

15 YEARS OF THE DEUTSCHE CLAVICHORD SOCIETÄT

Lothar Bemann, Dorothea Demel and Thomas Bregenzer

First Steps

The last century brought us a considerable number of individuals, be it musicians or craftsmen, who rendered outstanding services to the clavichord. In Germany we especially think of Eta Harich-Schneider (1897-1986), who lived in Vienna in her later years, Alfred Kreutz (1898-1960), Fritz Neumeyer (1900-1983) and his pupil Rolf Junghanns (1945-1993), Irmgard Lechner (1907-1999), Walter Haacke (1909-2002), Annelise Pflugbeil (b.1918) and Hermann Iseringhausen (1921-1984), just to mention some names of those who promoted the revival of the clavichord in the 20th century.

After the foundation of HET NEDERLANDS CLAVICHORD GENOOTSCHAP in 1988, similar efforts were made in Germany to bring the clavichord back into the public domain, and finally a group of clavichord enthusiasts – players, builders and scientists – around Alfred Gross met in the monastery of Pfullingen (in the south-west Germany) in early October 1992 to co-ordinate these activities.

As a result of this meeting, it was agreed to found a clavichord society and to develop appropriate statutes. To this end, Richard Moroz invited this founders' group to his museum's workshop in Gelsenkirchen-Hassel where on 9th January 1993 the DEUTSCHE CLAVICHORD SOCIETÄT (DCS) was born in the *Rittersaal* (Knight's Hall) of *Haus Lüttinghof*, supported by 22 founding members. Northeim (in Lower Saxony) then became its domicile, and finally the local fiscal authorities confirmed its public status. The first Executive Board of the Clavichord Society consisted of Jean Tournay (president), Alfred Gross (vice president), Kirsten Martin (secretary) and Lothar Bemann (treasurer). During the following years the president's chair was held by Alfred Gross (1994-1999), Michael Zapf (2000-2004) and Lothar Bemann (2004-2008).

“Rundbrief” and Other Paperwork

Since 5th April 1993 the *Rundbrief* (circular) has informed the members of the DCS of all activities around the clavichord, i.e. concerts, books, recordings, lectures, courses and research activities. Up to now 55 circulars have been issued.

Moreover, since December 1994 Lothar Bemann has provided HET CLAVICHORD (and later on, since May 1997, CLAVICHORD INTERNATIONAL) with the *Northeimer Clavichord-Nachrichten – Mitteilungen der Deutschen Clavichord Societät*, extended since August 1996 by the section *From Other Societies*, for which Michael Zapf has been writing the DCS reports since 1997.

“Clavichordtage”

The principal activity of the DCS without doubt is the *Clavichordtage*, the first of which took place on 9th and 10th October 1993 in Schwäbisch Hall (again in south-west Germany). Since then, these weekends, entirely devoted to the



A postcard announcing the foundation of the DCS: Alfred Gross invites Lothar Bemann.

clavichord, have taken place twice each year in Germany and (sometimes) in adjacent European countries: Prague (Czech Republic), Colmar (France), and Basle (Switzerland) were the external venues of the *Clavichordtage*, supplemented by an excursion to Poland.

Usually such a clavichord weekend extends from Friday afternoon to noon on Sunday, comprising three recitals, lectures, visits to workshops, a course on clavichord maintenance and tuning (led by Martin Kather), and, last but not least, a clavichord exhibition with modern replicas as well as freely designed instruments. Recitals sometimes have involved other instruments like flute or square piano or are combined with readings.

Although similar in their organisation, every clavichord weekend had its own special character, because varying concert programmes and artists, varying instruments and varying locations always generates an individual and inspiring atmosphere. As a consequence, it would be inadequate and even impossible to emphasise individual weekends. For all such events it was obvious that meeting the *Kenner und Liebhaber* of this sensitive instrument was one of the outstanding benefits.

In the clavichord exhibitions (where it became obvious that clavichord building has improved considerably during the last one-and-a-half decades!) visitors are encouraged to play on all the instruments on display, they can discuss with builders and artists and can attend the 'demonstration session', usually one to two hours during which all instruments are presented by their builders and some artists – sometimes those who are also playing the recitals, but from time to time young artists prove themselves so well that they are invited for one of the next recitals.

Occasionally interpretation courses are part of the *Clavichordtage*. Some ten years ago we hardly were able to find participants for these events as our members obviously didn't dare to play in the public, but nowadays these courses are very popular, and both active players and listeners benefit similarly.

A recurrent event during the clavichord weekends is the annual meeting of members, summarising the activities of the last year, the financial status, and the planning of future activities. Organising the clavichord weekends consistently at different locations, of course, incurs considerable effort. Thus recurrent discussions revolve around the question of whether the DCS should reduce these activities (which would mean only one such a weekend per year) or whether we should (at least once per year) have *Clavichordtage* at a fixed location, rather than going on with the 'travelling circus', as one member called it. On the other hand, changing locations are so alluring that the travelling circus seems to

persist for an indefinite time. At least, various DCS members frankly admitted that without the *Clavichordtage* they would hardly ever have gone to bizarre locations like *Homburg/Main* (a tiny village in northern Bavaria where visitors were deeply impressed by an exquisite collection of Michael Günther's historical square pianos in a castle).

DCS Webpage, Archive and Research Activities

In addition to the organisation of these clavichord weekends, another challenging activity of the DCS is the management of its website <www.clavichord.info>, initiated in 1998 and since then faithfully updated by Dorothea Demel. Here an almost unlimited amount of information on the clavichord

is readily available for everybody who is interested in worldwide events around the clavichord, in recordings, books, publications, museums owning clavichords, clavichord builders and teachers, artists and links to other clavichord societies around the globe. Recently a 'second-hand' area was added, presenting clavichords for sale – and the rapid changes of this page seem to demonstrate that this activity is successful as well. If you want to sell your clavichord, please let us know, and you will find the offer on our webpage. Of course,

the quality of the contents of our webpage depends on your support; please inform us of new events, changed email addresses, updated links or interesting citations.

Apart from these contents, a comprehensive clavichord bibliography needs to be mentioned which, beyond doubt, seems to be unique in the world. It is Lothar Bemmman's merit that this bibliography with some 3,000 citations was established, and he is also responsible for another activity of the DCS which is perhaps less visible to the public: the clavichord archive. In addition to all documents in conjunction with the DCS, the archive comprises books, journals, publications, copies of historical source documents – and a collection of more than 500 sound recordings. An electronic database filled with details on historical as well as modern clavichords, the associated museums, the builders of all these instruments and their current owners, all this is part of the archive, too. Therefore it can be assumed that almost every piece of 'clavichordial information' is recorded here

which was located or retrieved during the last 15 years within the networks of the DCS by its current 167 members in 13 countries.

The DCS is, in co-operation with the British and the Swedish clavichord societies, initiating a web-based extension of the famous book by Donald H. Boalch *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440-1840*, (edited by Charles Mould, Oxford 3/1995). This book has been out of print for many years, and according to the Oxford University Press no new edition is planned. But fortunately the University of Edinburgh (Darryl Martin) was granted permission to publish the second part of the book, *Details of Surviving Instruments by Named Makers*, on the internet. After more than 13 years of worldwide research



Crowded exhibition and demonstration of instruments during a clavichord weekend, Hamburg 2008. (Photos Hartmut Schlums)





*Lothar Bemann, DCS president 2004 – 2008.
(Photo Dorothea Demel)*

*Two clavichords played by two DCS presidents.
Michael Zapf in the foreground, Thomas Bregenzer in the
background, Eisenach 2003. (Photo Dorothea Demel)*



activity, the biographical details of the clavichord builders and details on the instruments need careful revision and extension, so a 'Boalch 3 Clavichord update' can be found on the web-pages of the British Clavichord Society (BCS) <saturn.nildram.co.uk/~bcs/Boalch3CUindex.htm>.

Moreover, everybody who can contribute to this extension is encouraged to contact Judith Wardman at the BCS (JWardman@nildram.co.uk).

During the recent clavichord weekend in Halle/Saale in September 2008, Lothar Bemann retired as president of the DCS. The Executive Board of the DCS (with Thomas Bregenzer as newly-elected president) wishes to express their gratitude to Lothar, not only for four years leading the society but for many years being actively involved in all DCS affairs, since the foundation meetings 15 years ago. Lothar promised that he will continue to provide any imaginable support to the DCS and will carry on taking care of the DCS archive, and the Executive Board promised to take him at his word.

Appendix: Players at the *Clavichordtage* 1993 - 2008

Pieter-Jan Belder - Michel Bignens - Johannes M. Bogner - Christian Brembeck - Eberhard Brünger - Erik van Bruggen - Konrad Burr Menno van Delft - Anke Dennert - Jean-Jacques Düнки - Péter Ella Michael Eberth - Andreas Erismann - Sally Fortino - Bernhard Gillitzer Pierre Goy - Alfred Gross - Peter Gulas - Gisela Gumz - Marcia Hadjimarkos - Aapo Häkkinen - Gerald Hambitzer - Siebe Henstra Robert Hill - Nicole Hostettler - Jos van Immerseel - Yoshi Kazama Karen Kirschenbauer - Bernhard Klapprott - Angela Koppenwallner Eckhart Kuper - Evelyn Laib - Gustav Leonhardt - Thomas Leutenegger Suzana Mendes - Ulrike Nagy - Siegbert Rampe - Eckart Sellheim Paul Simmonds - Johann Sonnleitner - Miklós Spányi - Joel Speerstra Armin Thalheim - Geoffrey Thomas - Colin Tilney - Jaroslav Tůma Hannelore Unruh - Harald Vogel - Heinrich Walther - John Whitelaw - Ilton Wjuniski - Akiko Yamashita - Michael Zapf - Raphael Zauels