

THE HISTORY OF THE MEERBACH CLAVICHORD IN THE GEELVINCK MUSIC MUSEUM, ZUTPHEN

*This article, which appeared in *Clavichord International*, vol. 24 No. 2 (November 2020), is an edited and updated version of a talk delivered at the Geelvinck Music Museum, Zutphen, on 14 August 2018, as part of the 8th Geelvinck Fortepiano Festival. Sadly, the museum in Zutphen has since had to close, and the clavichord is in store with many other instruments. The Festival, however, continues at various venues around the Netherlands. The organisation's other venue, the Geelvinck Early Piano Museum in Amsterdam, is currently closed because of coronavirus precautions, but is expected to reopen in May 2021: see www.geelvinck.nl. Meanwhile, a 'virtual tour' of the former Zutphen museum is at <https://muziekmuseumzutphen.nl/virtual-museum-tour>.*



Fig. 1: From auction catalogue, Conway Hall, London, 6 April 2017:
'Lot 64: Clavichord, probably late 18th century.'

Photo by courtesy of Piano Auctions Ltd (www.pianoauctions.co.uk)

Four times a year an auction of second-hand pianos is held in London, where I live. The items on offer vary greatly in age and quality, from superb and highly valuable instruments to more humble uprights and baby grands. As each catalogue is published, I scan it for items of interest. Occasionally early keyboard instruments appear, and of course when they do my interest is aroused. So it was that on 6 April 2017 I found myself in the auction room with two friends. Before us was a large unfretted clavichord with a compass of five octaves and two notes,

FF-g³; the catalogue described it as ‘possibly German or Swedish, late eighteenth century’. The maker was unknown.

It seemed to be an example of what is rather loosely called the Saxon school. This refers to clavichords made in the second half of the eighteenth century in what are now the modern *Bundesländer* of Saxony and Thuringia, by such makers as Christian Gotthelf Hoffmann and the brothers Friederici and Horn. Saxon-school clavichords are generally rather sober in appearance when compared with those made in the Northern part of Germany, lacking such embellishments as painted cases and soundboards. But their most significant technical feature is the use of a ‘walking-stick’ or J-shaped bridge: in effect, a long, straight bridge arranged obliquely on the soundboard, with a short curved section at the treble end.



Fig. 2: Plan view (before restoration). Note ‘walking-stick’ bridge, becoming quite massive at bass end; octave strings in the bass with separate bridge; left-hand edge of soundboard extended over treble keylevers

As you can see from Figure 2, the clavichord under examination had just such a bridge, increasing in mass towards the bass end. Less typically Saxon, though, were the set of octave-pitch strings with their own soundboard bridge provided for the lowest seventeen notes, since octave stringing in the bass is a feature of the North-German style and is not normally found on Saxon-school clavichords. Another unusual feature was the way in which the left-hand edge of the soundboard had been extended over the treble keylevers, evidently to give a little more room around the treble curve of the bridge. The covering of red leather on the case, and the painting inside the lid, a land- and sea-scape in a dark, foreboding style, were both clearly non-original. But how did they come to be there?

At the auction the instrument was acquired by the Geelvinck Music Museum, and since then it has been possible to identify the maker and to find out a great deal more about its history. This has been achieved as a result of a joint effort by many colleagues, and I am grateful to all those who have contributed.¹ A special acknowledgment must be made of the contribution of

Lothar Bemann: without his invaluable database of surviving clavichords we almost certainly wouldn't have identified the maker, and without his extensive research into contemporary documents we should know very little about his life. It has all been a fascinating piece of detective work, but rather than explaining how each new item of information was discovered and new clues were followed up, for clarity I shall present what we now know about the clavichord in the form of a chronological survey (see also the Timeline in Table 4).

To begin, then, at the beginning: the clavichord was made, probably around 1800, by Johann Christian Meerbach in Gotha, in the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, now in the *Freistaat Thüringen*. How do we know this? By comparison with three surviving signed and dated instruments by Meerbach.



Fig. 3: Clavichord by J. C. Meerbach, Gotha, 1799
in Moravian College, Bethlehem PA
Photo: Alissa Duryee

The earliest of these (Fig. 3) is in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, owned by Moravian College, which was founded in 1742 by members of the Moravian Church as the Bethlehem Female Seminary, a boarding school for young women.² It bears Meerbach's signature on a paper label inside the toolbox, which today reads:

J. C. Meerbach
in Gotha
1759

However, the date has been altered. The true date of origin is recorded in a pencil inscription on the underside of the soundboard:

Mit Gott
1799
in Monath April
von
J. C Meerbach
in Gotha³

It is not known at present whether the clavichord was purchased new for the Seminary or, more probably, arrived in Bethlehem after 1799 as the property of an immigrant. Since Moravians had settled around Gotha, a personal connection with Meerbach is possible.⁴



Fig. 4: Clavichord by J. C. Meerbach, Gotha, 1802
City Museum, Zittau (Saxony), No. 2742/2600
Photo: Volker Heinrich

The second signed Meerbach clavichord is in the local museum at Zittau: it too bears a label inside the toolbox, with Meerbach's name and the date 1802. The instrument was in store at the time of my talk in Zutphen, but is now on show at the museum.⁵



Fig. 5: Clavichord by J. C. Meerbach, Gotha, 1820–21
Museum für Regionalgeschichte, Schloss Friedenstein,
Gotha (Thuringia), No. 3073
Photo: Wolfgang Wenke

The third signed clavichord is in Schloss Friedenstein Museum in Gotha itself: once again, it is signed on a paper label fixed inside the toolbox, which gives the date 1821. Intriguingly, there is another label hidden within the space under the soundboard, identical in every way except that it gives the date as 1820. Perhaps this indicates that construction was spread over two years: maybe we can excuse Meerbach for slowing down a bit, since by 1820 he would have been over 80 years old.

The similarities between the four instruments, the signed and dated clavichords in Pennsylvania, Zittau and Gotha and the unsigned one in the Geelvinck collection, are very striking. All four clavichords have the same compass of five octaves and two notes. All four have the characteristic Saxon walking-stick bridge: this is found on many clavichords, but the marked increase in mass towards the bass end seems to be a special feature of Meerbach's

style. All have octave strings for the bass notes; the only difference here is that in the Geelvinck and the two nineteenth-century clavichords these are provided for 17 notes whereas in the 1799 instrument only 15 notes have them. In all four clavichords the soundboard is extended over the treble keylevers, and all have a thin slip of hardwood in front of the keys, something commonly found on square pianos but unusual on clavichords.

The method of guiding the keys on the Geelvinck instrument is by means of metal pins between the levers at the far end. The same system is used on the 1802 and 1820–21 clavichords, but interestingly the 1799 instrument, which may be the earliest of the four, has the more traditional system of horn slips working in a rack.

Table 1: Keyfronts
The 1799 instrument in Bethlehem PA is similar.⁶


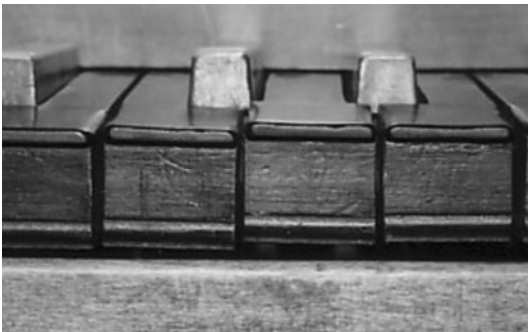

	<p>1802 (Zittau)</p>
	<p>1820–21 (Gotha)</p>
	<p>Geelvinck</p>

Table 1 shows the distinctive style of the keyfronts, with a plain surface enlivened at the bottom with a small ogee moulding. These are found on the Geelvinck clavichord and all of the three signed and dated instruments. You can also see in the photos the thin hardwood keyslip that conceals the gap between the keys and the front wall of the instrument.

Table 2: Hitch-pin rails
The 1799 clavichord in Bethlehem PA and
the 1802 instrument in Zittau are similar.

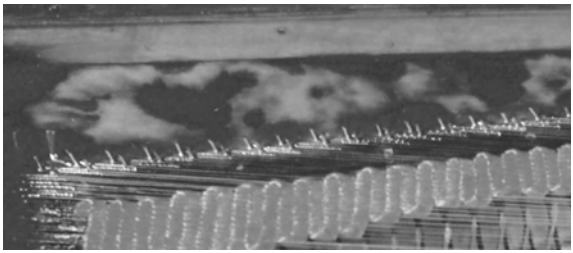
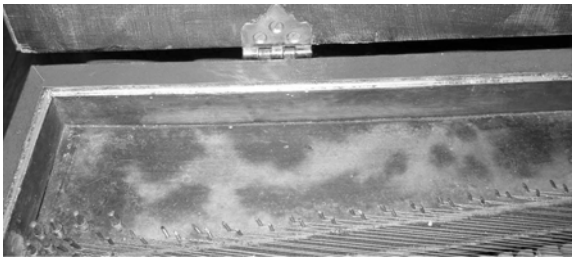
	1820–21
	Geelvinck

Table 2 shows the imitation tortoise-shell decoration on the hitch-pin rail, which is found on the Geelvinck clavichord and also on all of the other three. It was this which, when taken along with all the other similarities, finally convinced me that all four instruments *must* be by the same maker, since it is so distinctive and so unusual: I know of no other clavichords that have this kind of painted decoration in that particular position.

I am therefore confident that we can attribute the Geelvinck clavichord to J. C. Meerbach with a high degree of certainty. In 2018, when I gave the talk in Zutphen, we knew very little about his life; we now know a great deal more, thanks to Lothar Bemann’s extensive research into contemporary documents and archives (see Table 3).

Table 3: J. C. Meerbach, life events and documentary references

The information has been provided by Lothar Bemmman, derived from contemporary published documents and from the Gotha church archive.

The name is given in some documents as ‘Merbach’⁷

1738	Johann Christian Meerbach born in Gotha (baptised 4 September), the son of a court coachman ⁸
1769	First marriage (17 July), to Johanna Christiana Ritter. Meerbach is described in the marriage record as ‘Stucco artist’ (<i>kunsterfahrner Stuccatur-Arbeiter</i>) ⁹
1771	Daughter Charlotta Eleonora born (4 July). She died 26 April 1774. Meerbach’s profession is again given as <i>Stuccator</i> ¹⁰
1787	The philosopher Johann Georg Hamann of Königsberg acquired a clavichord made by Meerbach for his daughter Magdalena ¹¹
1794	Meerbach was among the subscribers to a book of folk tales; in the printed list he is described as <i>Stukator und Künstler</i> (‘stuccoist and craftsman’) ¹²
1795	He is included in a list of keyboard-instrument makers in Gotha in an article in a weekly paper ¹³
1796	Mentioned in a guide to Gotha and district as instrument maker ¹⁴
1798	Mentioned in a trade directory as <i>Hofstukatur, K[ünstler] in schönen Clavieren</i> (court stuccoist, maker of fine keyboard instruments) ¹⁵
1799	Made the clavichord now in Bethlehem PA
1802	Made the clavichord now in Zittau
1808	Second marriage, to Eleonore Dorothee Gläser (b. 1757), the daughter of the garrison church cantor. Meerbach’s profession is given as <i>musicalischer Instrumentenverfertiger</i> ¹⁶
1813	Merbach is listed as <i>Instrumentenmacher</i> among the subscribers to the publication of a poetical work ¹⁷
1820–21	Made the clavichord now in Gotha
1824	Died of old age (<i>an Alterschwäche</i>) on 28 October, aged 86. ¹⁸ Eleonore Dorothee lived until 1831

It seems that Meerbach, during his long life, worked in two different fields: building and music. The father of his first wife is described in the marriage record as ‘Ducal building supervisor and Court fresco artist’ (*Herzogsⁿ Sächßsⁿ Bau-Commissari[us] wie auch Hof-Alfresco Mahler*), and Johann Christian’s profession is given as ‘artistic worker in stucco’ (*kunsterfahrner Stuccatur-Arbeiter*). By 1786 at the latest he must have taken up the making of keyboard instruments as a parallel career, since in that year a clavichord made by him was despatched from Gotha to Königsberg, where it arrived in April the following year. However, he still described himself as *Stuccator* when subscribing for a book of folk tales in 1794. In 1798 a trade directory gives both occupations. Later documents, however, all describe him as ‘musical-instrument maker’ (*musicalischer Instrumentenmacher*).

Meerbach was remarkable for longevity: he married for a second time in his seventieth year, and he completed the latest known clavichord in his 80s. We are alert to the possibility that he might have had a son, also named Johann Christian, who took over the workshop on his father’s retirement, and who could be the maker of the later instruments. There is no evidence at all to support this. The records seem to show that our Meerbach had only one child, a daughter from his first marriage, who died in infancy.

We do not know when, or for whom, the Geelvinck clavichord was made, or what happened to it during the nineteenth century. It seems that at some stage it was probably acquired by the piano-making firm of Helmholz in Hanover, founded in 1851. Several piano manufacturers amassed collections of old keyboard instruments, whether out of antiquarian interest or as a result of accepting obsolete instruments in exchange for new pianos. In England, for example, the firm of Broadwood amassed such a collection.¹⁹

In April 1934, 53 instruments from the Helmholz collection, including five clavichords, were loaned to the Musicology Seminar at the University of Göttingen.²⁰ In the same year, the Helmholz firm seems to have ceased trading.²¹ It is not clear whether the loan was arranged because this was foreseen. The loan was to be for a period of ten years, with the possibility of renewing the arrangement thereafter; however, World War II evidently prevented this plan from being fully realised, and in 1942, 52 instruments from the Helmholz collection were added to the existing collection of J. C. Neupert GmbH in Bamberg, another keyboard instrument manufacturer, celebrated for being the first in Germany to revive the making of harpsichords and clavichords.²² The evidence that the Meerbach clavichord was included in this transfer is indirect. It was definitely included when, in 1968, all the Neupert instruments were transferred to the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, and since the clavichord was

not included in the pre-war written catalogue of the Neupert collection, it seems almost certain that it came to Neupert's from the Helmholtz collection.

When the clavichord was acquired by the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, it was catalogued and given the inventory number MINE71. The museum did not hold on to it very long, however, for in 1970, in a momentous decision, it was transferred to the Colt Collection in Bethersden, Kent, England, in exchange for a 1784 Broadwood square piano.²³

The Colt Clavier Collection,²⁴ consisting mainly of early pianos, was one of the largest privately owned collections of keyboard instruments in the world. The founder, Charles F. Colt (always known as Mick or Micky Colt), was the owner of a firm making timber-frame houses, and the collection was for many years kept in what were originally 'showroom' buildings at the firm's headquarters in a small wood on the outskirts of Bethersden.

Mr Colt's knowledge and expertise in the field of the early piano was unrivalled, and it is hardly possible to overstate the contribution he made to the fortepiano revival. Indeed, all of us that are interested in studying early keyboard instruments must acknowledge a great debt to the private collectors of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Almost all the great public museum collections owe their existence to their assiduous acquisitive activities. Without them, the instruments would simply have been discarded when they were seen as obsolete (as indeed many were), and we would not have available for study the corpus of surviving examples that we have today.

But of course, private owners are free from the constraints that may apply to public museums: they are at liberty to do what they want with their possessions. Mr Colt was certainly not willing to leave the clavichord as he received it. He entrusted the structural and musical restoration to Peter Guy, a skilled joiner employed by the company who normally worked on making staircases for the houses.



Fig. 6: 1972 restorer's signature inside the Geelvinck clavichord

Fortunately for later researchers, Mr Guy left his signature inside the clavichord, where it was discovered by Sander Ruys when he restored the instrument for the Geelvinck Museum. (Fig. 6). By a stroke of luck I was able to trace him. He retired from work many years ago, and cannot remember anything about the clavichord; however, he wrote to me with his recollections of life at the Colt Collection, from which I shall quote:

I went to work for ‘Micky’ Colt in 1967 as a joiner [...] it was also not long before I was asked to work on pianos, harpsichords, sofas, and – apparently – clavichords!

Mr Colt was always buying new ones [...] they usually came off the back of a lorry at the works as a wreck and a cardboard box of bits. One piano that arrived was very heavy, which was taking about eight of us to carry down the ramp, and Micky was tinkling the ivories to see if it would play as we struggled down the ramp.

I was always aware [that] my expertise was as a joiner and not as piano maker or restorer. When I raised my concerns, I was introduced to a lovely chap called Derek Adlam [...] and over time he guided me through [the] practices and techniques needed to replace nuts, wrestplanks, wrestpins and the repair of soundboards etc.²⁵



Fig. 7: Lid painting by Hector McDonnell

The leather covering of the case was applied at the instigation of Mr Colt, who also commissioned the lid painting (Fig. 7). In the Golden Jubilee catalogue of the collection, published in 1981, he explained:

One likes musical instruments to be visually pleasing, so the case has been covered in antique red leather and the underside of the lid painted [...] by Hector McDonnell.²⁶

This gives no clue as to the subject of the lid painting. One of my colleagues, examining it in the auction room, thought it might depict the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. However, the Irish artist Hector McDonnell (born 1947) is still living; he had forgotten the painting, but with some persistence Jurn Buisman, director of the Geelvinck Music Musea, was able to jog his memory, and received a letter from him explaining the origins and meaning of the picture. I shall quote part of it:

Mr Colt was restoring the clavichord you now have during the period when I was a regular visitor to his collection at Bethersden, and he commissioned me to think up and

paint some scenes of a faintly mythological nature for the lid. As archaeology had been my passion as a teenager, and I had worked on a dig on the island of Kythera on a Minoan site, I devised the idea of creating a great historical landscape that would hint at the myths that grew out of the real events which caused the devastation that overcame the Minoan civilisation circa 1600 BC. That, essentially, is the background of what you see on your clavichord lid. It shows all of Southern Greece seen from a great height, with the ship taking Theseus to Crete in the distance, and the island of Santorini [...] on the point of erupting – an event which caused a massive tsunami which destroyed all the major Minoan sites on the northern shores of Crete.²⁷

After Mr Colt died in 1985, the collection remained at Bethersden under the control of his widow, Mrs Lore Barbara Colt, and a board of trustees. It was still possible for those with a special interest to visit, but it seems that there were no funds available for restoration. Even maintenance, both of the instruments and the buildings that housed them, was minimal, especially after the building firm moved elsewhere in 2012. In that year an incident occurred which was reported by one of the witnesses (Claudio di Veroli) as follows:

[Among the] clavichords, I noticed an [...] unfretted one, with a [...] painted lid, perhaps a late re-decoration [...] we were in another room when suddenly we heard a great noise; we ran to it and were astonished to find that the roof had broken and water was coming [in] by the bucket, precisely inside the strange-looking clavichord! [...] we moved it to a safe place, put it vertical on the floor to help the water out from the instrument, and finally with some paper towels we removed as much water as possible from the soundboard. Hopefully it is something that can be restored.²⁸

It is likely that this incident was the cause of the damage which made the instrument unplayable until the recent restoration by Sander Ruys.

For tax reasons, the legal ownership of the clavichord and four other instruments had been vested in Mrs Colt, and when she died in August 2016 her heirs decided to send these instruments to the London auction where the clavichord was bought by the Geelvinck Music Museum. So that completes the story of the clavichord up to Sander Ruys's restoration and its inauguration by Peter Sykes at the 2018 Geelvinck Fortepiano Festival in Zutphen. What the future holds for it depends on whether a new home can be found to house the Geelvinck collection and make it once again available to the public.

Table 4: The Meerbach Clavichord in the Geelvinck Music Museum: Timeline

c. 1800	Made by Johann Christian Meerbach (1738–1824) in Gotha in the Ernestine Duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg (now in Thuringia, a <i>Bundesland</i> in the Federal Republic of Germany). The original owner is not known.
1851	Friedrich Helmholtz founded his piano-making workshop in Hanover. ²⁹ It is not known when the Helmholtz firm began to acquire a collection of old musical instruments. It seems very likely that at some stage they acquired the Meerbach clavichord.
1934	The Helmholtz collection, including five clavichords, was loaned to the University of Göttingen Musicology Seminar. The loan was intended to last 10 years with the possibility of renewal. However, it seems that in the same year (1934) the Helmholtz concern ceased trading.
1942	A total of 52 instruments from the Helmholtz collection, probably including the Meerbach clavichord, were acquired by J. C. Neupert GmbH in Bamberg.
1968	The Neupert collection, including the Meerbach clavichord, was acquired by the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg. The clavichord was given the number MINE71. By this time, if not before, the signature had been lost and the maker was unknown.
1970	The clavichord was transferred to the private collection of Charles F. Colt (1911–85) at Bethersden, Kent, U.K. in exchange for a 1784 Broadwood square piano (Nuremberg museum number MINE.504). The Colt Collection inventory number was M515C.
1972	The clavichord was restored by Peter C. Guy for C. F. Colt, with guidance from Derek Adlam. At or around this time the case was covered in red leather, and the inside of the lid was painted by Hector McDonnell (b. 1947). Legal ownership of the clavichord (and four other instruments) was transferred to Mr Colt's wife, Lore Barbara Colt.
1985	Death of Mr Colt. The instruments remained at Bethersden for many years but restoration and maintenance activity virtually ceased.
2012	The building concern (W. H. Colt, Son & Co. Ltd) transferred their operations to Woodchurch; the instrument collection remained at Bethersden. The clavichord was filled with water as a result of a roof leak; it was rescued by two visitors to the collection, Claudio di Veroli and Ibo Orgies, who happened to be on the spot, but some damage occurred.
2016	Death of Lore Barbara Colt.
2017	On 6 April the clavichord, along with four other instruments belonging to Mrs Colt, was sold at auction in London, and was acquired by the Geelvinck Music Museum.
2017–8	Restoration by Sander Ruys.

¹ Lothar Bemann first drew attention to possible similarities between the Colt Collection clavichord and the Meerbach instrument in Gotha; he then established that another Meerbach clavichord existed in Zittau. He went on to discover information about Meerbach in the Gotha church archive and other sources. Stewart Pollens kindly provided information about the Meerbach clavichord in Pennsylvania and a copy of his 1991 Restoration Report. Jurn Buisman, director of the Geelvinck Music Museum, discovered the origins and meaning of the painting inside the lid. Sander Ruys shared details of his 2017–8 restoration and the information hidden inside the instrument. Volker Heinrich visited Zittau and reported, with photos, on the clavichord in the museum store there. Others who have contributed include Derek Adlam, Veronika Biedermann, Hilde Binford, Neil Coleman, Alissa Duryee, Linda Escherich, Peter Guy, David Hackett, Laurence Libin, Hector McDonnell, Wolf Dieter Neupert, Christopher Nobbs, Ibo Ortgies, Ian Pleeth, William Spiers, Claudio di Veroli and Wolfgang Wenke.

² Moravian Missionaries had arrived in Pennsylvania in 1741 and established the settlement of Bethlehem on the east bank of the Monocacy Creek; the Central Moravian Church and the female Seminary were established in the following year. See <https://www.centralmoravianchurch.org/who-we-are/> (accessed June 2020).

³ I thank Stewart Pollens for providing a copy of his 1991 Restoration Report and photos of the pencil inscription under the soundboard. Photos of the soundboard before and after restoration appear in Stewart Pollens, *The Manual of Musical Instrument Conservation*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 294–5. I thank Alissa Duryee for providing photographs of the instrument and of the label in the toolbox. Her recording *An das Klavier*, made on this instrument, will be released this year; the contents include works by Buxtehude, Kuhnau, J. S. Bach, and Martinez alongside selections from notebooks held in the Moravian Archives.

⁴ *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (1876), Appendix, ‘Historical Sketch of the Moravian Seminary for Young Ladies ...’, contains a note on p. 30 which states: ‘Among the many relics of the olden time preserved in the “Archives” of the Seminary [...] there is the spinet or virginal [sic], on which lessons were given to the first pupil [Elizabeth Bedell (1775–1847), the first seminarian not of Moravian parentage] in February of 1785 [recte 1787]. It is one of T. C. [sic] Meerbach’s make, Gotha, 1769.’ This is clearly a reference to the clavichord, but if its date is really 1799, Elizabeth Bedell cannot, of course, have played it in the 1780s. I thank Laurence Libin for providing this source and for his comments on it.

⁵ I thank Volker Heinrich for providing information about this instrument, and photo.

⁶ I thank Hilde Binford of Moravian College for her assistance in establishing this.

⁷ The literary sources in Table 3 are included in Lothar Bemann’s invaluable *Clavichord Bibliography*, available at http://clavichord.info/clavkult_literatur.html (accessed June 2020). At the time of writing, most of them can also be found on Google Books (<https://books.google.com>). Other information is drawn from the Gotha church records: we are most grateful to the Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchengemeinde Gotha, and to Veronika Biedermann in particular, for providing access to these.

⁸ Baptismal register, Augustinerkirche, Gotha, p. 83, 4 Sept. 1738. The place of birth is not stated but it can be assumed that it was within the city of Gotha.

⁹ Weddings register, Margarethenkirche, Gotha, 1769, No. 8. The bride’s father was in the service of the ducal court as building inspector and *Alfresco Mahler* at Friedenstein castle, the seat of the ducal court. For unknown reasons, the wedding was solemnised in Coburg (about 100 km/62 miles south of Gotha).

¹⁰ Baptismal register, Margarethenkirche, Gotha, p. 170.

¹¹ The purchase was arranged through Johann Friedrich Hartknoch of Riga. See letter from Hamann to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi dated 18 April 1787, quoted in Carl Hermann Gildemeister, *Johann Georg Hamann’s, des Magus im Norden Leben und Schriften*, Gotha, 1857–68, Vol. 5, p. 482. Vol. 5 contains the correspondence of Hamann and Jacobi; further references to the *Clavier* are on pp. 467 and 479. There is an earlier reference to the clavichord in a letter from Hamann to Hartknoch dated 3 January 1787; see Arthur Henkel (ed.), *Johann Georg Hamann: Briefwechsel*, Vol. 7, Wiesbaden, Insel Verlag, 1979, p. 96. The clavichord went by ship to Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad) from Lübeck; presumably it was transported to that port from Gotha by land.

¹² F. W. Möller, *Volksmärchen aus Thüringen*, Gotha, 1794.

¹³ ‘Ueber die Verfertigung der Claviere und Fortepiano’, in *Handlungszeitung oder wöchentliche Nachrichten* (ed. J. A. Hildt), Vol. 12 No. 46, p. 367, c. 2. This article contains a well-informed account of the whole process of making keyboard instruments. It includes the information that the profession of keyboard instrument making was not subject to guild regulation (‘Die Kunst des Claviermachers ist frey’, p. 367, c. 1), which suggests that Meerbach would not have encountered legal opposition when he changed his profession from Stucco artist.

¹⁴ Friedrich Albert Klebe, *Gotha und die umliegende Gegend*, Gotha, Ettinger, 1796, p. 248. It is worth quoting the passage in full:

Die Stadt Gotha besitzt auch mehrere geschickte Künstler, die sich durch die Verfertigung musikalischer Instrumente auszeichnen. Die Claviere und Fortepiano’s der Hrn. Merbach, Steinbrück und Paul sind von vorzüglichen Güte und Schönheit, und werden meist in die nordischen Gegenden, insbesondere nach Liefland, Curland und bis nach Petersburg versendet.

(The city of Gotha also has several skilful craftsmen who are known for their musical instruments. The clavichords and fortepianos of Messrs Merbach, Steinbrück and Paul are of outstanding quality and beauty,

and are mostly shipped to the Northern regions, especially to Livonia, Courland [parts of present-day Latvia and Estonia] and even as far as St. Petersburg.)

Although Meerbach is mentioned here as a maker of fortepianos, none by him are known to have survived (according to Clinkscale online: <http://earlypianos.org>, accessed July 2020).

¹⁵ Friedrich August Schumann (attr.), *Versuch eines allgemeinen Handlungs- und Fabriken-Addressbuch...*, Ronneburg and Leipzig, Schumannsche Buchhandlung & J. A. Barth, 1798, p. 3. Meerbach is also mentioned as musical instrument maker in another directory by Schumann: *Handbuch der merkantilisch-geographischen Gewerb- und Produktenkunde ...*, Erfurt, G. A. Keyser, 1797, pp. 351–2. The text here appears to have been copied from Klebe.

¹⁶ Weddings register, Margarethenkirche, Gotha, p. 539, No. 6. The date of death of Meerbach's first wife Johanna Christiana is not known.

¹⁷ Christian Schreiber, *Religion: ein Gedicht in zwey Gesängen*, Gotha, Carl Steudel, 1813, p. xxx.

¹⁸ Burials register, Margarethenkirche, Gotha, 1824, entry No. 59.

¹⁹ Most of the Broadwood collection was transferred in 1993 to the Royal Academy of Music, London; see <https://www.ram.ac.uk/museum/collections/instruments/broadwood-collection> (accessed August 2020).

²⁰ The archives of Göttingen University contain a copy of the loan contract dated 10 April 1934, with a memorandum by the director of the Musicology Seminar, Professor H. Zenck, dated 2 May 1934. The latter includes a list of the 53 loan instruments (mostly keyboard instruments). No maker's name is given for any of the five clavichords. Thanks to Lothar Bemmman for supplying a copy of the relevant pages.

²¹ This information comes from the German-language Wikipedia page 'Friedrich Helmholtz' (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Helmholtz; accessed July 2020).

²² In a letter to Lothar Bemmman dated 19 April 2017, Wolf Dieter Neupert refers to the clavichord which eventually became No. MINE71 in the Nuremberg museum. Since it was *not* included in his great-uncle Julius Neupert's handwritten stock-list of the Neupert collection, he concludes that it was most likely acquired by Neupert's in 1942 along with other instruments from the Helmholtz collection.

²³ The details of this transfer were confirmed in an e-mail message from Linda Escherich of the GNM to Lothar Bemmman, 12 April 2017.

²⁴ Information about the Colt Clavier Collection is taken from the relevant Wikipedia article (accessed July 2020), supplemented by the personal recollections of Derek Adlam and Peter Guy.

²⁵ Private e-mail message from Peter Guy to Peter Bavington, 16 July 2018.

²⁶ [C. F. Colt], *The Colt Clavier Collection: Golden Jubilee 1944–1981* (booklet issued by the collection), p. 32. Both the leather covering and the lid painting have been preserved in the 2017–8 restoration.

²⁷ Letter from Hector McDonnell to Jurn Buisman, 9 May 2018. I thank Mr Buisman for providing a photocopy.

²⁸ J. Claudio di Veroli, posting on the LISTSERV forum HPSCHD-L (Harpsichords and Related Topics), maintained by the University of Iowa, subject line 'Re: Auction – Colt Clavier Collection, 3 May 2018'. Accessible online via <https://list.uiowa.edu/scripts/wa.exe> (accessed July 2020).

²⁹ According to Martha Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano, Vol. 2: 1820–1860*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 177.