

## COMMUNICATIONS



## REPORTS

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### THE WESTFIELD CENTER FOR HISTORICAL KEYBOARD STUDIES

In October 2019 the Westfield Center for Historical Keyboard Studies celebrated its fortieth anniversary at Oberlin Conservatory with a conference entitled 'Blending Past & Present: Collections and Collectors'. Over seventy conference attendees enjoyed a four-day programme of recitals, papers, instrument visits, masterclasses, panel discussions and presentations, two keynote addresses, a banquet, and even a film screening. Oberlin proved an ideal setting for this meeting, since the Conservatory houses one of the most significant collections of historical and historically inspired keyboard instruments in the world. Conference instruments included organs galore, from the Fenner Douglass Memorial Organ by Greg Harrold (a Spanish-style instrument, recently acquired by Oberlin from the University of California Berkeley) to John Brombaugh's landmark meantone organ in Fairchild Chapel, multiple harpsichords (by John Phillips, Anderson Dupree and Malcolm Rose), early pianos (Anton Zierer and David Sutherland) and even clavichords (Dolmetsch/Chickering and Karin Richter).

The conference opened and closed with stimulating keynote lectures on the history and future of collecting and on historical performance. Highlights included two lecture-recitals – one at Oberlin's splendid Allen Art Museum featuring music on various keyboards alongside a promenade of paintings, the other providing fascinating context for a Schumann song cycle played on an 1810 Viennese piano – plus opportunities to hear and admire the Caldwell Collection of Viols and a cornucopia of items from the Selch Collection of American Music History. Papers addressed a wide range of topics, from early-modern 'combination keyboards' to the collecting habits of a wealthy Mexican businessman. Conference attendees were treated to music that also ran the gamut: one programme juxtaposed early seventeenth-century Italian chromatic works with the equally strange keyboard music of Charles-Valentin Alkan. Panel discussions provided great opportunities for conversation with several invited collectors and curators as well as instrument builders and restorers. Organized by Westfield's current Executive Director Kathryn Stuart, 'Blending Past & Present' epitomized this organization's wide reach and high ambition and served as a fitting climax to its fortieth anniversary year.

Founded in Massachusetts, the Westfield Center currently has its offices at Cornell University, though it presents programmes and conferences throughout North America. Significant milestones have included 'Festival Organ' (a four-year interactive exhibition with public talks and concerts across the United States); conferences on the themes of 'The Historical Organ in America' (Tempe, Arizona, 1992), 'Beyond Notation: Improvisation in Mozart's Time' (Ann Arbor, 2002), 'Keyboard Culture in Eighteenth-Century Berlin' (Ithaca, 2011) and 'Cembalophilia' (Berkeley, 2016); international competitions in organ, fortepiano and harpsichord; and study tours to Germany, Holland and Mexico. Its membership, while primarily American, extends to twenty different countries and includes significant benefits, including a quarterly newsletter, an annual scholarly journal and several landmark publications on the organ. Members include artists, builders, scholars, educators, students, enthusiasts and various partner organizations.

Founded in 1979 by Lynn Edwards and Edward Pepe, Westfield was intended to fill a need for keyboard events that promoted historical performance practice and instrument building in historical styles. Edwards,



an organist and scholar, served as the Center's Director from 1987 to 1999 and was succeeded by Roger Sherman, an organist and harpsichordist who also owns and operates Loft Recordings and Gothic Records. Annette Richards of Cornell University served Westfield as its Executive Director between 2007 and 2017, during which time a partnership was established between Westfield and Cornell. Richards has also been the driving force behind *Keyboard Perspectives*, a peer-reviewed journal that provides a lively forum for scholars, performers, instrument builders and amateurs of the keyboard across both time and genre. As current President of the Westfield Board, I would like to acknowledge and thank these individuals in particular for their outstanding service to the organization.

Originally an association for organ performers and scholars, the Westfield Center now offers a unique environment for the study, appreciation, use and promotion of a wide range of keyboard instruments. Its long-standing priorities have included the intersections of historical practices and technologies with larger social and artistic developments, and it welcomes enquiries from prospective members and partner organizations. More information can be found on the organization's website, <https://westfield.org>.

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## CONFERENCE REPORTS

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THEATRE ON THE MOVE IN TIMES OF CONFLICT, 1750–1850  
 UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, 18–19 SEPTEMBER 2019

In this stimulating interdisciplinary conference held at Magdalen College Oxford, scholars researching history, musicology, language and politics collectively examined the movement of music and theatre across cultural, linguistic and national boundaries, with an emphasis on the role of war as a catalyst for exchange. 'Theatre on the Move in Times of Conflict' was the opening element of a larger ongoing research project organized by Annelies Andries (University of Oxford) and Clare Siviter (University of Bristol) that explores the impact of war on theatrical cultures; further events include a series of academic workshops and a public concert-lecture in Bristol showcasing songs of migration. (More details can be found on project's website <https://theatreonthemove.wordpress.com>.)

Alessandra Palidda (Oxford Brookes University) opened the conference by examining musical life in Milan during the Napoleonic occupation of 1796–1799, documenting the penetration of French Revolutionary songs into the city's operatic repertory. She argued that authorities considered musical theatre a 'paramount vehicle of propaganda' and employed opera as a means of inculcating republican values among the public. Palidda also highlighted the impact of the armed forces on Milan's musical scene: invading French troops brought with them patriotic tunes such as 'La Marseillaise', 'Ça ira' and 'La Carmagnole', while military bandmen were able to provide instrumental accompaniment at opera productions and public festivals alike. Several fascinating papers explored the importance of wartime theatre and music as vehicles for political indoctrination or resistance, or for both. Lotte Jensen (Radboud Universiteit) discussed the role of the Dutch theatre in challenging French occupation between 1806 and 1813, contending that the concept of 'resistance literature', originating in studies of the Second World War, can be fruitfully applied to an early nineteenth-century context. Works depicting the downfall of tyrannical rulers, such as Shakespeare's