

## SIXTY SECONDS WITH “SOUNDBOARD”



In December 2004, Darryl Martin commenced his appointment as Curator of Music Museums and Lecturer in Music at the University of Edinburgh. For many years Darryl has been involved with early instruments - making instruments, carrying out research and also through acting as a restorer and conservator. “Soundboard” invited him to talk about his interests and his work at the Raymond Russell and John Donaldson Museums of Instruments.

*How did you first become interested in harpsichords?*

Perhaps it began because I was a bad classical guitarist who thought he should try and play a different instrument. I wanted to play the lute, and the only way I could afford one when I was at school was to buy a kit and make it myself. Noticing the price of harpsichords probably helped a bit, and then when I first went to University they had an original harpsichord - a 1760 Kirkman single manual.

*And they let you poke around in it...?*

No, not really. Although I did look at it without touching it, when I got the chance. I would spend time in the library reading all the standard textbooks - Hubbard and Russell for example, and looking at the pictures, many of which featured instruments displayed in St Cecilia's Hall!



*A triple-fretted clavichord in its standard form with a walnut case and a pine lid, made by Darryl Martin.*

Later I got the chance to work with the harpsichord maker Robert Deegan, when he came to repair a damaged harpsichord of his which had been dropped by a freight company. Following that episode, the Professor suggested I might have found my true talent...

*How did you end up in Edinburgh?*

I used to visit the Russell Collection regularly from Lancaster, and one day Grant O'Brien asked if I would be interested in doing drawings of a couple of instruments he was restoring. I said “yes”, and then things went from there - drawing for his Ruckers book and helping with the restoration. Then John Barnes very kindly invited me to work with him. Soon after, I started my involvement at the Reid Concert Hall by making drawings of a number of instruments there - I think I've completed about ten now.

*Are the instruments that you make usually based on those which are in Edinburgh?*

They often are. I've only ever really wanted to make instruments as a form of research, which means acquiring a sound knowledge of the originals. And, of course, Edinburgh has such good examples of many types. I have concentrated, almost exclusively, on clavichords and early English instruments, so instruments in Edinburgh have figured high - the anonymous triple-fretted clavichord is regularly reproduced, plus the Hubert and the two early English virginals. In

addition, I've also worked with others on copies of other Russell Collection instruments - the Taskin, the Goermans-Taskin, the Hass clavichord, the 1638 Ruckers, as well as the Gregori, Dulcken and Keene and Brackley from the Barnes Collection.

*Do you have a favourite instrument in the Collection?*

I don't know that I have any real personal favourite, although I'm obviously more familiar with some instruments than others. Generally I prefer smaller instruments, so I tend to be attracted to the clavichords and virginals.

*The first instrument you made was a lute. Do you still make them?*

Well, time is obviously much more limited now that I'm working at the University, so making instruments is taking a back seat. I have always been buying wood, intending to make non-keyboard instruments, but I have always had keyboard commissions to complete. I don't know about lutes, but it would be nice to make some baroque or nineteenth-century guitars - again it will be done from a research point-of-view. I have some articles I would like to write on them, so the chance may come.

*You mentioned the drawings of the guitars. With your research on keyboards as well, you seem to have wide-ranging interests.*

Yes, I enjoy that very much. I've always found it interesting and fruitful to have various projects on the go at the same time. It partly originated from having big breaks between being able to examine instruments when I was doing my English virginal research for what would eventually become my PhD. So I started doing other research projects in order to have something else to keep me occupied. Some of the projects such as the English virginals and the Talbot Manuscript (a late-seventeenth century

English manuscript about musical instruments, which I'm transcribing and editing) have been very long-term ventures, so it is nice to do smaller things which can be slotted in.



*The fretted clavichord in the Raymond Russell Collection by Christian Gottlob Hubert, Ansbach, 1784, was used as the model for this instrument which was made in Darryl Martin's workshop.*

*Do you play as well as research and build?*

No, not in any real sense. I can demonstrate the keyboards if I need to, and obviously I played the guitar and lute (as well as the viol) when I was an undergraduate, but I haven't really kept it up at all. These days I only tend to play the mandolin, and it is really only for my own enjoyment, or perhaps the occasional old-time session.

*Now that you're working at the Collections, what are your main priorities?*

The immediate thing is re-housing the plucked instruments from the John Donaldson Collection at St Cecilia's Hall, into showcases which will go around part of the Laigh Room. It is wonderful for me to have a project like this to work on. The big things will be designing the case layout and the display mounts, and then working on the text. I think it will be a great addition to the instruments that are already at St Cecilia's, and that there will be new audiences for both of the displays.