



SOUNDBOARD

*Newsletter of the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall
and Museum*

NO. 38, SPRING 2021



'A unique instrument with historic provenance'



'Chorale for Solo Cello'

THE FRIENDS OF ST CECILIA'S HALL AND MUSEUM

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Front cover: Yaniewicz & Green square piano detail (see p. 9), and bourrée II from Bach's fourth cello suite (see p. 12).

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New members

The Friends of St Cecilia's Hall are always happy to welcome new members. Please do encourage your friends, family members and colleagues to join us.

They will find a joining form on our website:

www.stceciliasfriends.org.uk.

Alternatively, anyone interested in joining the Friends can write, requesting the necessary forms, to: The Treasurer, The Friends of St Cecilia's Hall,
St Cecilia's Hall, Niddry Street, Edinburgh EH1 1NQ.

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From the Chair's Desk

Dear Friends – greetings from Göteborg! I also want to extend my apologies that there has been such a gap between editions of *Soundboard*: whilst we did start working on a March 2020 edition, as quickly as we put items together, events were cancelled, and our content was getting shorter and shorter. I have to thank Erica Schwarz for her help in bringing this edition together with various new items, and her thoughtful treatment of the items that should have been in last year's edition. As ever it has been a pleasure to work together.

As you know from AGM papers from November, my move to Sweden means that I will be stepping down from my role as Chair, although with life and meetings still being in the most part digital finding a replacement is not a priority as I can still operate from afar for now. However, it is my great pleasure to be able to announce that we have co-opted a new Secretary, Dorothy Wright, who volunteered to take over the role. Dorothy has only recently stepped down as a board member of the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and brings very valuable experience to the committee. I am very glad that Dorothy volunteered for the job, and we all look forward to getting to know her more in person when we are allowed to meet in real-life rather than on Zoom. As a co-opted committee member, Dorothy will be up for official election at the 2021 AGM.

When last year's Fringe Festival was cancelled, we were hoping to be able to recreate our programme like-for-like this year. We still have no idea what the Fringe Festival will look like in 2021 – and the Fringe Festival organisers are sensibly holding back on any major decisions – but the Friends Committee are resigned to the fact that it will not be possible to have concerts in the manner we are accustomed to. Our hope is that we may be able to sponsor a livestreamed concert or a small series that would be broadcast from St Cecilia's (perhaps even with a very limited audience) but this will depend entirely on how restrictions are lifted over the coming months.

Whilst I know that watching concerts online is not the same as being able to attend in person, even if one is allowed to have one's wine glass during the concert, these livestreamed concerts are a small way of supporting our

musicians, many of whom have had more than 12 months of work cancelled. We hope that with the speed of the vaccination programme in the UK that things will be back to normality towards the end of the year, and that we can have a celebratory Fringe programme in 2022.

The COVID 19 situation also affected our plans for awarding student bursaries in 2020: as these are often applied for to cover research travel expenses or performing workshops, it did not seem appropriate to go against government advice and encourage travel. We are continuing to monitor this advice and will make a decision on how to continue the bursaries in a responsible fashion in 2021, whether this means a delayed schedule or inviting proposals that do not involve travel (or help students to access research from afar). We will review Government guidance at each committee meeting, the next being in early May, and make decisions accordingly.

The committee does consider that these student bursaries are one of our most important activities as a charity, and we want to do all we can to ensure that they are made available as soon as is reasonable. We have also been continuing to make progress on discussions for the Pamela Jackson Scholarship with the staff of the Reid School, and have had some very positive discussions to ensure that this Scholarship closely represents Pam's wishes, whilst also being flexible enough to be practicable in the current University environment. We are very grateful to all those who have contributed to these discussions and hope that we may be able to advertise this next year all being well.

Finally, I must congratulate Jenny Nex and the team at St Cecilia's for all they have been able to achieve during a year of pandemic, with the museum being closed for so long and with working from home or with minimal staff in the building. There have been a number of online events and talks that have been organised, as well as the facilitating of livestreamed concerts (including some of those mentioned later in this issue by Annemarie Klein). Jenny and Sarah Deters (Learning and Engagement Curator), together with Margarita Vazquez Ponte (Museum Assistant), have created tours of the collections which are available on the museum YouTube Channel, and there is also a series of micro-tours highlighting particular instruments in the collection, as well as two very interesting videos about concert life at St Cecilia's in the eighteenth century. You can even watch the process of making a parchment rose!

Whilst we do miss being able to visit the building, and be together at concerts, it is so nice to see glimpses of the collection and the museum itself

through these videos. Many of us have been on steep learning curves over the past year, working out how to run Zoom committee meetings (or AGMs), figuring out how to livestream concerts and church services, and give people a taste of the familiar even when using a digital format. I do hope though that all these new skills will come in useful for the future to make our concerts and meetings more accessible to those outwith Edinburgh: but we shall just have to cross those bridges when we reach them.

Eleanor Smith

For those wishing to visit or engage with St Cecilia's online the links are as follows:

Twitter: @StCeciliasHall

You Tube: St Cecilia's Hall: all things musical instruments (click on the Playlist tab to see the various categories of videos)

Website: www.stcecilias.ed.ac.uk, to enjoy online activities and book onto the virtual events programme.

Professor Newman Anniversary

Professor Sidney Newman is a very important figure for the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall and Museum as he was responsible for bringing the Russell Collection to Edinburgh, as well as breathing new life into the Museum of Instruments (established originally by his predecessor Prof. John Donaldson in the nineteenth century). 2021 marks two anniversaries for Newman: 80 years since he became Reid Professor and Dean of Music, as well as 50 years since his death. For his centenary in 2006, a collection of reminiscences from his colleagues and friends was published by the Museum. The Collection Staff are working with Prof. Newman's family to find ways to mark these dual anniversaries this year, whilst working around current COVID regulations. As soon as we know more, we will let our members know: but you can also sign up for the St Cecilia's Hall: Concert Room & Music Museum Facebook page for other updates and events (both virtual and in person).

Virtual Concerts – A musician's experience

Nobody could have imagined in the spring of 2020 that we would have no concerts with a live audience for more than a year. Although we had no idea then that restrictions would continue for so long, in hindsight, I am delighted that we made the best of an unfortunate situation and decided to organise live-streamed concerts.

John Kitchen and I have so far performed three virtual concerts together during the pandemic. We soon realised some surprising differences between a live and a broadcast concert. The preparation is very similar: choosing the repertoire, organising a venue, publicity, rehearsals, programme, and so on. The day of the concert is also very similar: travel to venue, rehearsal, put on concert dress, sound and light checks, final preparations, the appearance of nerves, and, finally, the concert. But it is the aftermath that feels most unusual in a virtual concert: silence after each piece and quiet when the cameras and microphones are turned off, when all that is left to do is to pack up and go home. It feels oddly anticlimactic after all the adrenaline involved in a performance, and is, combined with the lack of interaction with a live audience, probably one of the two main reasons why most performers miss a real-life public.

However, the differences between a virtual and a real-life concert are likely to be more pronounced for a listener than a performer. From a listener's point of view, it is crucial to have either good speakers or headphones. However good the music, the microphones and the performance, it is no help if the listener's experience suffers because of poor technology. Additionally, the buzzing pre- and post-concert atmosphere in a live venue cannot be recreated at home and the rapport with the performers feels less direct. There is also no social interaction with your fellow concert-goers, and I think we have all been reminded over the last year to what extent





going to a concert is an enjoyable social as well as cultural event (especially in Edinburgh, which sometimes feels like a very small town at classical music concerts!).

In the spring of 2020, most people were waiting ‘for it all to be over’, but by the summer and autumn, more and more people started to take the initiative and work with what was available and possible. Technology and the internet have become more important than ever – vital even – to stay in touch, not just socially but also professionally. Having only come off maternity leave in March, I was facing a return to work that was even more challenging than expected. Finding myself in this situation, organising a virtual concert seemed to have only benefits: it would satisfy a strong desire for music-making with another musician, help with getting back into things after a year off, give a good reason to stay motivated and keep practising, and perhaps even earn some income.

It is always a privilege to work with John Kitchen – to learn and benefit from his expertise and experience, but also to share in our passion for early music. I have known John since my time as an undergraduate music student at the University of Edinburgh, which culminated in my final recital at St Cecilia’s Hall where he accompanied me. As soon as restrictions were eased in

July 2020, we started rehearsing for our first ‘Virtual & Virtuoso’ concert. We were both so delighted to be making music with another (physically-distanced) musician, in the same room!

I felt similarly excited when starting our rehearsal at St Cecilia’s Hall on the day of our third concert in November 2020, in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Having performed both of our previous concerts live from John’s drawing room, we had been hoping for a small live audience, as well as a virtual one. However, as restrictions were tightened again, we had to stick to a virtual audience only. We were thrilled however that John could play the 1755 Baillon harpsichord, and that we were allowed to play at St Cecilia’s Hall at all. (With many grateful thanks to Dr Jenny Nex and Dr Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet in particular.) To ensure all health and safety regulations were followed, the harpsichord and concert hall were quarantined for 72 hours prior to and following our concert. We were stunned to have raised over £2500 for Macmillan Cancer Support and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who donated.



Jenny Nex

The Baillon harpsichord awaits the performers and their virtual audience

One of the difficulties that many people have been finding during the lockdowns is that life can seem more monotonous. However, when it comes to live performance, even virtual, the highs and lows have remained exactly the same. In fact, John and I found it somewhat more daunting with a live-streamed concert as anyone in the world might be watching. We know of listeners from at least ten different countries, the farthest away having watched live in Texas! There is also nothing quite like the elation after a successful performance but it can also be hugely disappointing when things don't go to plan. Our technical problems on the day of the first planned concert in July 2020 meant that we had to postpone it until the next day. Thankfully, everything went smoothly the second time, but it also highlighted one of the mixed effects of the virtual world: whilst we received many messages of support, a few spectators were less patient and understanding.

Despite these previous difficulties and continued uncertainty about restrictions, as well as the amount of organisation and preparation required as with any concert, we have decided to take the plunge again and look forward to welcoming you to our fourth virtual concert in May. I can confirm – with delight – that John Kitchen will join me again, and that we will return to our beloved French baroque repertoire with music by Marin Marais amongst others. I am also pleased that we will be joined by Ruth Slater on the baroque violin (for more information, please visit www.annemarieklein.com). John and I have really enjoyed rehearsing and performing our virtual concerts, but we cannot wait to get back to a live audience. We hope you will be there.

Annemarie Klein



*Help to save the Yaniewicz & Green square piano,
c.1810: A unique instrument with historic provenance*



Several years ago, St Cecilia's Hall acquired an inlaid double violin case (below) which had belonged to Felix Yaniewicz (1762–1848), a Polish-Lithuanian violin virtuoso and composer who came to Britain and founded the first Edinburgh music festival in 1815. An inventory of 1925 compiled by his grandson, the architect Charles Harrison Townsend, records that it had contained a Stradivarius and an Amati. With these two instruments, Yaniewicz held his audiences in thrall as a famously charismatic performer: his concert at Edinburgh's Theatre Royal in 1804 was hailed by an enthusiastic reviewer as *'a perfect masterpiece of the art. In fire, spirit, elegance and finish, Mr Yaniewicz's violin concerto cannot be excelled by any performance in Europe'*. The violins were sold around 1845, shortly before he died, the Stradivarius fetching £60 and the Amati raffled (!) for £40. Despite efforts to track them down, they appear to have vanished without trace.

More recently, however, another instrument associated with Yaniewicz has led to a trail of discovery about his extraordinary life. Two decades ago, a square



piano dating from around 1810 came to light in a private house in Snowdonia. Despite its dilapidated condition, it was recognised as an instrument of historical interest by Douglas Hollick, who bought it for restoration and embarked on a research project to discover more about its provenance. Above the keyboard, a cartouche with painted flowers and musical instruments bears the label 'Yaniewicz & Green' with the addresses of premises in fashionable areas of London and Liverpool (*see front cover*). Inside the piano, a signature in Indian ink has been matched with those on Felix Yaniewicz's marriage certificate and surviving letters.



*Felix Yaniewicz
(1762–1848)*

Douglas Hollick published his research in the Dolmetsch Foundation's *Consort* journal, putting together the most sustained account to date of Yaniewicz's career. His musical portfolio combined roles as a virtuoso violinist, orchestral leader, composer, businessman and impresario with great entrepreneurial energy and flair. In addition to his role in founding the first Edinburgh music festival in 1815, he was a founder member of London's Philharmonic Society, and among his many concert productions was the first performance in Britain of Beethoven's oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*.



Signature inside the piano, and detail of fretwork

His business activities included a number of partnerships dealing in musical instruments, and it was from one of these that the Yaniewicz & Green square piano originates.

Several design features of the piano suggest that in fact it came from the London workshop of Clementi, which supplied pianos to dealers such as Yaniewicz & Green, who then customised the case for their fashionable clients. The ornamentation may have been chosen by the original purchaser (perhaps from pattern books of the time) and has been identified by Derek Adlam as characteristic of ‘Liverpool bling’! Features individual to this piano include the unusual pattern of the turned legs, and the brass rosettes (of a design rarely seen on English pianos). Along with the lion ring drawer-pulls, these are all original.

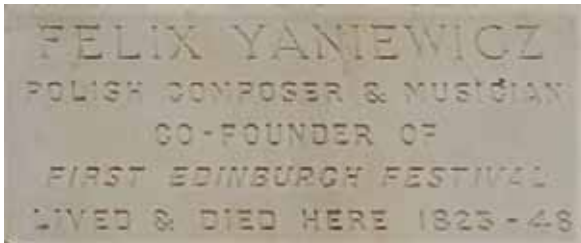
Some of the decoration such as the wooden fretwork had been badly damaged; this has been painstakingly renewed as part of the piano’s restoration. The piano is now returned to its original handsome appearance, and is in exceptionally good working order with a lovely tone, since the sound-board is in very fine condition.

The Friends of Felix Yaniewicz are crowdfunding for this unique instrument, to bring it to Edinburgh as the centrepiece of an exhibition in 2022 at The Georgian House on Yaniewicz’s life and music. Beyond the exhibition it will find a home at the Polish House on Drummond Place, where its connection to Yaniewicz will continue to be celebrated with an annual recital in his name.

We need your help to save this unique and historic instrument!

More details and a link to donate at www.yaniewicz.org/piano

Josie Dixon, The Friends of Felix Yaniewicz



Yaniewicz remained in Edinburgh until his death in 1848, living at 84 Great King Street, where a cornerstone still marks his residence.

A Chorale for Solo Cello

The bourrées from the fourth cello suite are unusual for many reasons. First of all, bourrée I is the longest of all of the optional movements in Bach's cello suites. By 'optional movements', I refer to such movements as minuets, bourrées, and gavottes. These dance movements, sometimes called 'galanteries', consist of two parts (in this case bourrée I and bourrée II) that are played in the form ABA, with the return of the A section usually without repeats. Bourrées are characterised by their duple metre and quarter-bar anacrusis, as opposed to gavottes which have a half-bar anacrusis.

Bourrée I from suite 4 (*opposite*) is 48 measures long (compare this, for example, to bourrée I from suite 3, which is 28 measures long). This movement, especially when played rapidly as many cellists do, sounds almost virtuosic with its scalar sixteenth-note figures. The challenging key of this suite, E-flat major, adds to its virtuosity. However, as if making up for lost time, bourrée II from suite 4 (*below*) is the shortest movement from all of the cello suites. It is only 12 measures long, and its character is markedly different from that of bourrée I.

While contrast is an important part of such optional movements, I feel that the juxtaposition of bourrée I and bourrée II produces a sensation of genuine strangeness. Played together, the movements are like an oddly proportioned sandwich. Two thick pieces of bread sandwiching a single – olive? This feeling of strangeness is precisely what drove me to write this article.

Bourrée II is not only curious for its brevity. It is also curious because, to me, it looks and sounds more like a chorale than a work for solo cello.





A perfect example of two-part counterpoint, this movement is harmonically simple, never deviating far from the tonic. Allen Winold, in his book *Bach's Cello Suites: Analyses and Explorations*, does an excellent job of laying out the structure of the movement, and splitting it into two voices.

My knowledge of Bach chorales is lacking, so I am undoubtedly missing some examples, but these are some chorales that I think resemble bourrée II from the fourth suite: In terms of its mood, gestures, and length, the bourrée somewhat resembles 'Nun lieget alles unter dir' from the Ascension Oratorio BWV 11. The quarter-bar anacrusis in 'Was frag ich nach der Welt' BWV 9 likewise resembles that in the bourrée. I also think the movement bears some similarities to the beginning of 'Zion hört die Wächter singen' BWV 140.

I have no explanation for bourrée II's likeness to a chorale. It is possible Bach recycled old material, but I have no proof of this. The movement has an unfinished quality; after its initial 12 bars (plus repeats) I want something more – another variation, or a vocal line to come in. The return to bourrée I, on the other hand, feels strange.

How have some cellists tackled these peculiar movements? Anner Bylsma plays bourrée I especially speedily, and then pushes bourrée II along by emphasising its syncopations. Bylsma perhaps best succeeds in making bourrée II – a movement that I think resists a dance-like interpretation – sound almost danceable. Surprisingly, as he is a completely modern player, Mischa Maisky is very successful in making bourrée II sound chorale-like, taking a slow tempo and singing tone. However, he takes bourrée I at a relatively slow tempo.

These movements present a substantial interpretive problem. If bourrée II is played like a chorale, as I think the notes seem to cry out for, 1) it is no longer a bourrée (if it ever was one), and 2) it does not make sense with bourrée I. The player has at least three options. First, they can play bourrée I with a lively tempo, and try to up the tempo of bourrée II to make it as dance-like as possible. Second, they can play bourrée II relatively slowly and like a chorale, and take down the tempo of bourrée I in order to make it fit with the character. Or third, they can take an approach of extreme contrasts, playing the first bourrée with virtuosity and vigour, and the second bourrée slowly and songfully, embracing the oddness of these hodgepodge movements.

Saskia Maxwell Keller

Bursary Reports

CAMBRIDGE SUMMER SCHOOL (report written October 2019)

Thanks to the generous support of the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall Bursary Fund, during August of this year I was able to attend the Cambridge Early Music Baroque Summer School, held at Girton College. This annual study programme is led by The Parley of Instruments, a long-established early music group including Peter Holman, Judy Tarling, Mark Caudle, Gail Hennessy and Philip Thorby, with each course focusing on a specially chosen repertoire theme. This year's was 'Paris versus Versailles: Marc-Antoine Charpentier and his court rivals', and as such was focused on the performance of idiomatic French baroque music 'dans le bon goût'.

What seems to be a unique aspect of the Cambridge Early Music Baroque Summer School is the truly immersive approach to repertoire that the programme takes. Whilst, at the end of the course, the orchestra and choir gave a performance of nine different works (by Du Mont, Lalande, Couperin



Cambridge Early Music – Andrew Wilkinson Photography

and Charpentier) this was only a small fraction of the total amount of material that myself and the other attendees were exposed to. Each morning we would rehearse and discuss new pieces which were chosen to target specific technical and interpretational points in sectionals, such as the use of 'notes inégales', improvised ornaments and rhetorical expressions of different 'affects'. Also, each afternoon there was free time in which everyone had the opportunity to take part in self-organised chamber groups, rehearsing either music from the tutors or pieces attendees had brought themselves. This feature of the course, along with the friendly (though still rigorous) tuition we received in formal rehearsals, facilitated the 'non-competitive and creative' environment which attracted me in the programme's advertisements. Along with our public concert, we gave a private performance of pieces rehearsed in these chamber groups to each other and the tutors, and even had the pleasure of seeing all of the tutors in performance twice over the course of the week. The aggregate result was a challenging yet welcoming and fascinating exploration of this largely seventeenth-century sound-world born of court and church settings.

The opportunity to work with tutors of such artistic and academic pedigree was an invaluable one. As a violinist, it was a particular pleasure to learn from Judy Tarling, a world-renowned authority on baroque string playing who has taught and given lectures at many of the world's leading music institutions. She was even kind enough to allow myself and the rest of the students to try out some of her instruments and bows (including replicas of short French bows), giving me first-hand experience into how the instruments of different times and places have influenced musical tastes, and vice versa. Since the course I have bought two of Judy's books on baroque performance, and after some very interesting conversations intend to study her publications on the workings of rhetoric in baroque music.

For this course and since I have had the pleasure of the loan of a 1972 David Rubio baroque violin and Conrad Götz bow from the Reid School of Music.

Andrew Tabeny



SIX SUITES IN SIX MONTHS (report written October 2019)

As I wrote in my project proposal, *Six Suites in Six Months* is a project to study and perform the complete cycle of Bach cello suites in the period from September to March. I wrote in my proposal that I would document my experience in a blog, and perform two concerts at St Cecilia's Hall. I also wrote that the bursary from the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall would contribute to the cost of renting a practice space. While the scope of the project has changed slightly, I believe it is even more exciting.

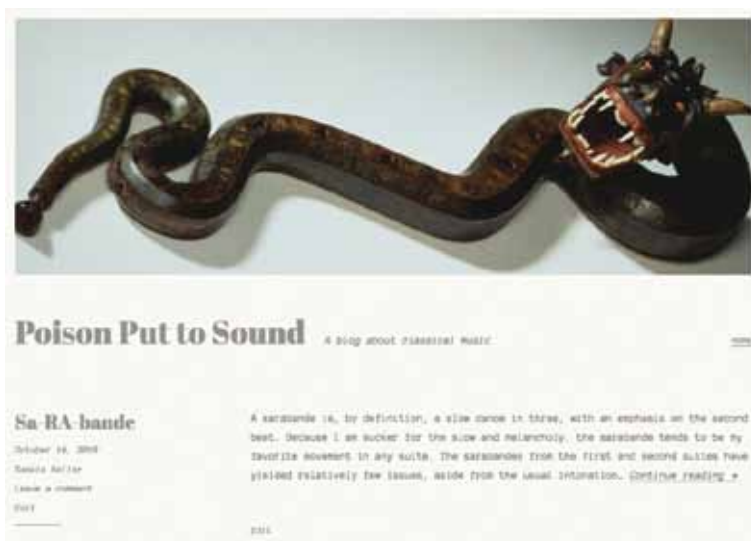
In the past two months, I have worked on suites 1–3, which puts me ahead of schedule, as I originally predicted practising one suite per month. I will have four months to learn suites 4–6, which are more challenging. I have arranged to borrow my ex-teacher's five-string cello next month in order to begin learning suite 6, an amazing opportunity. This instrument will allow me to develop a more historically-informed interpretation.

I found a beautiful practice space in Leith, only ten minutes from my flat, which is convenient when carrying a cello. The space has all the equipment needed for practising – chairs, mirror, music stand – as well as a desk at which



to work on my blog posts. The room has high ceilings and an excellent acoustic, which is perfect for making recordings for my blog.

My blog, <https://poisonputtosound.home.blog/>, has seen growing attention in the past months. So far, I have published four posts related to the project: 'Six Suites in Six Months', 'Slurs and Swear Words', 'How Fast is a Prelude?', and 'Sa-RA-Bande'. The blog has had great engagement, with hundreds of views and many positive comments. My most recent posts have included recordings of my playing. I will continue to write more posts in the coming months, with a goal of about one post per week.



Recent events have caused me to redefine the goals of the project. While I originally envisioned a series of concerts, I now think that I would like to make a complete recording of the suites. While I may still perform a concert, I will shift my focus to making the suites recording-ready. The reason for this change of heart is that my grandmother, who was a pianist, recently passed away, and her death reminded me of the importance of recordings for our posterity. While my grandmother stopped playing later in life, I am lucky to have some recordings of her playing. It would be incredible to produce an ambitious recording at this point in time, when my playing is at its peak. Maybe one day my children, or even grandchildren, might listen to it. In the meantime I would share this recording with friends, family, and anyone interested.

I am lucky that my boyfriend is a recording engineer, and has all the needed equipment and expertise. I have reserved the Sybert concert room, sure to lend a unique acoustic, for two sessions on 27 January and 2 March. In the first session I will record suites 1–3, and in the second session I will record suites 4–6. As this recording is not intended to be commercial grade but rather a record of my playing at this point in time, I will only do a few takes. While I have the hall reserved all day, the sessions should take 3–4 hours each. I am also hoping to make a video of the first suite, and have a local videographer interested. Of course, the Sybert concert room would be a perfect venue for this video recording.



The bursary from the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall has contributed mainly towards funding my practice space, which although costly has proved indispensable. The bursary may also contribute to the cost of a videographer. I am looking forward to the next months, and hope you follow my activities on my blog!

Saskia Maxwell Keller



A Postcard from Linköping

In March, I had the opportunity to join a small bubble of colleagues to do some organ-hunting around Linköping (a town about half-way between Göteborg and Stockholm) – visiting two churches and an organ-builders workshop. The purpose of the trip was to do some filming for different projects relating to both organ-building and performance, as well as to take the opportunity to see the progress of a restoration, and in my case to experience some of the historical instruments that will be the focus of our database project for the next three years.

In the area around Linköping there are three important instruments built by Pehr Schiörlin, an organ-builder based in the town who worked from the mid-eighteenth century through the beginning of the nineteenth. The proximity of these three examples to each other allows organ students the unique opportunity to get to know this style of instrument, whilst an established relationship between the Organ Academy and the church at Gammalkil in particular allows the students to get more concentrated teaching in one location and become familiar with the instrument.

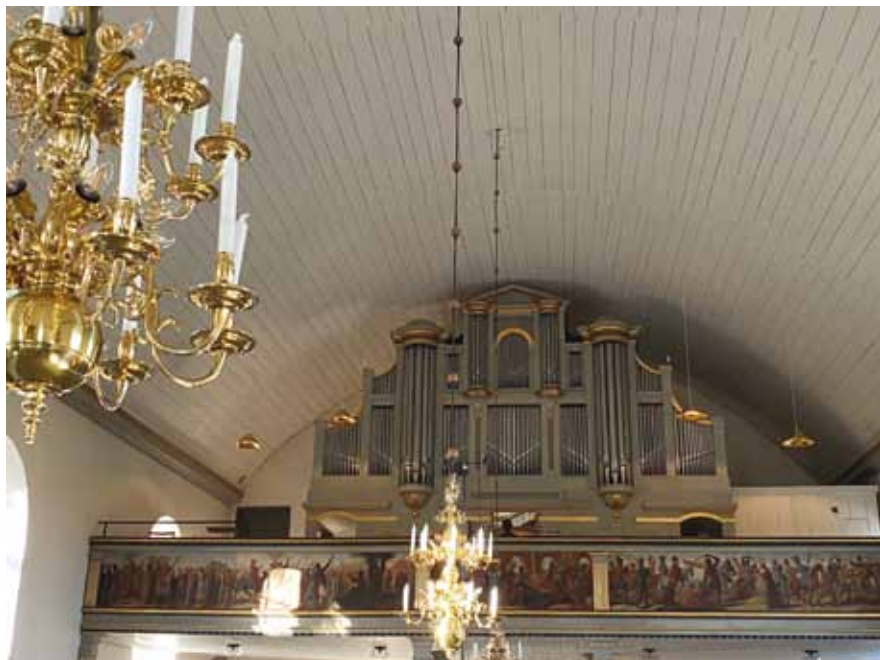
Our first stop was at the organ-builders Bergenblad & Jonsson who are currently restoring the organ from Vikingstad 1785 (the earliest of the three instruments). This underwent a somewhat unsympathetic restoration/rebuild in the 1970s which is now being reversed. Bergenblad & Jonsson are currently working on a recreation of the original free-standing console – as well as on repairing and restoring the pipework. The bellows have already been completed and delivered back to the church.

It was particularly fascinating to see the work that is being done on the console, which is an unusual example in Sweden of a freestanding console with mechanical action. The original console was unfortunately discarded during the 1970s, with little to no evidence of its construction, so the organ builders are having to become forensic musicologists to recreate the action. It was also a challenge for my elementary Swedish to keep up with a tour, but thankfully organ terms are very similar in many languages!

Our next stop (and home-base for the trip) was the tiny hamlet of Gammalkil, home to one of Sweden's most famous historical instruments –



Members of the Göteborg International Organ Academy visiting organ-builders Bergenblad & Jonsson to view progress on the restoration of the Schiörlin organ from Vikingstad. (All photos by the author unless otherwise stated)



the Schiörlin organ of 1806. This example has fared rather better over the years, with a sympathetic restoration and expansion by Frobenius & Co in 1948, then another restoration in the 1970s by the Swedish Brothers Moberg. Although all three instruments (and other historical organs in the area) are used extensively for teaching, the Gammalkil church is the base for an annual International Schiörlin Academy, as well as masterclasses throughout the year for students from Göteborg and Uppsala.

Standing on a small hill in the middle of farmland, the Gammalkil church is a stunning example of an early-nineteenth century Swedish church – the organ was designed and built for the balcony space not long after the church was opened in 1801. The musicians' gallery is quite extensive, so there is plenty of room to access the pipework and bellows for tuning and maintenance (or for taking photographs). I was lucky enough to have a full tour of the instrument from my colleague Hans Davidsson who was teaching the workshops, and who has recorded a number of discs and documentaries about the organ.



*Photos this page and opposite:
The Schiörlin organ in Gammalkil*

◀ *Detail from inside the Öberverk*

*Professor Hans Davidsson showing
Eleanor around the organ ▼*



Jon Linnason

Our third instrument was in another small hamlet to the north-east of Linköping, Östra Skrukeby – whose Medieval church has a single-manual Schiörlin of 1794 with pedal pulldowns (as opposed to a distinct pedal division). This organ has a remarkably similar restoration history to the Gammalkil instrument, and thankfully has also survived without any major rebuilding work.

I had the opportunity to observe the Göteborg students having a masterclass on this instrument as well as “treading the bellows” for a short demonstration recital by their teacher Lars Storm. The students all took turns to work the bellows for each other, using the step-on levers running into the bellows housing; it was a very different experience to using the foot-pedal for the small grey chamber organ in St Cecilia’s Hall where you have to be very careful not to affect the wind pressure by how fast you pedal. It was certainly much more of a workout too!

It was wonderful to be able to see the three instruments and get some first-hand experience of Swedish organ-building. It was also rather an adventure to be driven around the countryside, which in many places reminded me of the Highlands. One of the most marvellous things was to be able to watch the students making their own journeys of discovery and learning from their two experienced professors. But after a year of quarantine and livestreamed concerts, possibly the most rewarding element was getting to spend two days hearing live music – even in such a small group setting.

Eleanor Smith





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