Ruckers, and always worked my own out. Sounds very big headed but it’s not, the most important factor is to create a tension graph as even as possible so the framing is not put into too many different tensions. Once I have that working as close to a tension any given wire sounds at its best, I string up to tension and listen to how every string speaks. They will break with too much tension and sound dull when working under tension so they tell you what they want.” MJ had raved about Stephen Birkett’s traditional wire which he hoped to use on mine, but on closer examination saw that the speaking lengths in the treble were on the long side so Malcolm Rose’s wire seemed the best option. “I have got Malcolm to supply me with a very fine wire for the top notes and it is holding pitch and not breaking. I purposely did not look at the scaling of Peter or John in order to not be influenced by them. I measured and calculated the tensions of each string myself in order create a balanced tension curve and I think we will win!” That was encouraging news. And for the bass strings, MJ was confident in using Little Falls brass. “The change over to brass I have done at A# and it really is speaking quite beautifully. Of course the acid test is going to be how you feel about the sound and how I can get that from the
action.” This last comment was typical of MJ’s approach all along - he has a lifetime’s experience and is one of the top makers world-wide, yet always seeks approval from his client, which I admired. While waiting for the brass string to arrive from America MJ turned his attention to the action. “I have just voiced the 4ft plectra. I used the small acetyl sample ‘The Instrument Workshop’ sent me for the top couple of octaves giving their 80mm sheet a 3% under taper, and my own 1.10mm material for the remainder of the instrument. The thinner sample material worked very well indeed and there was no tonal difference at all from my own thicker material. The old plectrum on this instrument was I’m sure the normal commercial ones, very shaped wide at the root to quite a point at the working end. It’s producing a much better sound and feel, I think.”

I myself had noticed an immediate improvement when at our first meeting he had experimented with one of his own plectra - the difference was radical. The next day he messaged: “Just voiced the lower 8fts new plectrum and am quite excited at where we are going! The instrument is so stable, so I have got a good scaling on it for you. With luck I will have the upper 8ft plectrum in today and then I can fiddle around with new dampers.”

And with that, the work was basically all wrapped up. Five weeks of totally committed work, and I had a ‘new’ instrument to rediscover. My first impressions when I played it
for the first time was how wonderfully focused the sound was. Both 8’ registers have their own distinct quality which blend really well together when coupled, while the 4’ adds a shimmering brilliance. The new clarity of sound is a revelation, of the kind that inspires one to rediscover harpsichord music all over again. I found it irresistible to play and six weeks later, still do. Tighter tuning pins (though initially quite hard work) help the instrument to stay well in tune.

And not only does it sound so clear, but the action is wonderful. Everything feels so effortless even with all registers on, and much more detail in the music can be heard and felt. It has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience witnessing its transformation, and coming at a stage of personal change and moving forwards, it seems perfect timing. The work was carried out with meticulous attention to detail and with total dedication. Michael Johnson showed a genuine interest in doing the work, and at all times he gave me his honest opinions, so that I always knew where I stood. I know that I asked one of the world’s best makers to do the job and that he gave me the very best he could. I can’t ask for more than that.

**Katharine May**

*Katharine May enjoys a varied career as a recitalist, continuo player, teacher and baroque chamber music coach. She writes for Early Music Today, BCS and Music Teacher, and was Guest Editor of Sounding Board in 2011. She is planning to move to Cumbria in order to continue her performing, teaching and writing, and to establish courses, workshops and a new music festival.*

[Katharine May -- http://www.katharinemay.co.uk/](http://www.katharinemay.co.uk/)

[Michael Johnson – http://www.michaeljohnsonharpsichords.co.uk](http://www.michaeljohnsonharpsichords.co.uk)

*Photographs – Taken by and reproduced by kind permission of Michael Johnson*
The museum Handel & Hendrix in London, formerly Handel House Museum, has seen a great number of changes within the recent past. Claire Davies has answered Sounding Board’s questions.

**Medea Bindewald (MB):** What is your current position at Handel & Hendrix in London (H&H)? What are your personal responsibilities?

**Claire Davies (CD):** I am Head of Learning & Participation and my duties cover a broad spectrum of areas. I am responsible for the formal learning programme and projects, events and concerts, visual display and interpretation, access and the programme for visually impaired people, and the maintenance and care of our historic instruments.

**MB:** When did you start working at H&H? Please tell us about previous jobs and work experience as well.

**CD:** I started at Handel & Hendrix in London (previously Handel House) in October 2013 as the Learning & Events Officer. I was responsible for the same elements as I am now but on a smaller scale. The Head of Learning & Participation role was created in 2015 and is partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund so that the team could grow and our activities could expand. I was fortunate enough to be promoted and to have a new colleague, Michelle Graabek, come in as the Learning & Participation Officer to help facilitate all of the fabulous activities we organise here.

Before coming to Handel & Hendrix in London I was the Music Director for two children’s theatre companies; I worked for Opera in the Park and the Aylesbury Music Festival; I volunteered at the Sir John Soane’s Museum and Harewood House and I took a BA in Music and History of Art and a Master’s degree in History of Art.

**MB:** Major changes have taken place at H&H in the recent past, including building works, the acquisition of instruments and the opening of the renovated Jimi Hendrix flat. Can you tell us about these, the motivation behind them and the impact they have on the museum?

**CD:** The Handel House Trust won a grant of £1.2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore and open the Hendrix Flat for renovation. The building project began in January 2015 and lasted a year. The Hendrix Flat opened on Wednesday 10th February 2016. Jimi Hendrix’s Flat is at 23 Brook Street, so it is next door to Handel’s House at 25 Brook Street.
When Handel House opened in 2001, the plan was always to open both Handel’s and Hendrix’s homes but there weren’t quite enough funds, instead the trust is working in phases. Phase 1 was to open the first and second floor of Handel’s House, using the extra space of the first and second floors of 23 Brook Street as exhibition rooms and the Hendrix Flat as offices for staff; phase 2 was to build a new office for staff on top of Handel House, open the Hendrix Flat and build a new Learning and Events Studio; phase 3 is to open the basement and ground floor of Handel’s House.

Within the project to open Hendrix’s Flat we were able to build a state-of-the-art studio for learning activities and concerts. This now means that, instead of having school groups visit on a Monday whilst we were shut to the public, we can have school groups every day and we’ve already had over a thousand school students visit our musical homes since we re-opened. They get to travel back in time to the 18th century, fast forward into the 1960s and then back to the present day, always being prompted to compare music and society between the three different periods. It’s lots of fun, and the image of school children walking through the historic spaces, dressed in a mixture of 18th century and 1960s costumes, is very special.

As for concerts in the Learning and Events Studio, the aim is to be able to have concerts and lectures whilst the house is open without shutting off an historic space from our general visitors. It is also a sound-proofed room with special acoustic detail lending itself perfectly to both baroque chamber music and modern rock and jazz; it also requires fewer staff to run it in the evening, a particularly useful factor for a very small team. The room has a much larger capacity than any other room in the house, not least because it has particularly strong foundations.

The impact on the organisation is hugely positive. Our footfall is set to triple along with our production of activities for all sorts of different learning and events groups. This will ultimately lead us to raising the funds to complete the restoration of Handel House, an incredibly exciting prospect.

As for the instruments, I would like to answer your question in a separate section: In the summer of 2015 we received the kind gift of a 1754 Kirckman double manual harpsichord and a 1752 Snetzler Bureau Organ from the incredibly generous George Warburg, in honour of his late wife, Ellie Warburg, a great keyboard enthusiast.
These are exceptional gifts and incredible historic additions to our collection of instruments. Handel’s Music Room is much more authentic for our general visitors with a period harpsichord on display, especially as it was made by Jacob Kirckman, who was known to Handel. It also means that we now have our Thursday Live concerts performed using a period instrument, which I think makes the experience even more valuable and special. To accommodate these wonderful gifts, we have had to move our instruments around, and the only place we can now house our beautiful 1998 Bruce Kennedy Double Manual is in the Studio. This instrument is much more versatile for modern performers than its period counterpart and so the change has taken some getting used to by some of our performers, but you will notice that, from May onwards, our What’s On guide clearly states which venue each concert is in, meaning that audience-goers will be aware of both room and instrument used for each event. Of course, harpsichords are temperamental and we can’t guarantee that they are always in perfect working order so we will occasionally find that a temporary issue on one might lead to a last minute change in venue or swap of instruments. This is something we like to avoid, not least because we physically do the lifting ourselves, but also because we know that our audience has both instrument and room preferences. We try very hard to keep everyone happy! However, it is extremely useful for us to have the resources and flexibility to move things around if we need to, so that - no matter what - the show can go on.

The Bureau Organ will be off for restoration between July and September of this year so that it too can be used in concerts. So, watch this space! It will be wonderful to hear an 18th century domestic organ used in such a perfect setting.
MB: At first glance, George Frederic Handel and Jimi Hendrix, apart from the initial letters of their names and the fact that they were both musicians, do not seem to have very much in common. How does H&H handle the challenge of doing both of them justice?

CD: Well, actually I'd disagree that they don't have much in common. These are two great musical innovators from overseas, who came to London, where their careers took off. The thriving London music scene in both periods of history can take a lot of credit for the success of both men. Furthermore, when you deconstruct their music, there are lots of common themes. The idea of a Ritornello, the repetition of a musical passage and a common feature in Baroque music, is at the centre of all rock and pop music and is a great concept to convey to students.

However, our message isn’t really about making people delve into similarities and contrasts, it’s more about inviting people to come and celebrate music and two great contributors to music. Handel has inspired so many musicians, including Jimi Hendrix who owned several Handel records on LP, and since the 60s Hendrix’s experimentation with sound and guitar technique has gone on to influence generations of musicians. Many modern musicians would argue they are inspired and influenced by both men, and I certainly am: the music of both filled my childhood whether I was singing in a choir, playing in an orchestra or playing the drums in a band.

MB: H&H has, in particular, always supported young professional musicians. In 2014 the Handel House Talent scheme was introduced. What can you tell us about this?

CD: We are an historic house by day and an intimate concert venue set in a unique historic house by night; what an inspiring place to nurture new talents. We strongly believe that nurturing up-and-coming talents is an important aspect of Handel’s legacy and it was this belief that prompted the creation of Handel House Talent. Handel taught and tutored many aspiring musicians at 25 Brook Street; he also created and wrote exceptionally exciting pieces of music at this address, incredible factors that create the perfect source of inspiration and resonance for young talent. It keeps the building alive with creativity.
MB: What are your hopes and wishes for H&H’s future?

CD: My hopes and wishes for the future are very simple. I want as many people as possible to learn about the lives of Handel & Hendrix through their private homes, and as many people as possible to engage with their music; this will always be at the heart of everything that we do. I can’t wait for the restoration of Handel’s House to be completed and the lower two floors to be opened. This will offer such a complete insight into Handel’s domestic life and will reinstate 25 Brook Street as a prominent and intriguing building in the heart of London.

Claire Davies
interviewed by
Medea Binnewald
28th April 2016

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Book online https://handelhendrix.org/whats-on/ or telephone 020 7399 1953
Published in May, a new book is now available on the life and work of the harpsichord maker Jacob Kirkman. It is the first of its kind on that maker, the product of a co-authorship of Charles Mould and Peter Mole, with contributions by Thomas Strange. Sounding Board is grateful to Douglas Hollick for writing a review of this new publication.

‘Jacob Kirkman, Harpsichord Maker to Her Majesty’ by Charles Mould and Peter Mole, with contributions by Thomas Strange.

Published by Lulu Press Inc., and available through the Lulu website, https://www.lulu.com/

UK copyright 2016 (no ISBN number), 202 pages,
Price (excl. VAT): £37.99 (paperback) /£47.99 (hardcover).

This is a sumptuously produced book on fine paper, and with many colour pictures, tables and diagrams to illustrate the text. This text is based either on Charles Mould’s 1975 Oxford dissertation The Development of the English harpsichord with particular reference to the work of Kirkman or on additional research into the life of Jacob Kirkman carried out by Charles since he presented his dissertation. The book is divided into two parts: part one is an account of the life of Kirkman, together with information about others who were significant in the development of his harpsichord making business; part two presents an account of his surviving output of instruments, with contributions on the marquetried harpsichords and on his spinets by Thomas Strange.

Part one traces the family history from the year 1710 when Jacob Kirkman was born in Bischweiler, a small town in Alsace north east of Strasbourg. He arrived in London by about 1738, and seems to have had some informal period of apprenticeship (as did Shudi some years earlier) with Hermann Tabel, whose widow Kirkman married on that maker’s death. Considerable detail is given, with reproductions of documents and a family tree, and maps of the London area in which he worked, giving details of his musical neighbours – makers such as Ganer and Shudi, and musicians as celebrated as Saloman and Burney. Kirkman was obviously a very successful businessman as well as a fine harpsichord maker, and died leaving a substantial estate which included property and works of art. All this is covered in exemplary detail, and provides a fascinating glimpse into Kirkman’s life and work, and the period in which he lived. Part one concludes with nine appendices, ranging over the family tree of his ancestors from Basel, some further detail of Hermann Tabel’s life, Jacob Kirkman’s naturalisation, several which deal with property he owned or leased, and his long and detailed will, which shows clearly what a wealthy man he was when he died.
Part two is a detailed examination of the instruments themselves, starting with early influences. The possibility of influence from the Strasbourg harpsichord maker and organ builder Friderich Ring prior to Kirkman moving to London is examined, and the one surviving harpsichord by Ring of 1700 compared with those of Kirkman. Whether this link is more than just a common ancestry of instruments to both makers is debateable, but very interesting. Much more certain is the huge influence of Hermann Tabel with whom both Shudi and Kirkman worked. A study of the surviving Tabel harpsichord of 1721 leads to the first of Shudi’s instruments of 1729, and then to Kirkman’s earliest surviving harpsichord of 1744. From this early period the question of black/white (Tabel and the first Shudi) and white/black (Kirkman) keyboards is confused on page 76, which sadly is not the only thing to result from poor proof reading. On page 106 there is a sequence of four pictures of a single key (figure 61), described as being from the upper manual of a Kirkman harpsichord – and the text accompanying even points out the two buckskin cushions for the feet of the jacks which an upper manual key would have. Unfortunately the key shown is a lower manual key with only back buckskin, so doesn’t correspond with the description! Page 132 talks about the ‘nag’s head swell’ (a device whereby a pedal lifts the outer part of the closed main lid, hinged diagonally across from the point of the tail), a crude forerunner of the more sophisticated ‘Venetian swell’, and refers the reader to Figure 43. Again, the picture does not show what the text says it does, with no division of the main lid for the nag’s head mechanism.

These text and picture mistakes are not hugely detrimental to this very fine study – but one would hope for a future edition with these and other small grammatical errors corrected. A ‘reference’ Kirkman harpsichord of 1772 is used at regular points in the text, which is all well illustrated, and with plenty of technical detail on scalings, construction and actions. This technical detail, not just of the instruments themselves, but also methods of construction and techniques of what might almost be described as mass production (for jacks for instance) is an important documenting of workshop practice in the 18th century. The illustrations and descriptions of the beautifully marquetryed harpsichords, and the methods of cutting the veneers, are fascinating, and the sheer quality of the craftsmanship in these instruments is well portrayed here. There is a section on the Kirkman spinets, also in great detail, and questioning whether Kirkman himself actually made these, or if they were made by a specialist spinet maker and then labelled in Kirkman’s workshop. Finally a brief section ‘Living with a Kirkman’ – a useful resumé of hints and tips on maintaining and looking after an historical original for those lucky enough to be able to own one! Practical information given here will also apply to many copies of historical instruments. The appendices to this second part contain details of the first Shudi harpsichord, a comparison table of string lengths and plucking points of the ‘reference’ Kirkman and the 1721 Tabel, rubbings of the jack number stampings, 8 foot string gauge numbers, and fake Kirkman harpsichords.

This is a most important book on Kirkman and his harpsichords, the social and practical details of his life in mid-18th-century London, the workshop practices of the time, and one which anyone interested in historic instruments should have, and read, and digest. Highly recommended.

Douglas Hollick

Douglas Hollick is an early keyboard performer, teacher and scholar, playing organ, harpsichord, clavichord and early pianos. He made copies of early keyboard instruments professionally for 15 years and has performed widely in the UK, Europe and Australia. He teaches at Clare College, in the University of Cambridge.
EXHIBITION

August BOUGHTON HOUSE in NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
A rural estate near Kettering acquired by Sir Edward Montagu in 1528. Most of the present building is the work of Ralph Montagu, 1st Duke of Montagu who inherited the house in 1683 and set about creating The English Versailles. It has some of the best preserved Baroque state rooms in the UK.

Handel Exhibition 2016
August this year we celebrate the composer George Frideric Handel’s extraordinary legacy with items from the Buccleuch musical archives. On show will be rare scores and manuscripts including the first edition of The Messiah, original choreographies as used in the Handel operas at The Kings Theatre, Haymarket and a 1720 harpsichord thought to have been owned by Handel. Contemporary images in a variety of media will portray his life and times and introduce us to his circle of friends and colleagues. Handel, who was known to have loved his food, visited Montagu House in April 1747; on display will be the guest list and the menu he enjoyed on that special occasion.
The Handel Exhibition will be open as part of the public opening, daily during all of August.
Postcode NN14 1BJ- see also http://www.boughtonhouse.co.uk/boughton-house/handel-exhibition

and MUSIC EVENTS IN HOLLAND

FESTIVAL OUDE MUZIEK UTRECHT
26th August - 4th September 2016
The largest of its kind in the World this Early Music Festival is held every year in the centre of Utrecht. A festival of mediaeval, renaissance and baroque music with over 150 concerts set in historic inner-city locations. Alongside the concerts will be a rich and varied programmes of short lectures and a symposium by the STIMU Foundation for Historical Performance Practice. An international jury of distinguished musicians, including Carole Cerrasi, will be judging the entries in the International Van Wassenaer Competition. An Early Music Market will be held with over 50 instrument makers, music publishers and CD producers ready to give advice and to demonstrate a variety of historical instruments.
This year with a special focus on the music from the Venetian School, the Festival theme is Venice, La Serenissima
See http://oudemuziek.nl/home/

CONSERVATORIUM VAN AMSTERDAM
August 22nd – 27th, 2016
EARLY MUSIC SUMMER SCHOOL
The Amsterdam Early Music Summer School is an Early Music course targeting the historically informed performance of Baroque and Classical music. The course is open to participants of all ages (instrumentalists as well as vocalists) and will include private lessons from expert teachers from the Early Music Faculty at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, as well as workshops, masterclasses, lectures, concerts, and lots of chances to play with fellow students from all over the world.
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