

## Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute: Week One, Day Five (Friday, June 23)

by Daniel Hathaway



If people seemed a bit woolly-headed on Friday morning, the day began with *Donner und Blitzen*: nearly everybody sleeping near a window was rudely awakened about 5 in the morning by bright flashes of lightning and heavenly timpani.

Mark Edwards spent two hours in his harpsichord class reflecting on the finer points of ornamentation and touch, beginning with a Rondeau by François Couperin whose languorous first half suddenly turned lively. Edwards pointed out that Couperin was an awesome player whose notation of ornaments preserved all his niceties of touch and style. In a second work, Edwards advised a student to make a difference between a downward motion and the feeling of gripping the sound of the instrument toward you.

Friday afternoon was devoted to final coachings for Saturday’s marathon ensembles concert. Ensembles with organ continuo got first dibs on Kulas Recital Hall for their “dress rehearsal,” while others signed up for 15-minute slots on Saturday. This meant that my group got a final coaching *after* its dress rehearsal — for which the much-traveled continuo organ made yet another journey from the 2 pm session in Kulas to the 3 pm coaching in an organ practice room.

Pieces, like cathedrals, are never finished, only abandoned, so with the help of Lucas Harris’ recording from the 2pm session, we found tiny things to correct or improve upon. Joe Gascho dropped by late in the coaching with some helpful advice for me: don’t play too low on the keyboard when the singer is in the upper register; and take

some improvisatory risks with the continuo part especially when the words have to do with “fluttering.”



BPI’s faculty don’t just teach, they also perform — one of the most immediate ways to demonstrate pedagogical points — so both Friday evenings of the institute are dedicated to faculty concerts. The small ensemble version in Kulas on June 23 included solo pieces by fortepianist David Breitman (the 3-voice Ricercar from J.S. Bach’s *Musical Offering*) and violinist Marilyn McDonald (two Ayres by Nicola Matteis).

Gambist Catharina Meints was featured in Marin Marais’s *Sujet avec 13 couplets*, with backup provided by gambist Mary Anne Ballard, theorboist Lucas Harris, and harpsichordist Mark Edwards.

Selections from Turlough Carolan’s *The Hibernian Muse* provided a delightful Celtic *entremet* served up by flutist Michael Lynn, violinists Julie Andrijeski and Cynthia Roberts, and guitarist Lucas Harris.

Telemann was represented by his sixth Paris Quartet, performed by flutist Christopher Krueger, violinist Cynthia Roberts, gambists Kenneth Slowik and Catharina Meints, and harpsichordist Mitzi Meyerson. Then violinist Jane Starkman, oboist Mark Schachman, gambist Kenneth Slowik and harpsichordist Mark Edward’s took a side trip to England for Handel’s g-minor Trio Sonata.

The long but thoroughly enjoyable evening ended with François Couperin's *Les Nations, Troisième Order: L'Impériale*. The ensemble of nine players — McDonald, Andrijeski, Meints, Krueger, Lynn, Schachman, and Harris, joined by bassoonist Andrew Schwarz and harpsichordist Lisa Goode Crawford — alternated between strings and winds, then joined in a colorful mixes of colors and rich tuttis in a Sonade and nine dance movements. These folks really know how to bring Baroque music to life.



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