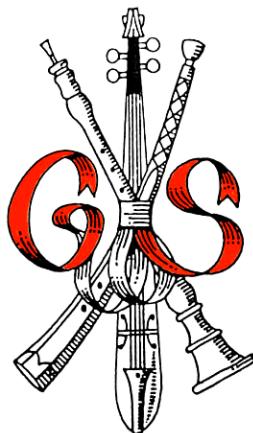


The Galpin Society

For the Study of Musical Instruments



Newsletter 51

May 2018



Canterbury Auction Galleries – The Colt Clavier Collection (see p. 10)

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THE GALPIN SOCIETY

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Complete run of Galpin Society Journals I – LXX (1948-2017)

We have a complete run of 70 Journals from the first year of the Society's existence after the inaugural meeting in May 1947. This run belonged to Miss Jocelyn Morris, a longstanding member of the Society, at one time Curator of the Warwick County Museum and for many years associated with one of the Society's founder members, the collector and player Eric Halfpenny.

Please email me if you would like to make an offer in aid of the Society's funds for this complete run of journals. The journals are in west London, the buyer to collect.

Diana Wells, Archivist
dianaswells@aol.com

EDITORIAL

I have various future events to bring to members' attention but none at present with precise dates. These will be advised in future Newsletters as plans develop.

Firstly, I am pleased to say that enough people have expressed an interest in a trip to Dublin to justify organising the visit. The intention is that this will take place in the Spring of 2019. If there are any further members who would like to join our visit can I ask you to contact me as soon as possible as I would like to find a time for the trip that suits as many people as possible, as well as our various hosts. Please email me on grahamwhwells@aol.com

A pattern has developed of holding conferences every two years. The plan for the 2019 conference is that it should be a joint event with the Bate Collection in Oxford, and will celebrate the life and work of Dr Anthony Baines whose archive is lodged with the Oxford University Faculty of Music. Funding has been found to run an archival research project on this material and the conference will be an opportunity to showcase this project. It is scheduled to take place during the summer of 2019.

The Society has also been invited to participate in a conference in 2020 hosted by the Royal College of Music and CIMCIM to celebrate the re-opening of the RCA's Collection. This conference, only a year later, may seem to break the pattern mentioned above, but will bring us into line when it comes to holding the next conference in 2022 when we will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Society's founding meeting (see our Archivist's article on p. 8). The last anniversary we celebrated was the 40th which was marked by an exhibition of instruments mostly belonging to members. I fear that the formidable expenses now involved in staging such exhibitions will prevent us from marking this milestone with a similar event, but a celebratory conference will, I am sure, suffice.

I look forward to seeing as many members as possible at this year's AGM (see announcement below).

As I finished writing this editorial I received the very sad news of the death of Marlowe Sigal. Marlowe was a longstanding member of our Society and will certainly have been known to many of our members. He will be primarily known for his magnificent instrument collection. A full obituary will appear in the next Journal.

**Graham Wells
Chairman**

The Galpin Society AGM

Saturday 28 July 2018

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Saturday 28 July 2018 at 2.30 p.m. at the Royal Academy of Music, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5HT. You are welcome to visit the Museum to see the Academy's Collection of musical instruments from 12.30pm to 5.00pm. The Academy shop is also open, but not the restaurant. Coffee, tea and biscuits will be available before the AGM. Those who would like lunch before the meeting will find a multiplicity of cafes and restaurants in Marylebone High Street which is on the opposite side of the Marylebone Road from the Academy. The nearest underground stations are Baker Street, Regents Park and Great Portland Street. There is some parking in Regents Park – in the Outer Circle, 4 hours maximum stay, £2.40 per hour – as well as south of the Marylebone Road as there is no Congestion Charge on Saturdays, however parking charges are substantially higher there.

The full agenda will be available on the day, and will include the election of the Administrator. Nominations should be received by the Chairman no later than 14 days prior to the Meeting.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

As many of our members in the EU will be aware, changes to how we can use your data come into force this month (25 May) with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Although many GDPR principles are similar to the current Data Protection Act, new and strengthened requirements for how we protect members' data are reflected in the Galpin Society's Privacy Statement:

Galpin Society Privacy Statement

- The Galpin Society was founded in 1946 to promote the study of musical instruments.
- Names, postal addresses, email addresses and website addresses supplied by members who have joined the Galpin Society are held in a database. Members' names and addresses are used to create the labels sent to the printers for the Journal mailing once a year. The email addresses are used to notify members that a newsletter has become available on the website, or for occasional interim messages such as membership renewal reminders. Website addresses are added to the Galpin Society website where appropriate www.galpinsociety.org
- Personal data is not kept for longer than necessary – details of members who cancel their membership or allow it to lapse are deleted.
- Members are asked to notify the Galpin Society Administrator administrator@galpinsociety.org of any change in their contact details so that their personal data can be kept up-to-date.
- The membership database is held on a secure server and is password protected.
- We do not undertake any fundraising or marketing, and we do not share your details with any third parties.
- If you need any further details about how we manage your personal information you can contact the Chairman of the Galpin Society trustees, Graham Wells grahamwhwells@aol.com
- If you are unhappy you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office, the independent regulator which exists to protect people's information rights www.ico.org.uk
- This Privacy Statement can also be found on our website www.galpinsociety.org

3D printed replicas of historical woodwinds



In recent times, great attention has been placed on the technology of 3D printing applied to musical instruments. Several examples can be found on internet media, mostly aimed at demonstrating the power of the 3D printing technology, but falling short in terms of musical or organological meaning. Notable exceptions are the experimentations of Savan and Simian,¹ anticipating the wide range of possibilities offered by digital fabrication of historical cornetts.

We would like to report some steps forward we have made in the field by joining our experience as a mechanical engineer (Federico Xiccato), a materials scientist (Gabriele Ricchiardi, University of Turin) and a musician and teacher (Manuel Staropoli, Bari and Vicenza Conservatories).

¹ J. Savan, R. Simian, 'CAD modelling and 3D printing for musical instrument research: the Renaissance cornett as a case study', *Early Music*, Vol. XLII, No. 4, 537 (2014)

We have followed two different methodologies for making 3D copies of historical instruments. One of us (FX) has initially made some instruments (cornets, baroque oboes and Baroque flutes) starting from the direct manual measurement of various modern copies of historical instruments and from measurements of original specimens provided by museums. All this information has been then merged into the three-dimensional CAD computer model, from which the 3D print was generated. At the same time one of us (GR), inspired by some early experiment at the Bate Collection, experimented with extracting printable geometries from X-ray Computed Tomography of recorders and flutes.

This technique allows the detection of details that escape manual measurement: irregularities and deformations of the wood, the skilled undercutting of the holes and the details of the voicing of recorders. In 2017 we merged these experiences with the expertise of musician Manuel Staropoli in a team (3D Early Winds, 3DEW) with the aim of producing professional quality copies of historical instruments. We have initially focused on two iconic instruments: a copy of a Baroque transverse flute by G.A. Rottenburgh (whose original is preserved in Barthold Kuijken's collection), and a modern copy of the contralto by P. Bressan preserved in the Bate Collection in Oxford. We have extracted accurate geometries from X-ray CT scans and experimented with several printing technologies employing different materials. The first experiments have reminded us that what comes out of a 3D printer, similarly to the raw instrument fresh from the lathe, is not yet a fully working instrument. Careful work on the surface finishing, mimicking the complex wood surface, was needed in order to obtain acoustically satisfactory copies. The finished instruments maintain the salient characteristics of the sound of the originals: the intonation, the range of the intervals, the resistance and the ease of emission of each note.

Encouraged by these results, we then began to work on the originals: an original baroque flute by Carlo Palanca is currently being copied, in collaboration with the Conservatorio 'G. Verdi' in Turin.



3D Printed recorder parts comparable to a traditionally made instrument

The materials of choice for 3D printing are polymers, which have densities and mechanical properties comparable to wood. The best results have been obtained with the technique of Nylon laser sintering, which guarantees relatively high precision and very robust and safe products. Sintered Nylon has a density similar to boxwood and a slight porosity which makes it suitable to be finished like wood.

A number of problems and limitations of currently available printing/materials technologies have emerged, which will need to be addressed in the future. Notably, the accuracy of commercial printers is not sufficient to reproduce some fine details of recorder voicing, or the smooth surface of the blow hole in a traverso. These limitations still require manual geometry checks and skillful finishing work. Moreover, the range of mechanical (and acoustical) properties offered by printable materials does not always allow the simulation of the acoustical details of a specific wood type. Indeed, we believe that the polymer printed copies should not be intended to replace wooden flutes, but rather as a powerful tool to achieve a better understanding of the original instruments and a wider access to them for musicians.

Nowadays there is a tendency among traditional instrument makers to make all instruments play in a very similar way – as perfect instruments, but lacking the peculiar character of each of the originals by which they are inspired. 3D printing brings to the attention of makers, and performers on original instruments, the thousands of variations on the handcrafted details of their construction.

Another important aspect is the enhancement of the fruition of museum collections. The possibility of creating copies of good acoustic quality has enormous implications on the accessibility of the collections. The relatively low cost of 3D printing also makes it a powerful tool both for creating good quality study models and for making prototypes of copies to be made in wood. The combination of tomography and 3D computer modelling also allows ‘virtual restorations’ of damaged instruments and the creation of working copies of them. Finally, this work naturally leads to a fundamental and much debated organological theme: the influence of materials on winds acoustics. The possibility of making geometrically identical copies in different materials opens up interesting possibilities for experimentation.

Gabriele Ricchiardi, Manuel Staropoli, Federico Xiccato

From the Galpin Society archives (3)

As we continue to publicise excerpts from the early Minute Books of the Society in the Newsletter, this is the third article on the inaugural meeting in 1947 as described in GSN February 2017. The first speaker was the Chairman, Mr Philip Bate, whose collection of musical instruments and papers was given to the Oxford Music Faculty in 1968 as a teaching resource and with the condition that there should be a specialist organologist as curator and lecturer. Others of the founding members also subsequently donated their own instruments to the Bate Collection: Reginald Morley-Pegge's brasswind and woodwind, Anthony Baines's woodwind, Edgar Hunt's recorders. The Bate Collection is now one of the leading collections of musical instruments in Britain and indeed the world, and continues to be closely allied with the Galpin Society and its aim of supporting the study of their history, performance and manufacture.

Philip Bate opened the Society's inaugural meeting by saying: "when the idea was first mooted of forming the society, the Founders did me the honour of voting me into the chair for their preliminary deliberations, and it is on their behalf that I speak to you now. We welcome you all and are delighted to see so large and distinguished a gathering. Our pleasure is twofold: first because the size of this meeting is a measure of the affection in which we all hold Canon Galpin, whose name we honour in the title of our society; and secondly, because it indicates the strength of the growing interest in our particular branch of musicology. In these dissentient times (i.e., after the six-year global conflict of 1939-1945) a common interest bringing men and women together for any cultural purpose is, more than ever before, a good thing".

Mr Bate then introduced Professor Westrup "who has come all the way from Oxford to be with us, to give the first Presidential address". Professor Jack Westrup (1904- 1975) had a long and distinguished career as a musicologist at several universities and in particular at Oxford (1947-1971) where at this time he had just been appointed the Heather Professor, the Oxford chair of music. He thanked the Society for electing him President and was apologetic that although he was "deeply interested in the study of and research on old instruments of music" he had in fact never himself performed in public on any such instrument. He went on to say how pleased he was that the Society bore the name of Canon Galpin, "a true pioneer in the study of musical instruments, when there were no societies to undertake such studies. The pioneering period has now passed but much work remains to be done". He next referred to the most important activities of the Society, the publication of a Journal for which there was a considerable need, not least in light of the Society's third objective: "to propagate a knowledge of instrumental history by any other means which may ... be considered desirable and practicable" which he described as "intentionally and justifiably vague in its terms since it left the way open to unlimited scope in the society's activities". The President was pleased to see the planned music programme as "in his view the goal of any research on instruments should be performance". Professor Jack Westrup held the honorary position of the Society's President until his death in 1975, and Philip Bate was in fact appointed as his successor to this position.

Diana Wells, Archivist

THE GALPIN SOCIETY

Programme of music played at the Inaugural Meeting, Trinity College of Music, London, May 17th 1947.

French Military Music c.1870

Marche (Mousquetaire)

Philidor l'Ainé

Marche des Dragons du Roi

Maurice Vincent	Dessus
Eric Halfpenny	Haute-contre
E.O. Pogson	Taille
Anthony Baines	Basse
Kenneth Rutherford	Tambour

Ayres to the Lute and Viols

O Mistress Mine

Morley

Can she Excuse my Wrongs

Dowland

Vezzosete care Pupilette

Falconieri

My True Love hath my Heart

Anon.

It was a Lover and his Lass

Morley

Sonata in C major for recorder and harpsichord

Handel

Trio sonata in D major for Flute, Viola d'Amore and Harpsichord

Neruda

Old Music with Old Instruments

Cecily Arnold	Soprano, Harpsichord
Marshall Johnson	Lute, Viola d'Amore
Edgar Hunt	Flute, Recorders

French Military Music

Air des Fifres ou Hautbois (L'Assemblée, Garde François)

Air des Hautbois (La Descente des Armes, Garde François)

Mons. De Lully

Marche des Mousquetaires

Early 17th Century, arr. Lully

Sonata No.3 for Traverso Solo

Handel

Edgar Hunt	Flute
R. Thurston Dart	Harpsichord

Trio for Fagotto, Flauto, Basso e Cembalo

C.P.E. Bach

Marylin Wailes	Bass Recorder
Anthony Baines	Bassoon
R. Thurston Dart	Harpsichord

Quartet No.3 for Clarinet, Horn, Viola and Cello

Carl Stamitz

Frederick Thurston	Clarinet
Francis Bradley	Horn
Eric Halfpenny	Viola
Sydney Sutcliffe	Cello

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AMIS:

The American Musical Instrument Society takes pleasure in announcing the winners of three annual awards. The awards will be presented at the Society's annual conference in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 23–26 May 2018.

Sachs Award: Tony Bingham is the recipient of the Curt Sachs Award, the society's highest award, which honors those who have made outstanding contributions toward the goals of the Society – to promote the understanding of all aspects of the history, design, construction, and usage of musical instruments in all cultures and from all periods.

Bessaraboff Prize: Michael Fleming and John Bryan are recipients of the Nicholas Bessaraboff Prize, awarded annually for the best book-length publication in English in furtherance of the goals of the Society. They receive the award for their book *Early English Viols: Instruments, Makers and Music* (London: Routledge, 2016).

Densmore Prize: Yuanzheng Yang is the recipient of the Frances Densmore Prize, awarded annually for the best article-length publication in English in furtherance of the goals of the Society. He receives the award for his article 'Typological Analysis of the Chinese Qin in the Late Bronze Age', *GSJ*, 69 (2016), pp. 137–151.

**Carolyn Bryant
President, AMIS**

Forthcoming musical instrument auctions

7 June 2018: Piano Auctions Ltd in conjunction with the Canterbury Auction Galleries: The Colt Clavier Collection (see photo on p. 1 of this newsletter). For more information contact info@pianoauctions.co.uk

14-15 June 2018:



For more information contact auctions@gardinerhoulgate.co.uk

Conference Report

The Keyboard as a Musical Interface: Materiality, Experience, Idiom
Deutsches Museum, Munich, Germany 12-13 January 2018

In the second weekend of January, a diverse group of scholars and practitioners came together for a conference exploring the myriad models, meanings, and manifestations of that most iconic of musical interfaces: the keyboard. Over the course of a stimulating and productive two-day conference, a lively conversation unfolded among musicologists, organologists, instrument makers, and performers from across Europe and North America, under the auspices of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. The museum, as curator Silke Berdux reminded the delegates in her tour of the vast musical instrument collection, was born of a singular idea: to showcase ‘masterpieces of science and technology.’ In 1903, the year of the Deutsches Museum’s founding, this was a rather unusual mission statement. Museums, after all, tend to evolve in the service of precious objects already in possession. Nonetheless, in their bid to acquire some of the most technologically innovative musical instruments, the original curators at the Deutsches Museum came up with a ‘wish list’ in which the keyboard featured prominently. Since the acquisition of a Jankó keyboard, one of its first instruments, in 1906, the collection has grown to encompass more than 1800 instruments, 200 musical automata, 3000 piano rolls, and the first of its kind Siemens-Ton-Studio—all of which raise new and intriguing questions about the richness and possibilities of the keyboard.

The museum was thus the perfect venue for the conference *The Keyboard as a Musical Interface: Materiality, Experience, Idiom*, the brainchild of Leon Chisholm and Katharina Preller. Chisholm and Preller are members of the research group The Materiality of Musical Instruments: New Approaches to the Cultural History of Organology. Led by Rebecca Wolf and supported by the Leibniz Association, the group aims to expand the bounds of traditional organology to encompass the social, cultural, historical, and aesthetic dimensions of musical instruments in dialogue with their material and mechanical bases. In that vein, the conference explored how the interface of the keyboard imports a musical perspective into not only various aspects of music-making and conceptualizations of music, but, moreover, everyday life, from calculating the shopping bill to playing video games to typing a letter. As Chisholm discussed in his introductory remarks, the keyboard’s iconic status—and its unmistakable black-and-white appearance—is practically metonymic for Western music writ large, but especially the classicism of the First Viennese School. Yet the keyboard is also the product of a feedback loop, where the concept of idiom is both the outcome of the embodied negotiation of the material constraints and affordances of the interface, and the regulator of material change, ensured through its establishment of ‘rules of engagement’.

Such rules permeate all the way down to even the smallest of bit components. Building on his application of the concepts of the digital and the analog to theories of musical play, Roger Moseley (Cornell University), the first of two keynote speakers, explored the potential of ‘aliasing’ as a critical lens onto Romantic piano aesthetics and practices. In the realm of visual projection, Moseley explained, aliasing is a process whereby pixels are eliminated in the reconstruction of a signal transmitted across resolutions or formats. At the piano, similar choices must be made, as the ‘gridwork’ of the keyboard enforces a binary logic onto musical ideas. For Moseley, the chromaticism, tactility, and programmatic evocations of Chopin’s piano music exemplify the ambiguity and misidentification brought forth by aliasing, a concept that sheds new light on the tension, engendered by the keyboard, between discrete input devices and continuous musical output.

Another small component—this time of the body—is the primary agent in this negotiation of the interface: the finger. The relationship between the finger and the key was illuminated in a presentation by Franz Körndl (University of Augsburg), who tracked historical usages of the term ‘clavis’ (key) in connection with organs from the 11th to the 18th century. The label, Körndl argued, indexes shifts in keyboard

conventions and understandings of the body-keyboard relationship. Similarly, reading Girolamo Diruta's *Il Transilvano* (1593) through the lens of David Sudnow's theory of embodied improvisation, Massimiliano Guido (University of Pavia), highlighted the ways in which historical keyboards dictate fingering patterns and digital (i.e. 'of the finger') practices. Variability in key size and distribution of keys across the console, Guido showed, can be mapped onto styles and aesthetics of improvisation.

Throughout history, the musical negotiation of the keyboard—and the keyboard's reciprocal negotiation of music—has prompted the reimagination of the keyboard configuration. Such novel adaptations were the subject of presentations by Johannes Keller and Martin Kirnbauer (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis) and Daniel Walden (Harvard University). After Kirnbauer's exploration of keyboards with split or additional keys, Keller brought his experience as a performer to the discussion, describing—and demonstrating—the relative ease with which he has adapted to the enharmonic keyboard. Walden, on the other hand, invoked the idea of 'defamiliarization' to describe the affective quality of just-intonation instruments created by Tanaka Shōhei, whose subversion of sensory expectations served an acoustical, pedagogical, and nationalist agenda.

All keyboards—be they expressly enhanced or simplified, bespoke or factory-manufactured—generate specific modes of bodily engagement. But some keyboards really are one of a kind. For example, James Davies (University of California, Berkeley) discussed the environmental and ideological implications of the modifications made to a piano destined for the equatorial rainforest: a Gaveau piano lined with zinc presented by the Paris Bach Society in 1913 to the humanitarian and Bach scholar Albert Schweitzer. Some modifications embed themselves, spawning a long and persistent lineage: on the evening of the first day, the delegates were treated to a performance by Christopher Hammer on the Steinway-Helmholtz piano, a particular highlight of the Deutsches Museum's collection. As Preller explained in her introduction to the instrument, this was one of the first Steinways to include the duplex scale—what would become the standard design for the piano manufacturers—and was presented to Helmholtz as a gift—which he gave away 17 years later having received his second of what would become a total of three Steinway gifts in the coming years!

The keyboard is tenacious, remaining stubbornly ingrained even as its influence is rejected. Ralph Whyte (Columbia University) introduced the conference delegates to Mary Hallock Greenewalt and Thomas Wilfred, pioneers of light-producing instruments, which, despite the removal of their original keyboard interfaces, struggled to shed the designation of 'color organ'. But the idea of the keyboard might be easily mistaken as self-sustaining, the physical endurance of keyboard instruments relies on the unwavering diligence of documentation and conservation, and continued performance. Pessimistic about the future of historical instruments—due to global warming, the rise of populism, and technological advancements rendering traditional instruments obsolete—Laurence Libin (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) called for a reinvigoration of the language of organology. If reconstructions of lost instruments are to recreate the historical experience of the performer, it is necessary, Libin propounded, to enrich our vocabularies to capture the 'feel' of the instrument. More optimistically, Catalina Vicens (Leiden University), Winold van der Putten (Orgelmakerij van der Putten) and Jankees Braaksma (Ensemble Super Librum) demonstrated the important role iconography can play in the (re)construction of historical instruments, through an 'experimental account' of a newly-constructed version of the Ghent Altarpiece organ (1432) built by van der Putten and a team of researchers.

While the classical piano might be (and often is) perceived as a 'black box', the harpsichord, as Walden pointed out, is more amenable, more susceptible, to situated influence and exchange. So too the organ. In her discussion and performance, Vicens drew our attention to the dynamism of the organ—the expressive potential of the bellows, the lack of uniformity across key mechanisms, and, in the case of the Ghent

Altarpiece organ, the affective quality imbued in the black keys through their physical separation from the diatonic keys. Although, as Tiffany Ng (University of Michigan) discussed, the image of the organ propagates the idea of ‘efficient human control of maximalized parameters’, and thus, appeals to various militaristic settings, the organ, in fact, engenders both collaborative and individualistic modes of interaction simultaneously. Hans Fidom, the chair of the Organ Studies program at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the conference’s second keynote speaker, foregrounded the organ as a site of music-making and nuanced musicianship, where the organist and calcant work together to ensure an evenness of wind pressure and tone; where the instrument maker expands the timbral capacities of the instrument with more stops and by diversifying the materials used for the pipes; where the composer can imagine new hyper-organs, which bring together the dynamic flexibility of pre-Renaissance organs and the aesthetic possibilities of the digital realm. For Fidom, the organ is an instrument of potentialities, generated through its inherent contradictions—fixity and dynamism, sacred and secular, collaboration and individualism, analog and digital.

In a concluding fishbowl conversation (imagine four participants in the middle of a room of spectators, who can swap into the conversation at any time, but by doing so, push one of the speakers out), the pervasive challenges of the conference topic were thrown into relief. Most fundamentally perhaps is the surface or aesthetic incompatibility between a systematized input device and what has, for much of its documented history, been understood as an ineffable expression of emotion. In other words, a certain incompatibility between the keyboard and its own music. The reconciliation of this encounter lies with the performer; but as they strive to mediate, their actions are simultaneously determined from both sides. While Keller emphasized the creative productivity engendered by the limitations of the keyboard—limitations, as Kirnbauer pointed out, that have ensured its persistent use as a training instrument in schools—Walden and Guido argued against the hegemony of the keyboard and for the authority of the performer and instrument maker. For Vicens, there must always be a balance, between the restrictions of the instrument and the control of the performer, while Davies removed the performer from the equation altogether, replacing subjective action and experience with the pre-determining power of materials. Berdux emphasized the role played by societal context in sculpting the nature of one’s relationship with a keyboard, citing the domestic setting of the eighteenth-century female pianist as a paradigmatic example. For the conference organizers, the context of keyboard negotiation must always be musical, the qualifier ‘musical’ in the conference’s title betraying their ultimate ambition: to conceptualize all keyboards as fundamentally musical devices.

The conference was brought to a close with a carillon recital by Tiffany Ng. By Ng’s own declaration, the interface of the carillon is especially indifferent to its operator and its music. The pervasive indifference of the keyboard broadly conceived is the quality, which, according to Moseley, makes it well-suited to a vast range of music and music-making settings; the indifference of the carillon, though, has marginalized its cultural function, limiting its reach to church and college settings. Ng’s short program, therefore, consisted primarily of commissions, by female composers, made with a view to expanding the diversity and representation of carillon repertory: materiality, experience, idiom in action. As the conference delegates shivered in the square of the Mariahilfkirke, the peals of the carillon echoed through and around them, uniting them with the invisible performer and her keyboard at the top of the bell tower, and I was struck once again by the nature of the keyboard’s presence. For the keyboard is so ubiquitous as to be simultaneously hypervisible and overlooked, a default and an anomaly. It was a useful reminder that our understanding of the keyboard, seemingly so robust (in that the very idea of it can stand in for the entire history of Western music), is deeply contingent. In its function as an intermediary between performer, listener, composer, instrument-maker, and musicologist, the keyboard remakes history with every performance.

Hayley Fenn
Harvard University