

# ARNOLD DOLMETSCH'S CLAVICHORD-MAKING IN THE YEARS BEFORE 1914

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## Introduction

In 1894, Arnold Dolmetsch made four clavichords at his home in London: as far as I can establish, these were the first clavichords made anywhere in the world since 1858.<sup>1</sup> For the next seventeen years, Dolmetsch was the only professional clavichord maker,<sup>2</sup> and it is therefore to him that we owe the revival of the art of making (as opposed to playing) our instrument. In the years before the First World War, he produced over fifty clavichords in London, Boston and Paris: this article takes the form of a check-list of these instruments, recording their whereabouts and giving brief details of their construction and history where known.

The broad outline of Dolmetsch's clavichord work has been described by Derek Adlam and John Barnes in a previous volume of these Proceedings,<sup>3</sup> by Howard Schott in an article in *Early Music*,<sup>4</sup> and by Dr Carl Dolmetsch in a charming memoir.<sup>5</sup> The first six clavichords have been comprehensively described and documented by Jenny Nex and Lance Whitehead,<sup>6</sup> and Richard Troeger has given an account of the thirty-four clavichords produced in the

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<sup>1</sup> The conversion of an 'old square piano' into a clavichord by Mr G. J. Chatterton in 1879 is reported in: A. J. Hipkins, *A Description of the History of the Pianoforte and of the Older Stringed Keyboard Instruments* (London and New York: Novello, Ewer & Co, 1896), p. 64; however, I hardly think this counts as clavichord making in the full sense. A Portuguese instrument made in 1858 seems to be the very last instrument in the continuous historical tradition of clavichord making; see: Martin Pühringer, "'Jaras me hizo 1858' — das jüngste aller Clavichorde?", *Fundament aller Clavirten Instrumenten — Das Clavichord*, proceedings of the symposium held at Herne in 2001 (Munich and Salzburg: Musikverlag Katzbichler, 2003), pp. 155–165.

<sup>2</sup> In 1911 Otto Marx made a copy of the 1543 Dominicus Pisarenensis instrument: this marks the beginning of the revival of clavichord-making in Germany. See: Lothar Bemann, 'The Decline and Revival of the Clavichord', *De Clavicordio VI*, proceedings of the International Clavichord Symposium held at Magnano, Italy in 2003 (Musica Antica a Magnano, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Derek Adlam, 'Arts & Crafts and the Clavichord' in *De Clavicordio II*, proceedings of the 1995 Magnano Symposium (Musica Antica a Magnano, 1996), pp. 208–11; John Barnes, 'The Parallel between the Harpsichord and Clavichord Revivals in the Twentieth Century' in the same volume, pp. 234–7.

<sup>4</sup> Howard Schott, 'The Clavichord Revival 1800–1960', *Early Music*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 598–9.

<sup>5</sup> Carl Dolmetsch, '*Plus fait douceur que violence: Arnold Dolmetsch and the Clavichord*', *The Consort*, vol. 52, No. 2, (Autumn 1996); originally delivered as a talk at a meeting of the British Clavichord Society in 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Jenny Nex and Lance Whitehead, 'The six early clavichords of Arnold Dolmetsch: their construction and inspiration' in: *Galpin Society Journal LIII*, April 2000, pp. 274–300.

workshops of Chickering and Son, Boston.<sup>7</sup> As far as practical, I have tried to avoid duplicating the information in these articles; rather more detail is therefore given on the instruments which have not so far been the subject of published studies.

On the whole, certain lapses apart,<sup>8</sup> the standard of workmanship in these clavichords is high, and they are remarkably successful as musical instruments. Considering that during the same period Dolmetsch was busy organizing and performing in countless concerts and theatrical events, the rate of instrument production — including in addition to clavichords several harpsichords, fortepianos and ottavini as well as lutes and viols — is impressive. Both the quantity and the quality of this work must owe much to Dolmetsch's workshop assistants, yet very little is known about them, particularly during the London years before his departure to the U.S.A. I am pleased to be able to record the names of two of them in what follows.

Dolmetsch occupied a succession of workshops, especially in London before his departure for America, and I have tried to establish the place in which each instrument was made.

As will be seen, certain mysteries remain: some instruments are glimpsed only fleetingly in the historical record, and their fate is at present unknown.<sup>9</sup>

### 1894: Dulwich. Nos. 1–4

Dolmetsch's first four clavichords were made in 1894, in the workshop on the first floor of 'Dowland', 172 Rosendale Road, West Dulwich (a suburb to the south of central London). Their model was an unfretted five-octave clavichord by Johann Adolf Hass: according to Nex and Whitehead,<sup>10</sup> probably the instrument dated 1763 which was sold at Sotheby's, London, on 12 December 1985 (lot 110). This was restored at Dowland by Dolmetsch and W. Nearn in the winter of 1894–5.<sup>11</sup> **William Benjamin Nearn was Dolmetsch's first workshop assistant:** he is recorded in the catalogue of the Fifth Arts and Crafts Exhibition as working with Dolmetsch on his first harpsichord, exhibited in 1896,<sup>12</sup> **and his signature appears on the underside of the soundboard in several of the clavichords made before 1900.**<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Richard Troeger, 'The Dolmetsch/Chickering Clavichords and their Model', *De Clavicordio II* (1996), pp. 213–24.

<sup>8</sup> Such as the circular-saw marks visible inside the lid of No. 2.

<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Judith Wardman for extensive documentary research on this project, and to Richard Troeger who generously shared with me his information on the Dolmetsch/Chickering clavichords and resolved many doubtful points. I should also like to acknowledge with gratitude the help I received from a number of informants, among them Lothar Bemmann, Roger Blackburn, Jeanne Dolmetsch, Maureen Giddings, Claire Hammett, Miles Hellon, **Douglas Hollick**, Tonino Howard, Laurence Libin, Lynne Mirrey, Christopher Nobbs, Karin Richter, **Alain Roudier**, **Bradley Strauchen-Scherer**, Kemer Thomson, Peter Thresh, **Mimi Waitzman** and Pat Webb. For facts relating to the life of Arnold Dolmetsch I have made use of Margaret Campbell's invaluable biography *Dolmetsch: the man and his work* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975) and Mabel Dolmetsch's *Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1957, reprinted by Ampersand Press in association with the Dolmetsch Foundation, 1990). Other biographical information is taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the various volumes of *Who was Who?*

<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.* (see note 6 above), p. 292; there is a picture of this clavichord on p. 293.

<sup>11</sup> The soundboard is inscribed 'Restored by Arnold Dolmetsch 1895' in handwriting which imitates that of the original maker, Johann Adolf Hass; however, the underside of the soundboard bears the following inscription: 'Restored at "Dowland" West Dulwich | November 1894. by Arnold Dolmetsch and W. Nearn'. The names are written one above the other and joined with brackets. (Miles Hellon, personal communication, with photo.)

<sup>12</sup> The Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, *Catalogue of the Fifth Exhibition, The New Gallery, 121 Regent Street, 1896* (London: Chiswick Press). Item 178 is listed as follows: 'HARPSICHORD. Designed and constructed by ARNOLD DOLMETSCH assisted by W. NEARN. Decoration invented and painted by HELEN COOMBE. Exhibited by ARNOLD DOLMETSCH'. This harpsichord is now in the Horniman Museum collection, London, No. M72-1983.

<sup>13</sup> **For more on W. Nearn, see my article 'Arnold Dolmetsch's First Workshop Assistant', *Dolmetsch Foundation Bulletin*, new series No. 38 (autumn 2020), pp. 1–4; this is available on-line at [www.peter-bavington.co.uk/ADs-assistant.html](http://www.peter-bavington.co.uk/ADs-assistant.html) (accessed May 2022).**

Like their model, these clavichords have a compass of five octaves  $F_1$ – $f^3$  with octave strings from  $F_1$  to  $c$ . Dolmetsch wrote about them in 1929:

In 1894 I began making clavichords, copies of a fine large instrument in my possession. The first went to Mr Fuller Maitland; Sir George Grove secured the second for the Royal College of Music; Herbert Horne decorated the third with inscriptions and paintings; it is now in a museum in Italy. The fourth is in my possession.<sup>14</sup>

This group of clavichords is mentioned in Mabel Dolmetsch's *Personal Recollections*, p. 11, and in the articles by John Barnes and Derek Adlam in a previous volume of these Proceedings.<sup>15</sup> They are described in detail (along with Nos. 5 and 6) by Nex and Whitehead.<sup>16</sup> Other references to the individual clavichords are shown below.

#### No. 1. 1894

*Compass:*  $F_1$ – $f^3$  with octave strings

*Present location:* Oxford University, Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, No. 969

*Description:* See: Nex and Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 297

*History:* Commissioned by John Fuller-Maitland;<sup>17</sup> sold after his death at Sotheby's, London, 28 May 1937, to 'Hanny' or 'Henning'; bought by the artists McKnight Kauffer and Marion Dorn; bequeathed to E. C. Gregory; bequeathed to his godson Dr George Gordon of Brasenose College, Oxford; given by him to the collection.<sup>18</sup>

*References:* Margaret Campbell, *Dolmetsch: the man and his work* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p. 68 and note 6, p. 76; Jeremy Montagu, *The Bate Collection, Demi-Catalogue No. 1: Keyboard Instruments* (Oxford, The Bate Collection, 1993), p. 6.

*Remarks:* The case is severely distorted and the instrument is not in playing condition. The names of Dolmetsch and W. Nearn are recorded on the underside of the soundboard.

#### No. 2. 1894

*Compass:*  $F_1$ – $f^3$  with octave strings

*Present location:* Royal College of Music, London, No. RCM 211

*Description:* See: Nex and Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 298

*History:* Purchased in 1894 by George Grove for the Royal College of Music, where it remains.

*References:* Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, pp. 26, 82–3, 124–5; Elizabeth Wells (ed.), *Royal College of Music Museum of Instruments, Catalogue Part II: Keyboard Instruments* (London: Royal College of Music, 2000), pp. 72–3.

*Remarks:* The instrument is in playing condition and is used occasionally.

#### No. 3. 1894

*Compass:*  $F_1$ – $f^3$  with octave strings

*Present location:* Museo degli Strumenti Musicali, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, No. 580

*Description:* See: Nex and Whitehead, *op. cit.*, pp. 298–9

*History:* Bought by Herbert Horne, who decorated it. It is not known for certain what happened to it after Horne's death (in Italy) in 1916; in 1929 Dolmetsch said 'it is now in a museum in Italy'<sup>19</sup> but gave no details. Gregory Crowell suggests (see *References* below) that it may have been the instrument on which Ralph Kirkpatrick gave a recital in June 1933 at the 'luxurious villa' of Olga Loeser in Florence. Some time between 1958 and 1962 it was purchased from an antique dealer by Natale Gallini, whose collection of instruments was transferred to the museum in 1962.

*References:* Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 82; Andrea Gatti (ed.), *Museo degli Strumenti Musicali* (Milan: Electa, 1998), pp. 371–2; Renato Meucci, 'D'Annunzio e la musica antica: parte II: Arnold Dolmetsch', *Hortus Musicus*, No. 7, July–September 2001 (includes illustration); Gregory Crowell, 'Victor Hammer and the Revival of the Nineteenth-Century Clavichord' in *De Clavicordio X* (Magnano, 2012), pp. 56–7.

*Remarks:* The instrument is on display in the museum; as far as is known, it is not playable at present.

<sup>14</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments*, brochure issued by Arnold Dolmetsch Ltd, Haslemere, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *op. cit.* (see note 3).

<sup>16</sup> *op. cit.* (see note 6).

<sup>17</sup> John Alexander Fuller-Maitland (1856–1936), music critic and musicologist.

<sup>18</sup> Information from the unpublished catalogue of the Bate Collection clavichords, made available to me by the acting curator, Andy Lamb, September 2007.

<sup>19</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments* (see note 14), p. 3.

**No. 4. 1894**

*Compass:* F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup> with octave strings

*Present location:* Horniman Museum and Gardens, London, No. 2015.152.

*History:* According to Arnold Dolmetsch himself,<sup>20</sup> this clavichord remained in his possession, and he still had it in 1929. In April 2000 Nex and Whitehead reported: ‘Despite considerable investigation, it has not been possible to locate No. 4’.<sup>21</sup> However, after the first publication of this paper, it came to light in private ownership in Great Britain, when the owner offered it to the Horniman Museum. The offer was accepted, and the clavichord is now in the museum’s reserve collection.

*Remarks:* The instrument has been modified in various ways: in particular, a substantial over-rail has been added. W. Nearn’s name, along with Dolmetsch’s, appears on the underside of the soundboard.

**1895–7: London. Nos. 5–7**

Dolmetsch moved from Dulwich to 6 Keppel Street, Bloomsbury (Central London) in summer 1895. There was a workshop on the ground floor at Keppel Street, but it seems that Dolmetsch also rented a second workshop nearby at 6 Queen Square (later to become the home of the Art Workers’ Guild);<sup>22</sup> clavichords 5–7 may have been made there. Nos. 5 and 6 are based, like Nos. 1–4, on the Hass model, and have the same compass F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup> with octave strings F<sub>1</sub>–c.

**No. 5. 1895**

*Compass:* F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup> with octave strings

*Present location:* Colin Tilney, Canada

*Description:* See: Nex and Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 299

*Reference:* Paul Simmonds and Koen Vermeij, ‘An Interview with Derek Adlam’, *Clavichord International*, Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1997, p. 34; Paul Simmonds, ‘An Interview with Colin Tilney’, *Clavichord International*, Vol. 6, No. 1, May 2002, pp. 3, 5; Derek Adlam, ‘The Art and Craft of Clavichord Making—A Quiet Revolution’, *Clavichord International*, Vol. 9, No. 1, May 2005, pp. 27, 28 (n. 3).

*Remarks:* This instrument is in regular use by the owner. It can be heard on the following recordings:

1. C. P. E. Bach, Six Clavichord Sonatas ‘for connoisseurs and amateurs’ (Book 1), Colin Tilney, Doremi DDR-71146 (the CD notes have a photograph of the instrument).
2. J. S. Bach, ‘French Suites’ etc., *Music & Arts Programs of America*, MACD-1268.

**No. 6. 1896–7**

*Compass:* F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup> with octave strings

*Present location:* Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, No. 4323

*Description:* See: Nex and Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 299

*History:* According to Charles Napier’s *Brief Guide* (see *References* below), the instrument ‘has been owned by the University of Edinburgh since about 1900’: its previous history is unknown. It is one of two possible candidates for being the clavichord made by Dolmetsch for Frank Harris: see No. 7 below.

*References:* Sidney Newman and Peter Williams, *The Russell Collection and Other Early Keyboard Instruments in St Cecilia’s Hall, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh University Press, 1968), pp. 50, 51; John Barnes, ‘Work done on Clavichord No. 6 by Arnold Dolmetsch 1896/7’, Communication No. 961, *FoMRHI Quarterly* No. 58 (The Fellowship of Makers and Researchers of Historical Instruments), January 1990 (this report is available on the internet at <http://www.peter-bavington.co.uk/dolmetschbarnes.pdf>, accessed June 2022); Charles Napier, *A Brief Guide to the Russell Collection of Harpsichords and Clavichords* (Edinburgh: The Friends of St Cecilia’s Hall, first published 1981, revised 1986 and again in 1994), p. 17; Grant O’Brien, *Data Sheet: Unfretted clavichord, Arnold Dolmetsch 1896* (Edinburgh: The Friends of St Cecilia’s Hall, 1996).

*Remarks:* The soundboard bears the date 1896, but the nameboard lettering gives the date as 1897 (M·DCCC·XC·VII). This may be the ‘new clavichord of remarkably fine tone’ referred to in a report in *The Times*, 8 February 1897<sup>23</sup>; if so, the remark can be amply confirmed by those who have had the pleasure of

<sup>20</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments*, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>22</sup> See: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, pp. 87–8 (with quotation from an article by John Runciman in the *Saturday Review*, 11 May 1895) and note 12, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 111.

hearing and playing it recently. It was restored in 1989 by John Barnes, can be played (on appointment) by visitors to the collection, and is used from time to time in recitals.

### No. 7. 1897(?)

*Remarks:* The present whereabouts of clavichord No. 7 are unknown, and we do not know anything about its design. It is likely, however, that it was the clavichord that Dolmetsch made for Frank Harris,<sup>24</sup> and which Harris gave to John F. Runciman.<sup>25</sup>

In a letter from Keppel Street dated 17 February 1897 Dolmetsch wrote to Herbert Horne:

I have just had a cheque from Harris for £25 on account! I understand he does not care to spend much on the decorations, so I am doing it plain; he can do what he likes with it afterwards.<sup>26</sup>

Further details of this transaction are contained in an exchange of letters between William Rothenstein and Dolmetsch, long after the event, in October 1930.<sup>27</sup> Rothenstein writes:

My dear Dolmetsch — in some reminiscences I am writing, I mention a visit Horne, Frank Harris and I paid you, when Harris wanted to buy the clavichord (was it a clavichord?) painted by Helen Coombe. Am I right in thinking that F. H. ordered another similar instrument for himself? that the price was then only £20? and that when the lovely thing was done, Harris rather wanted, at first, to get out of his bargain? ...

Dolmetsch wrote in reply:

Concerning the Harris Clavichord, your story is not quite correct. I never made a clavichord for £20. This one was a specially fine one and the price was, I think, £70. Harris had known me through the piano I made for Cecil Rhodes.

One evening, Runciman brought him to me; they were both rather drunk. H. got very enthusiastic about the clavichord, and he gave me an order for one. But when it was finished, he had lost interest in it. After some trouble, however, Runciman got him to pay.

He gave the clavichord to Runciman who was very pleased to have it ...

J. F. Runciman died in 1916: presumably the clavichord was part of his estate. Attempts to trace it thereafter have not so far met with success.

### 1897: London. Nos. 8–10

This is a group of three small clavichords to a new design, polygonal in shape, with separate outer cases and with the compass C–f<sup>3</sup>. Writing in 1929, Dolmetsch refers to them thus:

Amongst the instruments I made at this period were some small clavichords of original and graceful proportions. One of these was bought by Mr A. H. Fox-Strangways. Burne Jones was tempted to decorate another for his daughter, Mrs Margaret Mackail. A third was charmingly decorated by Helen Fry and given as a wedding present to Mrs Robert Trevelyan.<sup>28</sup>

These were probably the first clavichords to be made in the new workshop at 7 Bayley Street, where Dolmetsch and his other helpers were joined for the first time by Mabel Johnstone (later to become Dolmetsch's third wife) in the summer of 1897.<sup>29</sup> She writes:

<sup>24</sup> 1856–1931; described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* as 'journalist and rogue'.

<sup>25</sup> John Finlay Runciman (1866–1916), from 1894 the influential music critic of the *Saturday Review*, of which Frank Harris was editor and proprietor.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted by: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 112.

<sup>27</sup> See: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, pp. 241–2.

<sup>28</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments* (see note 14), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> The Dolmetsches had to leave 6 Keppel Street because the site was acquired for a planned extension of the British Museum. In the event, this plan was never fully completed: building work was halted by the outbreak of war in 1914 and never resumed. Eventually the land was acquired by London University; Keppel Street was truncated, and the University's Senate House was built on what had been the western section, leading into Russell Square. The only building in what now remains of the street is the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (see J. Mordaunt Crook, *The British Museum: a case-study in architectural politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 211–16). Dolmetsch

The first major undertaking after my installation [at 7 Bayley Street] was a batch of three clavichords in the Italian, pentagonal shape. The first of these little jewels [actually the third] was decorated by Burne Jones for his daughter and has ever since remained in the family.<sup>30</sup>

Other references are given below under the individual clavichords.

It is not known why Dolmetsch decided to make these small clavichords in polygonal shape. They do not seem to have been based on any particular original Italian clavichord.<sup>31</sup> In 1897 Dolmetsch possessed an Italian virginal, and he may have been inspired by this and by the depiction of a clavichord '*Italienischer Mensur*' in Plate XV of Michael Praetorius's *Theatrum Instrumentorum*.<sup>32</sup> It is also possible that he was aware of the hexagonal Dominicus Pisaurensis clavichord of 1543, since he visited Florence in 1897 and might have seen the instrument in the Kraus collection there.<sup>33</sup> But none of these resembles the three Dolmetsch polygonal clavichords at all closely. They are, in fact, strikingly similar in outline to a surviving *German* clavichord, made in 1692 by Georg Haase,<sup>34</sup> and it is tempting to speculate that Dolmetsch copied the shape of this instrument; however, there is no evidence that he knew of it. He did not return to the polygonal design after these first three.

Another unusual and perhaps experimental feature of these three clavichords is the arrangement of the soundboard grain at an angle of about 60° to the axis of the instrument and roughly at right angles to the line of the main part of the bridge. This system is found on eighteenth-century Swedish clavichords: whether Dolmetsch had seen it on such instruments or devised it independently is unknown. Except for the interesting case of the Horniman Museum clavichord No. M74-1983,<sup>35</sup> he does not seem to have adopted it after 1897.

#### No. 8. 1897

Compass: C–f<sup>3</sup>

Present location: Private ownership, England

Description<sup>36</sup>: This is a hexagonal unfretted clavichord in a separate outer case, the latter being basically rectangular with one corner cut off obliquely. The sides of the inner instrument are made of a light-coloured wood which I cannot identify: the article in *The Studio* (see *References* below) calls it 'a species of foreign pine which, when cut and finished in the right way, has a golden-yellow surface with a good texture'. It is covered with a heavy golden varnish. There is a cap moulding round the top edges, the shape resembling only very broadly those found on historical Italian instruments. There is no tool-box; instead, there is a horizontal board at the left-hand end of the instrument, which is decorated with a female figure (clothed) on a gilded background.

The maker's name is inscribed on the soundboard near the front in sloping letters, thus:

*arnold·dolmetsch·me·fecit·londini·mdcccxcvii·n<sup>o</sup> viii:*

The decorator has signed on the left side of the bottom keylever, on a gilded background: '*Helen Fry pinxit 1899*'.

took a lease on the house at 7 Bayley Street, the ultimate landlord being the Duke of Bedford. The house remains, essentially unaltered: it is now in use as offices.

<sup>30</sup> Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, p. 20. These clavichords are actually hexagonal.

<sup>31</sup> Dolmetsch later acquired an unsigned eighteenth-century clavichord which has since been attributed to Bartolomeo Cristofori: see: Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840*, third edition, edited by Charles Mould (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 282, col. 2. The design of this instrument ([which is now in the Leipzig Musical Instrument Museum, No. 5433](#)) bears no relation to that of Nos. 8–10. See: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, pp. 195–6, concerning the acquisition of this instrument through the agency of Herbert Horne.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, 1615–1620. The second volume, *De Organographia*, was published in Wolfenbüttel in 1619, and the plates (*Theatrum Instrumentorum*) appeared the following year. A facsimile edited by William Gurlitt was published by Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1958.

<sup>33</sup> In 1908 it came into the possession of Wilhelm Heyer of Cologne, whose collection was transferred to the University of Leipzig in 1926. See: Hubert Henkel, *Clavichorde (Musikinstrumenten-museum der Karl-Marx-Universität, Leipzig, Katalog, Band 4)* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1981), pp. 21–2 (Inventory No. 1).

<sup>34</sup> In the Leipzig Musikinstrumentenmuseum, No. 9, see: Henkel, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–5 and Plates 10 and 11.

<sup>35</sup> See pp. 14–15 below.

<sup>36</sup> This description is based on my notes of an examination of the instrument on 5 December 2007; I am most grateful to the present owners for their help.

The keylevers are of lime, front-guided, piano-style; the naturals covered with box, with two scribed lines, the sharp blocks of 'skunktail' type, an ebony–box–ebony sandwich. The natural keyfronts have arcades of box, with a semicircular cut-out revealing the blackened end of the keylever, and a gilded dot in the middle of this blackened area. The keylevers are not carved, but the edges are slightly bevelled: the tops of the levers are decorated with stems of lavender, with the shorter stems on the accidental levers—a charming conceit, neatly executed. Varnish has been applied over the decoration. The tangents are of brass, with heads of cylindrical form tapering to a wedge shape, on a thinner cylindrical (possibly threaded?) shank. These tangents, which appear also on No. 10 and presumably on No. 9, are unlike those on any other clavichord that I have come across, old or new: I can only assume that they were manufactured specially to Dolmetsch's specification.

The soundboard is of spruce, with the grain at an angle of 60° to the case front. Its left edge is curved, providing extra space for the treble curve of the bridge; it is supported by a curved belly rail, and the keylevers next to it neatly follow this curve. There is a gilded moulding where the soundboard joins the case sides. The bridge is 'S' shaped and has an approximately triangular cross-section. The soundboard is painted with sprigs, all of one kind of flower (pansies, perhaps). The soundboard rose, cut from the wood of the soundboard, consists of three overlapping circles, stained and incised, with a background layer of pierced parchment or vellum. It is surrounded by a rosette of lavender stalks.

The tuning pins are of traditional type, with oblong heads, in four rows. The side-bearing of the strings is reversed for the lowest three notes in a manner reminiscent of the Hass design.

The outer case is painted a dark colour outside with white flower sprigs; inside it is lined with plain white leather, and leather-covered blocks have been fitted at the corners to protect the instrument. Two brass hooks of Kirkman type hold down the lid when it is closed. The stand, of vaguely medieval design, is painted to match the outer case.

*History:* According to Dolmetsch,<sup>37</sup> this clavichord was 'given as a wedding present to Mrs Robert Trevelyan': this is Elizabeth des Amorie van der Hoeven, who married Robert Trevelyan<sup>38</sup> in 1900. It is not certain who the donor was: most likely it was Trevelyan himself. Mrs Trevelyan was a violinist who performed in Dolmetsch concerts: Mabel Dolmetsch calls her 'a performer of singular grace and charm'.<sup>39</sup> The Trevelyans were also close friends and neighbours of Roger Fry and his wife (formerly Helen Coombe), who undertook the decoration of the instrument. The clavichord later came into the possession of Dr Chalmers Burns,<sup>40</sup> who bequeathed it to the present owner.

*References:* 'Studio-Talk (from our own correspondents)', *The Studio*, Vol. 19 (1900), pp. 187–94 (includes two pictures of this clavichord); R. D. C. Noble and Carl Dolmetsch, *Arnold Dolmetsch Exhibition 1965* (catalogue of an exhibition held at the Haslemere Educational Museum, 19–23 July 1965, to mark the 25th anniversary of Dolmetsch's death; Haslemere: The Dolmetsch Foundation, 1965), item No. 2; Kenneth Mobbs, 'The BCS at Haslemere: the work of Arnold Dolmetsch', *British Clavichord Society Newsletter* No. 4, February 1996, p. 13;<sup>41</sup>

Anne Stutchbury, *Instruments of femininity: the Arnold Dolmetsch clavichords of 1897, Nos. 8 and 10, unpublished thesis, 2011*.<sup>42</sup>

*Remarks:* The decorative treatment of this clavichord by Helen Fry is a fine example of Arts & Crafts style, and is considerably more tasteful and elegant than that carried out by Burne-Jones on No. 10. The clavichord is in playing order, and it can be heard, played by Martin Souter, on a CD issued in connection with the 1996 William Morris exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London: *Music for William Morris*, Isis CD 020, tracks 9–11.

### No. 9. 1897(?)

*Present location:* Unknown

*History:* Bought from Dolmetsch by A. H. Fox Strangways<sup>43</sup>

*Remarks:* Attempts to trace this instrument have so far been unsuccessful.

<sup>37</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments* (see note 14), p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Calverley Trevelyan (1872–1951), poet and translator.

<sup>39</sup> Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup> Dr Chalmers Burns (1906–93), organist, lecturer in music at Glasgow University, subsequently Dean of Music at Kings College, Newcastle.

<sup>41</sup> This article is available on the internet at <http://www.clavichord.org.uk/dolmetschreport.pdf> (accessed 30 May 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Available at <https://www.academia.edu> (accessed 30 May 2021; subscription to Academia.edu may be required).

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Henry Fox Strangways (1859–1948) would have known Dolmetsch from 1884 to 1886 when they were both masters at Dulwich College (a boys' public school). He later became a music critic and author, and founder and first editor of the periodical *Music and Letters*.

**No. 10. 1897***Compass:* C–f<sup>3</sup>*Present location:* In private ownership. **On loan to the National Trust, and displayed at Standen House, East Grinstead, West Sussex, England***Description:*<sup>44</sup> The construction is essentially identical to that of No. 8, described above. Instead of being varnished, however, the outside, keywell, inner rim and mouldings of the inner instrument are all gilt, perhaps with shell-gold. The inscription on the soundboard, like that of No. 8, is near to the front edge and reads:

arnold·dolmetsch·me·fecit·londini·mdcccxcvii·n° io

In contrast to No. 8, these are upright letters, imitating the appearance of uncials. The instrument is also signed and dated on a paper label below the soundhole.

The keylevers are similar to No. 8, but undecorated. The keys present an appearance which is the exact reverse of No. 8: the naturals are covered with ebony, and the sharp blocks consist of a box–ebony–box sandwich. The arcades, it is true, are made of box, but the vertical faces are ebonized, so that the lighter boxwood shows only in the cut-out semicircle of the arcade.

The soundboard grain, like that of No. 8, is at an angle of about 60°, and the construction of the soundboard seems to be similar in all other respects. The painting by Burne-Jones<sup>45</sup> on the soundboard shows a girl in a loose, flowing white dress stooping to gather flowers, whose stems and blossoms twine to fill the remainder of the soundboard area; this figure is bisected by the bridge. Similar foliage is painted on the horizontal board at the left-hand end of the instrument. The rose is similar to that of No. 8 but lacks the surrounding rosette.The strings are of brass, the lowest four notes over-wound; scale of note c<sup>2</sup> = 250 mm.The outer case exterior is painted red, the interior green; it bears a Latin inscription by Margaret Mackail's husband, J. W. Mackail, and a punning motto ('*clavis cordium*') by Mrs Mackail herself in a foliate roundel. The lid exterior also has Burne-Jones's depiction of St Margaret with her dragon. According to Christopher Nobbs, the stand is almost certainly not original: slender legs, rails and a stretcher support a rectangular tray with moulded edges, the whole ebonized.*References:* Aymer Vallance, 'The Decorative Art of Sir Edward Burne-Jones', *The Easter Art Annual*, 1900, p. 26, colour illustration opposite p. 24; Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, p. 20; Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 122, illustration facing p. 49; **Anne Stutchbury, *Instruments of femininity* (see entry for No. 8 and note 42 above).***History:* Made for Margaret Mackail; it has remained in the family. **Since 2013 it has been on loan to the National Trust and on display at Standen.***Remarks:* Dolmetsch was not happy with the decoration. In a letter to Herbert Horne dated 8 December 1897, he wrote:[Burne-Jones] has made an awful hash of the clavichord. I would not have it for nothing! It made me quite sick to see it on Monday, and I cannot give vent to my feelings!<sup>46</sup>

Aymer Vallance, writing in 1900, was more tactful:

Beautiful as this work is in many ways, it may yet fairly be objected that the ornament is so disposed that the bridge of the instrument breaks right through the female form; and also that the lid ... is painted without regard to the fact that when folded, it mutilates the figures, and when opened, makes them stand on their heads. It is just in such instances as these that Burne-Jones occasionally betrayed the picture-painter's impatience of the limitations imposed by material and purpose, exigencies which no decorator can safely afford to treat with indifference.

**1898–1905: London and Windsor**This was a busy time for Dolmetsch. He was twice divorced and re-married, and three times moved house and workshop. In 1901 he was made bankrupt, as a result of which he and his family became homeless, and were forced for a time to leave London and take refuge in rural isolation at Boveney, near Windsor.<sup>47</sup> All the time Dolmetsch was arranging and<sup>44</sup> I am grateful to Christopher Nobbs for supplying details of the construction and decoration of this instrument.<sup>45</sup> Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833–98), pre-Raphaelite painter.<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 122.<sup>47</sup> The family and workshop remained at 7 Bayley Street until January 1901, when they moved to 85 Charlotte Street nearby, which had a large studio more suitable for concerts as well as a workshop. Dolmetsch took a lease on 85 Charlotte Street,



performing in countless concerts and other musical performances, including two tours of the U.S.A., two visits to Italy, and a spell in Paris working with the dancer Isadora Duncan. Despite all this, work on making and repairing musical instruments continued.

Evidence of clavichord making in this period comes from Mabel Dolmetsch, who writes, of the months leading up to the birth of her first child (Cécile) in 1904:

As the time for the great event drew near ... I withdrew for a while to the delightful neighbourhood of Dorking [in Surrey, about 22 miles south of London]. Arnold, meanwhile, spent the heart of the week in London, making clavichords for musical epicures, and came down for the week-ends.<sup>48</sup>

Later, in the spring of 1905, following a second, extended tour in the U.S.A., Arnold and Mabel decided to settle permanently in that country. Leaving Mabel and his daughter in Chicago, Arnold returned alone to London:

Arnold found his six weeks' stay [in May and June 1905] closely packed with the finishing off of the clavichord destined for Neville Lytton,<sup>49</sup> and the general winding up of his affairs.<sup>50</sup>

The whereabouts of this clavichord, and any others made during this period, are not known.

### 1906–1910: Boston

In the winter of 1905, Dolmetsch signed a contract with the piano manufacturers Chickering and Sons,<sup>51</sup> under which a department, supervised by him, was created within the Chickering factory at 791 Tremont Street, Boston<sup>52</sup> to produce 'early' instruments, including viols, lutes; and psalteries as well as stringed keyboard instruments. Dolmetsch and his family moved to Boston early in 1906, and during the following five years a total of ninety-three instruments were made: these included seventy-five keyboard instruments, among which were thirty-four clavichords.

Dolmetsch later wrote that he had

... a good salary, a choice corner in [the Chickering] factory, the pick of their eighteen hundred workmen, every facility and freedom to carry out my ideas.<sup>53</sup>

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and the Bayley Street house was sub-let. This turned out to be a disastrous decision: the tenant opened a brothel in the premises, which was closed down later in 1901 by the police. In the subsequent court case Dolmetsch was unable to convince the magistrate of his innocence in the transaction. He was heavily fined, and the lease on 7 Bayley Street was forfeited. The result was bankruptcy: he could no longer afford to stay at Charlotte Street, and his possessions, including tools and instruments, were seized by bailiffs. A benefactor identified by Mabel Dolmetsch (*Recollections*, p. 34) only as 'a wealthy pupil of [Dolmetsch's then wife] Élodie' offered the family the use of six cottages in Boveney, near Windsor, at a nominal rent: one of the cottages was used as a workshop. The Dolmetsches did not, however, remain there long: in late 1901 or early 1902 they moved to rented rooms at 2 Seymour Place, Marylebone. Dolmetsch retained the tenancy here until his final departure to the U.S.A. in 1905.

<sup>48</sup> *Recollections*, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> Neville Stephen Bulwer-Lytton (1879–1951), soldier, painter, journalist, author, and skilled amateur flute player; in 1947 became third Earl of Lytton on the death of his brother Victor.

<sup>50</sup> Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, pp. 57–8.

<sup>51</sup> See Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, pp. 64–5.

<sup>52</sup> This factory was built in 1853–4, replacing an earlier one which had been destroyed by fire in 1852. In the booklet *The Jonas Chickering Centennial Celebration* (Boston: Chickering & Sons, 1924), the anonymous author claims of the Tremont Street factory that 'when finished, [it] was the largest building in the United States with the exception of the Capitol at Washington' (p. 11). The building still stands, adapted to modern uses (Richard Troeger, private communication).

<sup>53</sup> *Dolmetsch and his Instruments* (see note 14), p. 3.

Mabel Dolmetsch reports that he was able to assemble from the Chickering work-force ‘a choice band of excellent collaborators of various nationalities’.<sup>54</sup> Among them was a Swede, Nils J. Ericsson, who was particularly close to Dolmetsch and was later to accompany him to France (see p. 12 below).

As each instrument was made, an entry was made in a register or ‘log-book’, recording its individual number, description and price, the name and address of the first purchaser, and the date the instrument left the factory. A single series of numbers was used for the keyboard instruments, regardless of type. After the closure of Chickering & Sons in the 1980s, the firm’s records, including the early-instrument log-book, were deposited at the National Museum of American History (part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC), and photographic scans were made available later on the internet.<sup>55</sup>

The entries in the log-book are all handwritten, and sometimes quite hard to decipher. A transcription of the clavichord entries by Gregory Crowell was published in 2012;<sup>56</sup> I have now produced an updated and annotated transcription, including all the keyboard and non-keyboard instruments, and this is available online.<sup>57</sup> A separate online document contains details of the individual people, including purchasers and others, whose names appear in the log-book.<sup>58</sup>

The clavichords produced at Chickering & Sons were all five-octave unfretted instruments with the compass  $F_1$ – $f^3$  but without octave strings. Their design is based on a 1784 clavichord by Christian Gottlieb Hoffmann, which Dolmetsch had brought with him to the U.S.A. on his second visit,<sup>59</sup> and which he sold to Belle Skinner in 1908 (it is now in the Yale University collection). Dolmetsch did not, however, copy the Hoffmann precisely. The most significant change that he made was to use an ‘S’-shaped bridge, essentially adopted from his previous Hass model, instead of Hoffmann’s ‘walking-stick’: this enabled him to dispense with the grooves in the top of the bridge which are a feature of the Hoffmann design.

There are references to these clavichords in Chapter XIV of Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, and on pp. 64–7 of Mabel Dolmetsch’s *Recollections*. They are discussed in articles by John Barnes<sup>60</sup> and Gregory Crowell<sup>61</sup> but the most complete account of them to date is contained in Richard Troeger’s article.<sup>62</sup> To avoid, as far as practicable, merely duplicating the information in these sources, I give only the briefest of details in the following list; in a few cases, however, it includes additional information (mostly about ownership) that has since become available.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See: *Recollections*, pp. 65–6, which contain more about Dolmetsch’s Chickering assistants without, unfortunately, giving their names.

<sup>55</sup> The Chickering early-instrument records can be downloaded from [https://sova.si.edu/record/NMAH.AC.0264?s=0&n=10&t=P&q=%3A\\*#ref668](https://sova.si.edu/record/NMAH.AC.0264?s=0&n=10&t=P&q=%3A*#ref668) (accessed 19 May 2022).

<sup>56</sup> Gregory Crowell, ‘Clavichord Customers at Chickering & Sons, 1906–1914’, *Clavichord International*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (November 2012), pp. 42–5.

<sup>57</sup> See <http://www.peter-bavington.co.uk/chickering-transcription.pdf> (accessed June 2022).

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.peter-bavington.co.uk/chickering-personalities.pdf> (accessed June 2022).

<sup>59</sup> October 1904 to May 1905. For more information on Dolmetsch’s American tours, see Larry Palmer, *Harpichord in America, A Twentieth-Century Revival* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 18–20.

<sup>60</sup> See note 3.

<sup>61</sup> See note 56.

<sup>62</sup> See note 7.

<sup>63</sup> For details of the original owners, see the online transcription of the Chickering early-instrument log-book, available at <http://www.peter-bavington.co.uk/chickering-transcription.pdf> (accessed 12 June 2022).

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- No. 1. 1906.** Yale University, **Morris Steinert Collection of Musical Instruments**, No. 4954.1989. See: <https://music.yale.edu/collection> (accessed 10 March 2022)
- No. 2. 1906.** Private ownership
- No. 3. 1906.** Private ownership
- No. 4. 1906.** **Horniman Museum, London, No. 2013.352.** Previously in the collection of Peter Sykes, Cambridge, MA. The date 1910 appears on the frontboard, recording an overhaul by Chickering's at that time.<sup>64</sup>
- No. 5. 1906.** Present whereabouts not known
- No. 6. 1906.** Private ownership
- No. 7. 1906.** Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, No. 1981.753<sup>65</sup>
- No. 8. 1906.** Private ownership
- No. 9. 1906.** Private ownership (Larry Palmer, Texas)<sup>66</sup>
- No. 10. 1996.** In the Lotta van Buren collection, Brigham Young University, Provo UT, No. 947050000
- No. 11. 1906.** Present whereabouts not known
- No. 12. 1906.** **Oberlin OH, Oberlin College and Conservatory**<sup>67</sup>
- No. 19. 1907.** Private ownership. Said to be the favourite of Dolmetsch himself<sup>68</sup>
- No. 20. 1907.** San Francisco Conservatory of Music, CA
- No. 21. 1907.** Private ownership
- No. 22. 1907.** Present whereabouts not known
- No. 23. 1907.** Private ownership
- No. 24. 1907.** Present whereabouts not known
- No. 25. 1907.** Dumbarton Oaks, Washington DC
- No. 26. 1907.** Was exhibited at the Boston Early Music Festival in 2007 and offered for sale through the Harpsichord Clearing House of Rehoboth, Massachusetts. Present whereabouts not known
- No. 27. 1907–8.** Private ownership. The date is given as 1908 on the nameboard but as 1907 on the hitch-pin rail<sup>69</sup>
- No. 28. 1907.** Wellesley College MA
- No. 29. 1907.** Yale University, **Morris Steinert Collection of Musical Instruments**, No. 4952.1984
- No. 30. 1908.** Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, No. 1983.0157.01
- No. 31. 1907–8.** Private ownership. The date is given as 1908 on the nameboard but as 1907 on the hitch-pin rail<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Troeger, private communication. See also <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/2013.352/> (accessed 12 May 2021).

<sup>65</sup> See: John Koster, *Keyboard Musical Instruments in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1994), p. 330. See also <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/51044> (accessed 5 March 2022).

<sup>66</sup> Larry Palmer, 'Autobiography of a clavichord', *The Diapason*, December 2015, pp. 12–13. I thank Richard Troeger for drawing my attention to this source.

<sup>67</sup> Gregory Crowell, 'An Interview with Christa Rakich', *Clavichord International*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (May 2019), p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Richard Troeger, private communication.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Irvin and Richard Troeger, 'Thoughts on Clavichord Listing Cloth', *Clavichord International*, Vol. 5, No. 1, May 2001, p. 15 c. 1: this is also the source for the date of No. 31.

<sup>70</sup> This instrument can be heard on some tracks of the CD 'J. S. Bach: The Art of Fugue', Hungaroton HCD 32784–85 (performer Bálint Karosi). Thanks to Lothar Bemann for this information.

- No. 32. 1908.** Yale University, **Morris Steinert Collection of Musical Instruments**, No. 4943.1957
- No. 33. 1908.** Present whereabouts not known
- No. 34. 1908.** **Berkeley CA, University of California, Berkeley (formerly Harvard University)**<sup>71</sup>
- No. 35. 1908.** Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, No. 1992.386.2.<sup>72</sup> The date is given as 1908 (MCMVIII) on the nameboard, but as 1907 (MCMVII) on the hitch-pin rail
- No. 36. 1908 or 1909.** **Indiana University, Jacobs Music School. The date is given as 1909 on the nameboard but as 1907 on the hitch-pin rail.**<sup>73</sup> Formerly belonged to Dorothy Swainson<sup>74</sup>
- No. 37. 1908 or 1909.** Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut
- No. 38. 1909.** Vassar College, Poughkeepsie NY<sup>75</sup>
- No. 51. 1909.** **Previously in the collection of the late Christopher Hogwood, who bought it from William Dowd. Now Douglas Hollick, Grantham, Lincolnshire, England**<sup>76</sup>
- No. 74. 1910.** Private ownership. Illustrated in Mabel Dolmetsch's *Recollections*, opposite p. 64

### 1911–1914: Fontenay sous Bois, France

Dolmetsch's productive period in Boston was brought to an end by an economic recession in the autumn of 1910 which seriously affected the Chickering firm. He looked for opportunities in Europe, and eventually signed a three-year contract with the French piano manufacturer Étienne Gaveau, under which an early-instrument-making department was set up at the Gaveau factory at 76–78 rue Marcel et Jacques Gaucher, Fontenay sous Bois, some six miles from the centre of Paris. As at Chickering's, Dolmetsch was able to select his team from the existing staff. Continuity was ensured by the fact that Nils Ericsson followed the Dolmetsches to France and was engaged as foreman. There is a picture of Dolmetsch and seven assistants at the Gaveau factory, standing behind a half-completed clavichord, in Mabel Dolmetsch's *Recollections*:<sup>77</sup> Ericsson is, I think, the tall figure on the left of the photo.<sup>78</sup>

Work at Fontenay began in 1911, and the first instruments were unveiled in the autumn of that year. It seems very likely that a single number sequence covered all kinds of keyboard instrument, as at Chickering's. It must have seemed to Dolmetsch very much as if he was picking up where he left off; and indeed, the first few Gaveau clavichords closely resemble

<sup>71</sup> Richard Troeger, private communication.

<sup>72</sup> I thank Laurence Libin for information about this instrument.

<sup>73</sup> Joan Benson, *Clavichord for Beginners*, Indiana University Press, 2014; especially the DVD issued with this book.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Troeger, private communication. Dorothy Swainson (1882–1959) was a pupil of Dolmetsch. Originally a pianist, she became a celebrated and influential harpsichordist and clavichordist: for another Dolmetsch clavichord owned by her, see the entry headed 'Number unknown, 1913' in the Fontenay sous Bois section (p. 16 below).

<sup>75</sup> The story in Mabel Dolmetsch's *Recollections* (pp. 74 and 95–6) that the students clubbed together to buy the instrument after hearing Arnold Dolmetsch play it cannot be correct: the clavichord was sold to Vassar five weeks before Dolmetsch's recital (private communication, Laurence Libin).

<sup>76</sup> This clavichord can be heard, played by the present owner, on the CD 'Light and Shade' (Riverrun Records RVR CD 122).

<sup>77</sup> Facing p. 129; this picture appeared earlier in *The Consort*, No. 14 (July 1957), opposite p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> When Dolmetsch's Gaveau operation came to an end in 1914, Nils Ericsson returned to Boston and re-joined the Chickering firm. In 1924 he was among a group of employees honoured for long service, and he appears in a group photograph on p. 23 of the booklet *The Jonas Chickering Centennial Celebration* (see note 52). Later, he became the curator of the Belle Skinner Collection of Old Musical Instruments at Holyoke, Massachusetts. In this capacity, in 1929 he invited Dolmetsch to contribute an introduction to the planned catalogue of the collection. For the reasons why Dolmetsch's introduction did not appear in the catalogue when it was eventually published in 1933, see: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, pp. 236–9.

those made in Boston. There are indications, however, that he was unhappy with the way things worked out at Gaveau,<sup>79</sup> and when his contract came to an end in 1914 it was not renewed. Dolmetsch and his family returned to England, establishing themselves first at 4 Tanza Road, Hampstead, London, and then from 1918 at Haslemere in Surrey.

It is remarkable that several clavichords exist which were begun at Gaveau's and completed, or perhaps modified, later in England. Whether these were unsold stock which Dolmetsch carried away with him on leaving Fontenay is not clear. According to Howard Schott, Gaveau continued to make clavichords according to Dolmetsch's design after his departure, well into the 1930s.<sup>80</sup>

Any attempt to catalogue the Gaveau clavichords is hampered by the lack of any of the firm's archive records from this period: according to Campbell,<sup>81</sup> they were destroyed by fire in the war of 1914–18. In consequence, the list below is certainly incomplete, and some enigmas remain.

## No. 2. 1911

*Compass:* F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup>, without octave strings

*Present location:* Private ownership, England<sup>82</sup>

*Description:* The design is essentially similar to that of the Chickering clavichords, ultimately derived from Hoffmann: in a departure from the Chickering design, however, there is an over-rail above the after-lengths of the strings. The case is painted dark green outside and red inside. The soundboard has two gilded roses in the same positions as in the Chickering clavichords but of a different design with a central letter G. The natural keys are black, with gilded arcades on the fronts; the accidental keys are covered with ivory slips. There are the following inscriptions:

on the nameboard: FAIT · PAR · GAVEAU · A · PARIS · MDCCCXI [‘No. 2’ in oblong frame]

on the hitch-pin rail: Fait par Gaveau à Paris | sous la direction de Arnold | Dolmetsch. 1911 N<sup>o</sup> 2

on the fall-board: VIOLET · GORDON · WOODHOUSE

on lid inside, in gold letters within a double border: PLVS · FAIT · DOVCEVR | QVE · VIOLENCE

The lid is in one piece, surrounded on the ends and front by a moulding which overlaps on the inside. It is supported when open by the music desk, which is attached to the nameboard.

*History:* This was probably the first clavichord made at Gaveau's (No. 1 was a spinet). It was commissioned by Violet Gordon Woodhouse,<sup>83</sup> an old friend and pupil from Dolmetsch's London period.

*References:* Jessica Douglas-Home, *Violet* (see note 83), illustration between pp. 214 and 215; a letter from Dolmetsch to Violet referring to this clavichord is quoted on p. 316.

*Remarks:* This instrument is in good playing condition.

## Number unknown, perhaps No. 3. 1911

*Compass:* F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup>, without octave strings

*Present location:* Unknown

*Description*<sup>84</sup>: The design is closely similar to that of Gaveau No. 2, including the addition of an over-rail. In this instrument, however, the case is of plain oak. No dovetails are visible at the case corners. Inscriptions are as follows:

<sup>79</sup> See: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 182; also p. 194, where there is a quotation from a letter dated 14 March 1914 from Dolmetsch to Dorothy Swainson: ‘I have left Gaveau whom I *don't* regret; I have also left Paris, with a different feeling’.

<sup>80</sup> *op. cit.* (see note 4), p. 599.

<sup>81</sup> *Dolmetsch*, p. 198, note 5.

<sup>82</sup> I thank Claire Hammett for bringing this instrument to my attention, and the present owner for allowing me to examine it on 25 January 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1870–1948), pioneer harpsichordist and clavichordist. See the excellent and highly readable biography by Jessica Douglas-Home, *Violet: the Life and Loves of Violet Gordon Woodhouse* (London: Harvill Press, 1996).

<sup>84</sup> This description is based on a photograph published on the internet by the auctioneers (see *History*).

on the nameboard in gold letters: FAIT · PAR · GAVEAU · A · PARIS · MDCCCCXI [here follows the number of the instrument in a scroll or frame, but this cannot be read with certainty from the photo]

on the lid inside, in large gold letters within a double border: PLUS : FAIT : DOVCEVR | QVE : VIOLENCE

The lid is of oak, in one piece, similar in construction to that of Gaveau No. 2, and supported in the same way by the music desk. There is a trestle stand with slender turned legs, similar to that in the photo of Dolmetsch with his staff in Mabel Dolmetsch's *Recollections*.<sup>85</sup>

*History*: This clavichord was sold by the firm of Dreweatt Neate at the Tunbridge Wells auction rooms on 9 July 2004 (lot 439). I have not been able to trace its previous or subsequent history.

### Number and date unknown: possibly 1912

*Compass*:  $F_1$ – $f^3$ , without octave strings

*Present location*: Horniman Museum, London, No. M74-1983

*Description*<sup>86</sup>: The case is rectangular and is made of a brown-coloured oak. A thin veneer of the same oak has been applied to the outside surfaces of the case walls, probably to conceal the end-grain of through-dovetail joints at the corners (*cf.* the 1911 instrument above). The spine is noticeably thicker than the other sides. A thick over-rail of triangular form is fixed over the after-lengths and most of the hitch-pin rail by means of screws. However, this is a later modification, and there are traces of an earlier, lighter over-rail, like that on the two 1911 Gaveau clavichords, attached in a more traditional fashion: these are two holes on the inside of the left-hand case end wall, to receive pins projecting from the earlier over-rail, and a brass socket just beyond the right-hand end of the hitch-pin rail, which would have held the right-hand end of the earlier over-rail but now has no purpose.

The bottom is made of three equal layers of coniferous wood, glued together plywood-fashion, with the grain of the top and bottom boards running parallel to the spine and the middle board at right angles. There is a diagonal stiffening brace within the soundbox but no brace in the keywell. An opening has been cut in the bottom below the soundboard, behind the diagonal brace, making it possible to see the triple-layer construction of the bottom board: this has been carefully done, with the edges of the opening neatly rounded both above and below.

The soundboard is of coniferous wood, probably European spruce, with the grain arranged at an angle of  $64.5^\circ$  to the front, in a way very like that of clavichords Nos. 8–10 made in London, described above. There are three bridges of beech, the bass bridge carrying the strings for notes  $F_1$ – $E$ , the middle bridge notes  $F$ – $b$  and the treble bridge notes  $c^1$ – $f^3$ . All three bridges are of approximately equal height and width and are remarkably small in cross-section. The treble and bass bridges are curved, the middle one approximately straight: it seems that the treble bridge has been bent to its curve, perhaps with steam. The middle and bass bridges are double-pinned. Presumably the treble bridge is intended for iron strings, the middle one for brass, and the bass one for covered strings: the existing strings do not in fact conform precisely to this pattern, but they may not be original.

The natural keys are plated with ebony; the sharp blocks are made of a black wood capped with ivory. The fronts of the naturals bear gilded arcades. The present key-guidance system is by means of bushed slots at the back end of the keylevers which engage with pins fixed vertically into the fall-back rail: however, this is not the original system. There have been three key-guidance systems in all. The first system was certainly the traditional one, consisting of guide slips in the ends of the levers working in a slotted rack. The rack is still in place behind the keylevers, now serving no purpose, and on examining the ends of the levers the mortices which formerly held the guide slips can very clearly be seen. We can be sure this was the first of the three systems because it would be quite impractical to fit the rack as a modification to an existing instrument.

It seems that at some stage the rack system was abandoned in favour of a front-guidance system, with bushed slots under the fronts of the keys engaging with vertical guide pins fixed into a rail, as on the modern piano. All the keys have been prepared with bushed slots underneath and near to the front: this is an obvious modification, since in some cases the keys had been previously carved away below to achieve the correct balance, and wood has had to be added in order to create the bushed slot. There are traces of damage to the cheeks at either side below the level of the keys, which could be signs of the front rail first fixed, and then later removed when front-guiding was abandoned in favour of the present system.

The clavichord rests on a trestle stand with four turned legs of oak.

The nameboard bears the signature + ARNOLD + DOLMETSCH + in dark letters between two starburst motifs. On the base board under the keys, there is a symbol in pencil which might be a monogram 'ad' or alternatively the number '3'. There are no other inscriptions.

<sup>85</sup> Opposite p. 129.

<sup>86</sup> This description is based on my unpublished notes of an examination of the instrument on 19 November 2007. I am grateful for the assistance of Dr Bradley Strauchen-Scherer and Judith Wardman on that occasion.

*History:* This instrument was owned by the Dolmetsch family after Arnold's death in 1940, and for many years was used in clavichord performances at the Haslemere Festival. In 1983 it was sold to the Horniman Museum, but remained on loan to the Festival. John Barnes (see *References* below) gives 1912 as the date it was made, but I could not find this recorded anywhere on the instrument when I examined it in 2007.

Dr Frances Palmer has suggested (see *References* below) that it was made in London in 1910 during the brief period between Dolmetsch's appointments in America and France. I do not think this is possible, since Dolmetsch spent only three weeks in London at this time, staying at a hotel, and was busy giving concerts.<sup>87</sup>

When this clavichord was played by Ruth Dyson at an event organized by the British Clavichord Society at the Haslemere Educational Museum on 2 September 1995, the audience was told, probably by Dr Carl Dolmetsch, that it had been made in the Gaveau workshops.<sup>88</sup> The case and stand are indeed very similar to those of Gaveau clavichords Nos. 2 and 3, each of which also has a light over-rail presumably similar to the original one on this clavichord. Moreover, the original key-guidance system by means of a rack also suggests Gaveau, since as far as I know Dolmetsch did not use it after 1914. However, the usual nameboard inscription, 'FAIT PAR GAVEAU A PARIS' plus the date, is missing, and the soundboard with its three bridges is quite unlike those on the Gaveau clavichords. The nameboard lettering resembles that on instruments made in the Haslemere workshops after 1915; moreover, the opening in the bottom boards, and the very small bridge cross-sections, if not the actual arrangement of the bridges, are all reminiscent of later Haslemere work.

I think the most likely explanation is that the case and stand were indeed made in Fontenay, but that the instrument was not completed there and was brought back to England by Dolmetsch in 1914. Subsequently it remained in his possession and was completed in the workshops at Haslemere some time after 1915, where it was perhaps the subject of a series of experiments.

*References:* John Barnes, 'The Parallel between the Harpsichord and Clavichord Revivals' (see note 3), p. 234; Kenneth Mobbs, 'The BCS at Haslemere: the work of Arnold Dolmetsch', *British Clavichord Society Newsletter* No. 4, February 1996, p. 13 (also available on the internet, see note 88); Frances Palmer, *The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments* (catalogue to a special exhibition at the Horniman Museum in 1981), p. 14.

*Remarks:* This clavichord was played regularly during the Haslemere festivals until 2001, when it was transferred to the museum's study collection. John Challis may have known it during his time at the Haslemere workshops,<sup>89</sup> and it may have influenced his later work, since some of the clavichords he later made in the U.S.A. have two bridges on the soundboard. It can be heard on the following recording, where it is played by Joseph Saxby: *Apollo's Feast: The Dolmetsch Collection, Instruments from the 15th to 19th centuries*, LP, Abbey PHB 731 (1973)

## No. 19. 1912

*Compass:* C–d<sup>3</sup>

*Present location:* Private ownership, U.S.A.

*Description:* This is the first of the small four-octaves-and-two-notes clavichords, specially designed by Dolmetsch at the request of Violet Gordon Woodhouse. The case exterior is painted black, with mouldings picked out in gold; the inside is red. The naturals are plated with ebony, the fronts have gilded arcades; the sharps are covered with ivory slips. Traces of an earlier over-rail, now missing, can be seen inside the left-hand end wall and the spine.

There are the following inscriptions, all in gold:

on the nameboard: FAIT·PAR·GAVEAU·A·PARIS·MDCCCCXII ['N° 19' in scroll]

on the fall-board: VIOLET · GORDON · WOODHOUSE

inside the lid within a wide gold border: PLVS : FAIT : DOVCEVR | QVE : VIOLENCE

According to Sotheby's catalogue (see *References* below) the words *Arnold Dolmetsch Paris 1912* are 'incised into the wrestplank', but this is not visible in the photographs I have seen. Inside the toolbox is a

<sup>87</sup> See: Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 179. It is remarkable that one of these performances, at Clifford's Inn, involved a clavichord; presumably a borrowed one, since the Hoffmann had been left behind in America and it seems unlikely that Dolmetsch had kept a stock of instruments in London (he had vacated the premises in Seymour Place in 1905).

<sup>88</sup> See the report of this event by Kenneth Mobbs in: *British Clavichord Society Newsletter* No. 4 (February 1996), pp. 11–13. This report is available on the internet at: <http://www.clavichord.org.uk/dolmetschreport.pdf> (accessed 30 May 2022).

<sup>89</sup> Challis worked with Dolmetsch at Haslemere 1926–30; see: Edward L. Kottick, *A History of the Harpsichord* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 429.

message from Bill Barrington to Violet, evidently written on his final home leave before departing with his regiment for war service in the Middle East<sup>90</sup>:

Bill's | blessing | to his own | little | Heart | Dec 8 | 1915

This instrument differs in certain respects from the C–d<sup>3</sup> clavichords later made at Haslemere: the bottom underneath the soundboard is closed; the treble wrestpins are here arranged in groups of six along the right-hand end wall rather than in groups of four arranged obliquely; and the keys are guided by means of a rack.

*History*: This clavichord was made for Violet Gordon Woodhouse: according to Mabel Dolmetsch (see *References* below),

Violet's desire for a smaller instrument arose from a wish to be able to transport her clavichord to the houses of her friends, tucked away safely on a shelf, specially constructed in the front of her carriage.

New information about the provenance of this clavichord has become available as a result of Katharine Hawnt's research into the life of Raymond Russell (see *References* below). Russell bought the instrument at Sotheby's after Violet Gordon Woodhouse's death: the sale was on 20 July 1951 (lot 105) and the price paid was £70. According to Sotheby's 1995 catalogue (see below) it was sold again at auction in 1966, possibly by Russell himself; it was then inherited by someone who sold it through Sotheby's on 8 November 1995 (lot 79). It then passed through one other owner before being sold to the present owner.<sup>91</sup>

*References*: Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, p. 104; John Barnes, 'The Parallel between the Harpsichord and Clavichord Revivals' (see note 3), p. 235; Sotheby's catalogues, 20 July 1951 (lot 105) and 8 November 1995, p. 25 (lot 79); Jessica Douglas-Home, *Violet* (see note 83), illustrated between pp. 214 and 215; Katharine Mary Hawnt, 'Strange Luggage': *Raymond Russell, the Harpsichord and Early Music Culture in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton, School of Humanities, Department of Music, October 2021, p. 110, note 185 (accessed at <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk>, 9 May 2022).

*Remarks*: The lid is badly split, but the clavichord is in playing order.

### Number unknown. 1913

*Compass*: F<sub>1</sub>–f<sup>3</sup>

*Present location*: Not known

*History*: Dorothy Swainson bought this instrument after meeting Arnold Dolmetsch for the first time in Fontenay; she had sought his advice on the interpretation of early French music, and was inspired by hearing him play a clavichord to get one herself. The price was £60. She took the instrument to Russia in 1914, where she gave performances on it at the Moscow Conservatoire and elsewhere. The statement in earlier versions of this paper that the instrument had to be abandoned owing to the outbreak of war in 1914 now seems to be incorrect: according to Swainson's unpublished memoir (not previously available to me), she owned the instrument in 1923 and played it at 'William Bartlett's lovely house in the Rue du Cherche Midi'. The lady of the house was so taken with the clavichord that 'she persuaded me to sell it to her'. At the time Dorothy Swainson had a smaller clavichord which she thought 'just as good', and she was glad of the money.<sup>92</sup> The same clavichord was much later discovered in a Paris shop by Raymond Russell; he offered to sell it to Swainson, but she realized that considerable work would be needed to quieten the action and bring it back to playing condition, and thought the price (£175) too high.<sup>93</sup> Raymond Russell retained the instrument for some time and played it on several occasions, but 'it later drifted back to the Dolmetsch workshops'.<sup>94</sup>

This account raises many questions, as yet unresolved. Was the instrument recovered after having been abandoned, or did Swainson have it with her throughout her adventures (including internment) in the early years of the First World War? What was the small 'just as good' clavichord that replaced it? Did Russell sell it back to the Dolmetsch workshops or merely commission a repair? And, above all, where is it now?

It is quite possible that this instrument is in fact the one now in the Horniman Museum, described above.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> This message was evidently not meant to be seen until later. For the circumstances surrounding its writing, see: Jessica Douglas-Home, *Violet* (see note 78), particularly Chapter IX, pp. 126–48.

<sup>91</sup> I am grateful to Kemer Thomson for providing information about the recent history of this instrument.

<sup>92</sup> Dorothy Swainson, unpublished memoir, private collection, Kent, UK; quoted in Hawnt, 'Strange Luggage' (see *References*).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 97.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>95</sup> See pp. 14–15 above.



Dorothy Swainson later owned Chickering clavichord No. 36. She wrote in 1954 ‘I have now secured a 5 octave Chickering made c. 1904 [sic] which has wiped out any lingering regrets about the Gaveau. Yet sold “Chick” in 1956.’<sup>96</sup>

*References:* Campbell, *Dolmetsch*, p. 184; Mabel Dolmetsch, tribute to Dorothy Swainson in *The Consort*, No. 16, July 1959, p. 32; Lynne Mirrey, ‘Pioneers of the English Clavichord Revival, 1: Dorothy Swainson’, *British Clavichord Society Newsletter* No. 36, October 2006, p. 3; Katharine Hawnt, ‘*Strange Luggage*’: *Raymond Russell, the Harpsichord and Early Music Culture in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton, School of Humanities, Department of Music, October 2021, Appendix F (accessed at <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk>, 9 May 2022).

### No. 23. 1913

*Compass:* C–d<sup>3</sup>

*Present location:* Private ownership, Italy<sup>97</sup>

*History:* This instrument must have accompanied the Dolmetsch family in their move from Fontenay to Hampstead in 1914. It was sold to Ezra Pound<sup>98</sup> in 1914 or 1915: in a letter to James Joyce dated September 1915, Pound writes ‘So here I am with a clavichord—beside me, which I can’t afford and can’t reasonably play on’. It seems that Pound heard Dolmetsch play the instrument and asked him to make a duplicate of it, but Dolmetsch sold him the original. Pound retained ownership of the instrument until his death in 1972; it was inherited by Pound’s daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz, the present owner.

*References:* Forrest Read (ed.), *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce with Pound’s Essays on Joyce* (New York, New Directions, 1967, reprinted London, Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 46; Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, reprinted by Penguin Books, 1974), p. 194; R. Murray Schaffer (ed.), *Ezra Pound and Music: the Complete Criticism* (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 41, 489–90; Mabel Dolmetsch, *Recollections*, pp. 114, 128; Joan Benson, ‘Clavichord Perspectives from Goethe to Pound’, *De Clavicordio VI* (2004), pp. 146–7.

### Number unknown. 1913

*Compass:* C–d<sup>3</sup>

*Present location:* Unknown

*Description:* The case is black inside and out, with decorative details in gold leaf and mouldings picked out in gold. There is a substantial triangular over-rail of the later type, fixed with screws. It has black barley-sugar-twist legs. In every way it looks like a standard Haslemere four-octave-and-two-notes clavichord, and the nameboard states:

ARNOLD · DOLMETSCH · ANNO · M · CM · XXIV

However, the hitch-pin rail bears an inscription stating that it was made at the Gaveau factory in 1913. The motto on the inside of the lid, enclosed in a flowery gold border, is

PLUS : FAIT : DOVCEVR | QVE : VIOLENCE

The soundboard is decorated with flowers, and signed M.D. | 1924 [Mabel Dolmetsch]

*History:* This clavichord was evidently completed and/or modified at the Haslemere workshops, which were in operation from 1918. From 1990 to 1993 it was in the possession of Robert Morley & Co, Lewisham, London, who offered it for sale at a price of £4960. In due course it was sold to a private customer.<sup>99</sup>

### No. 34. 1914

*Compass:* C–d<sup>3</sup>

*Present location:* Domaine Royal de Randan, Auvergne, France. Part of the Fonds Érard-Gaveau-Pleyel, owned by the Axa insurance group

*Description:* Except for the inscriptions, this instrument closely resembles the third instrument from 1913 listed above. It has the same black case, with decorative details in gold leaf and mouldings picked out in gold, and the same black barley-sugar-twist legs; it does not, however, have the triangular over-rail. The nameboard inscription states:

FAIT·PAR·GAVEAU·A·PARIS·MDCCCXIV [‘N° 34’ in scroll]

<sup>96</sup> Hawnt, ‘*Strange Luggage*’, p. 48.

<sup>97</sup> Lothar Bemann, private communication.

<sup>98</sup> Ezra Weston Loomis Pound (1885–1972), American expatriate poet and, at this period, music critic of *The New Age*.

<sup>99</sup> I am grateful to Roger Blackburn for information about this instrument.

The motto on the inside of the lid, enclosed in a flowery gold border, is

PLUS : FAIT : DOVCEVR | QVE : VIOLENCE

There does not appear to be an inscription on the hitch-pin rail.

*History:* This clavichord may have been begun under Dolmetsch's supervision at Fontenay and completed after his departure. It was exhibited at the Palais Lascaris, Nice, 31 March–29 October 2012.<sup>100</sup>

### No. 36. 1914

*Compass:* C–d<sup>3</sup>

*Present location:* Private ownership, Sussex, England<sup>101</sup>

*Description:* The case is of plain walnut. The naturals are plated with ebony, with gilded arcades on the key-fronts; the sharps are covered with white slips, probably ivory. The original key-guidance system was by means of a rack; this has been altered so that the keys are now guided by vertical pins at the rear, engaging with a bushed slot in the ends of the keylevers.<sup>102</sup> This clavichord has the lighter type of over-rail, similar to that on the two 1911 Gaveau instruments: it is approximately 60 mm wide in the bass, where it is held by two pins fitting into holes in the left-hand case wall, and tapers towards the treble, where it is secured by a decorative screw into the spine. The wrestpins are arranged in groups of six in the treble from note f#<sup>1</sup> upwards, as on Gaveau No. 19. The bottom beneath the soundboard is open.

There are the following inscriptions:

on the nameboard: FAIT · PAR · GAVEAU · A · PARIS · MDCCCXIV [‘N° 36’ in scroll]

on the hitch-pin rail: *Fait sous ma direction | et fini par moi | Arnold Dolmetsch | 9 août 1919*

on the soundboard: GAVEAU · PARIS

inside the lid: PLVS FAIT DOVCEVR QVE VIOLENCE

*History:* This clavichord was bought by the previous owner from Michael Thomas at the Harpsichord Centre, London, in 1971. It was restored at the Dolmetsch workshops in Haslemere in 1972, and further work was done by Richard Clayson and Andrew Garrett in 1975. It was given to the present owner in 2001.

*Remarks:* This clavichord is in good playing order.

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<sup>100</sup> I am grateful to Alain Roudier for information about this instrument.

<sup>101</sup> I thank Karin Richter for supplying details of this instrument.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. the Gaveau instrument in the Horniman Museum, described above under the heading ‘Number and date unknown: possibly 1912’.