‘The Grand Guru of Baroque Music’: Leonhardt’s antiquarianism in the progressivist 1960s

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Abstract:

‘The Grand Guru of Baroque Music’: Leonhardt’s antiquarianism in the progressivist 1960s In the 1960s, Gustav Leonhardt transformed from a locally successful Dutch harpsichordist into a global phenomenon. Ironically Leonhardt, an advocate for historical performance and building preservation, achieved critical and commercial success during an era marked by the rhetoric of social protest, renewal and technological progress.

An analysis of Leonhardt’s American reception reveals paradoxes of taste, aesthetics and political engagement. Record company advertisements, interviews and other materials promoted Leonhardt not only as a virtuoso performer-conductor, but also as a serious and scholarly persona. Leonhardt’s recordings demonstrate an ‘authenticist’ stance, contrasting with the Romantic subjectivity of earlier Bach interpreters and the flamboyant showmanship of competing harpsichordists. Complementing this positioning were Leonhardt’s austere performances in Straub-Huillet’s 1968 film *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, his advocacy for historical instruments, and his uncompromising repertory choices. Associations with the Fulbright program and prestigious American universities further strengthened his reputation as a scholar-performer.

To a conservative older generation, Leonhardt represented sobriety and a link to the past. Nonetheless, Leonhardt’s staid persona had broader appeal: an unlikely ‘guru’, he attracted flocks of devotees. Younger musicians, inspired by his speech-like harpsichord articulation and use of reduced performing forces, viewed his performances as anti-mainstream protest music—despite Leonhardt’s own self-consciously apolitical stance. Moreover, the antiquity of the harpsichord and historical instruments complemented concurrent interests in craftsmanship, whole foods and authenticity; yet early music’s popularity was dependent upon technological
mediation, especially high-fidelity recordings. Leonhardt thus emerges as a complex figure whose appeal transcended generational boundaries and bridged technological mediums.

**Keywords:** Gustav Leonhardt | harpsichord | early music revival | reception | social history

**Article:**

IN the late 1960s and early 70s, Gustav Leonhardt emerged as the leading harpsichordist of the post-war generation. His Telefunken recordings garnered strong sales figures, with *Gramophone* in 1972 proclaiming him ‘one of the pillars and, indeed, pioneers of the current boom in pre-classical music’.¹ He had even achieved ‘rock star’ celebrity status, or so it would seem from contemporary American concert reports. Writing in the 24 April 1971 edition of the *New York Times*, critic Donal Henahan remarked:

Even before Gustav Leonhardt, the Dutch harpsichordist, walked onstage at Alice Tully Hall on Thursday night the audience broke into applause. A stagehand had merely raised the top of the 1642 Johannes Ruckers harpsichord, displaying two opulent Flemish paintings that decorated the underside of the lid, so that the gilded instrument stood revealed in all its effulgent glory. That Mr Leonhardt went on to play a similarly attractive recital only made the cup run over for the assembled throng of harpsichord connoisseurs.²

Who was this ‘assembled throng of harpsichord connoisseurs’? Indeed, why had so many American fans turned out to hear a 40-something Dutch classical musician on the esoteric harpsichord performing a recital of relatively obscure works? (On the programme was an arrangement of the Sonata no.3 in C major for unaccompanied violin by J. S. Bach, BWV1005, and works by Louis Couperin and Louis Marchand.) Moreover, why might an antique 17th-century Flemish instrument—one that is discussed at length in the review, and credited on the concert advertisement with equal weight alongside the composers on the programme—attract such special attention?³

Henahan’s concert report is tongue-in-cheek (substitute Alice Tully Hall for Madison Square Garden, the harpsichord for an electric guitar and Leonhardt for Mick Jagger, and he might have been reporting on a very different sort of musical event!). Yet it is also revealing for what it tells us about Leonhardt’s reputation in the 1960s and 70s, his reception in America, and the attraction of the harpsichord and ‘historically informed performance’ (hereafter abbreviated HIP) during this turbulent period of American post-war society.

**Early music in the 1960s: regression or renewal?**

Practitioners, scholars and commentators on the early music movement have frequently noted the association of HIP with 1960s protest and counterculture. As Bruce Haynes, one of Leonhardt’s former collaborators and mentees, put it:
In the 1960s, it is doubtful whether a movement could have had credibility if it did not have an element of protest and revolution about it. A mainspring of HIP in the 1960s was a rejection of the status quo.4

This correlation of early music with the 1960s warrants unpacking, however: the rise of Gustav Leonhardt’s career during this period seems all the more incongruous considering the historical and cultural context in which it occurred. It is worth emphasizing that Leonhardt and the rarefied harpsichord, with its aristocratic associations, achieved new heights of popularity in America and abroad during a period synonymous in the mainstream media (and the popular imagination) with youth culture and psychedelic music.

The 1960s were also, of course, a period of tremendous social unrest, marked in the USA by the student protest, Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam war movements. Less well known is that Leonhardt’s home country of the Netherlands also underwent dramatic cultural and political change during the period 1965–75: a relatively stable, tradition-bound and religious Dutch society transformed into a countercultural hotbed, noted for its leftist progressivism, secularization and protest culture. A series of demonstrations, beginning in the mid-1960s, were largely non-violent, but nonetheless disruptive. The Provos (from provocatie, or ‘provocation’), a group of anti-authoritarian young people, launched a series of ludiek, or playful, disturbances throughout 1965 to 1967, using pamphlets and ‘happenings’ to poke fun at the staidness of the Dutch bourgeoisie. Their most notorious act was the disruption of the controversial 1966 wedding of Princess Beatrix to the German Claus von Amsberg with smoke bombs.5 The antics of the Provos were widely publicized in the Netherlands and abroad, especially in the United States, where they resonated with concurrent hippie and protest movements in Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area in particular.6 The widespread publicity the Provos garnered reflected the increasingly global awareness among 1960s protesters, fostered by mass media circulation of events, ideas and tactics. By the late 1960s, Dutch protest movements, inspired by the Provos, took on more serious causes, including US Cold War foreign policy and the war in Vietnam, university reform, and the restructuring of the arts and culture sectors.7 In addition to turmoil in the political, student and artistic spheres, the Netherlands was in the throes of a crisis of confessionalism in the late 1960s. Plummimg attendance in the Dutch Reformed and Catholic churches was evidence of a widespread questioning of organized religion and the authority of the Church; particularly steep drops occurred between 1968 and 1971.8 As the historian James C. Kennedy has argued, religious and political leaders, faced with such challenges to their authority, were not reactionary but willing to compromise with protestors, promoting the post-war policy buzzword vernieuwing (‘renewal’), reforms to educational and cultural policy, and the modernization of Dutch society as necessary and desirable.9

By the end of the decade, the Netherlands had thus acquired a curiously two-fold reputation: on the one hand, as critic Bernard Sherman put it, the Netherlands in the 1960s ‘became to Baroque performance what Switzerland is to chocolate, watches, and banks’.10 On the other hand, it became known as a haven for hedonism, freethinkers and radicalism, with Amsterdam emerging
as a centre of the global hippie counterculture—making it a popular attraction for American tourists in particular.\textsuperscript{11}

All of these, of course, were issues and events from which Leonhardt preferred to distance himself, and indeed they were far removed from the world of his central interests—that is to say the Dutch Reformed Church, music for the harpsichord and organ, 17th- and 18th-century visual arts, and historical building preservation. Nevertheless, Leonhardt’s rise to prominence in the 1960s and early 70s, which occurred amidst this climate of protest, a rhetoric of renewal and social change, and discourses of technology and scientific progress, is not coincidental. Leonhardt’s success during this period can be understood not only in terms of his extraordinary skills as a musician, and his development of a markedly different approach to playing the harpsichord. Also fundamental to his career development was his reception in America, which was facilitated by post-war advances in the recording industry, improved possibilities for transatlantic travel and touring, and cultural diplomacy initiatives between the USA and the Netherlands. These served to reinforce Leonhardt’s reputation as an expert on the harpsichord and in historical performance practice in several ways. First, concert promoters and record companies in the USA presented Leonhardt as a serious and scholarly musician, one who demonstrated a new type of virtuosity that distinguished him from his competitors. The harpsichord, with its contrapuntal clarity, and Leonhardt’s more intellectual approach to playing it, attracted audiophiles, record collectors and a sophisticated university-educated audience. Second, Leonhardt successfully connected with an ongoing American harpsichord revival. This New World movement, characterized by nostalgia for Old World craftsmanship, had a remarkably broad impact on American society after World War II, extending from the upper-middle class to the hippie counterculture. Thus, Leonhardt’s appeal in America crossed boundaries of generation and class, and bridged old and new technological mediums.

\textbf{Historical fidelity, high fidelity}

Leonhardt’s interest in breaking into the American classical music scene appears to have developed at the very beginning of his career. In the early 1950s, Leonhardt was a young harpsichordist living and working in Vienna, having recently graduated from the Basel Schola Cantorum. In a February 1951 letter to his friend Christopher Schmidt, Leonhardt writes:

I met the famous American composer Samuel Barber, who is very interested in the \textit{Kunst der Fuge} and who asked me to play it for him. Result: he will tell the Westminster Recording Company in New York that they should allow me to record it, which will instantly make me famous in America and [that] will result in a lot of concert engagements. There’s always something to hope for (naturally one hopes too much).\textsuperscript{12}

If scholarship on Samuel Barber does not corroborate this story, it does document that Barber was on a European tour in the first months of 1951, and it is certainly plausible that he would
have had occasion to meet Leonhardt. Barber’s lifelong interest in Bach’s keyboard music is demonstrated in his own Piano Sonata (1949), which includes a complex fugal finale.\textsuperscript{13}

In any event, Leonhardt’s recording breakthrough came not with Westminster Records but rather with Vanguard, another small American label associated—as its name suggests—with unconventional repertory and artists. Leonhardt described his encounter with Vanguard in a 2008 interview with me:

In Vienna, from ‘50 on, American companies flocked there because it was so cheap. The dollar was a miracle—so high, and Vienna was—for a farthing, you could get a whole orchestra. So all the companies were there, and the American directors of the companies. And I just began [by] chance. I met one of them, who was interested in early music, that was Vanguard/Bach Guild … that was a subdivision of it. And Mr Solomon was the boss, and he [was] very friendly, and well I made many records for him.\textsuperscript{14}

‘Mr Solomon’ was Seymour Solomon, who had developed a taste for early music through his musicological training at New York University. A former music critic and radio host, he co-founded the Bach Guild/Vanguard Record Company with his brother Maynard in 1950. That year was, of course, a ‘Bach Year’, commemorating the bicentennial of Bach’s death; the Solomons’ first three recordings were of Bach cantatas, which made this then little-known repertory available on disc for the first time. As Seymour Solomon remarked in a 1995 interview, the early 1950s were a particularly exciting period for recording companies, as new technological advances such as magnetic tape recorders and the long-playing record facilitated editing and made recording equipment more portable. He noted, ‘We recorded the entire range of music from the Middle Ages, through the Baroque, in a time when you could do that and make the first recording of every piece, or close to the first recording of every piece’.\textsuperscript{15} Later, Vanguard Records became better known for their courageous recording of blacklisted artists during the McCarthy era, including the Weavers and Paul Robeson, and in the 1960s for recording leaders of the folk music revival, such as Joan Baez, Odetta, Buffy Sainte-Marie and Country Joe and the Fish. It is ironic that the Solomons’ leftist political leanings and more populist ventures contrasted strongly with Leonhardt’s own distaste for the mixing of music and politics.

Leonhardt’s bold recording debut in 1953 was Bach’s Art of Fugue, BWV1080, the first harpsichord version to appear on disc (illus.1). The recording complemented his 1952 book, in which Leonhardt argued that the harpsichord was Bach’s intended choice of instrument for this work.\textsuperscript{16} This record was followed shortly thereafter with Bach’s Goldberg Variations, BWV988, also issued that same year.\textsuperscript{17} Such an ambitious choice of serious repertory seems to have attracted attention from the press, although the reviews in the USA were mixed.\textsuperscript{18} The American Record Guide found the idea of recording the Art of Fugue on a harpsichord interesting, but found Leonhardt’s playing ‘leaden at many moments where it should soar; it lacks delicacy in a number of places’.\textsuperscript{19} The New York Times likewise found Leonhardt’s playing to consist of
‘notes, nothing more’. 20 *Billboard Magazine*, reviewing the *Goldberg Variations* recording, praised Leonhardt as ‘a master of harpsichord technique and Baroque style and ornamentation’, yet demurred, concluding that, ‘[c]ommercially … this LP will suffer from competitive versions already available by Landowska and Kirkpatrick’. 21 Relatively simple record jackets and advertisements suggest that Vanguard did not heavily promote these records.

1 Leonhardt’s 1953 Vienna *Art of Fugue*, reissued by Artemis in 2006

Leonhardt’s early recordings nevertheless had a powerful impact on the direction of his career. They were heard by some of his first American students, including Alan Curtis (illus.2), Jim Weaver and John Koster, who were suitably impressed. Curtis, then a graduate student at the University of Illinois, recalled in an interview with me that

2 The 1989 Teldec reissue of Bach’s solo and multiple harpsichord concertos, played by Gustav Leonhardt and the Leonhardt Consort, with Anneke Uittenbosch, Eduard Müller, Alan Curtis and Janny van Wering (harpsichords)

[Illinois Collegium director] George Hunter had given me a recording of Alfred Deller and everyone was just ga-ga about the countertenor voice but I thought, not only is it a great countertenor voice, and a great musician, but this accompanist is fantastic. And I didn’t even know what to call it, but I now call it articulation at the harpsichord. Nobody had done that—you know, the idea of doing [sings] tada’ *ta*, to give an accent, tada’ *ta*. That was new to the
keyboard. And I heard that in his playing and in addition to the Deller I remember Sterling Jones, the viola da gamba player, who ended up in Tom Binkley’s group, Studio der Frühen Musik, he gave me his recording of the *Goldberg Variations* played by Leonhardt because he didn’t like it! <laughs> He preferred Landowska! And I didn’t. I preferred Leonhardt, even though it was on a clunky old Neupert harpsichord and recorded in Vienna when he was I think just out of school, he was like 21 or something. But I liked it very much.22

In 1957, Curtis and Weaver became the first in a series of Americans to travel to the Netherlands to study with the largely unknown Leonhardt, who had recently returned from Vienna to teach at the Amsterdam Conservatorium. These records also greatly impressed the French film directors Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, who—while non-musicians—likewise heard something in Leonhardt’s playing that differed from other Bach interpreters. This prompted them to seek Leonhardt to play the starring role in their 1968 film *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.23 The producer Wolf Erichson also discovered Leonhardt upon listening to another early recording he made for the Dutch company CRN Rood, a sister firm of Telefunken.24 Leonhardt would subsequently record nearly exclusively with Erichson for the next 17 years on the Das Alte Werk label, a partnership culminating in the landmark Bach cantata series, the first on period instruments, with Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Such examples illustrate the pivotal importance of recordings in circulating new ideas about historical performance to a wider audience.

Upon his return to the Netherlands, Leonhardt undertook a busy teaching, performing and recording schedule.25 In addition to solo recitals, he performed frequent chamber music programmes, particularly with Quadro Amsterdam (Jaap Schroeder, violin; Frans Brüggen, flute and recorder; Anner Bylsma, cello), which played Baroque repertory on modern instruments between 1960 and 1968. With the Leonhardt Consort, he began pioneering work on then little-known 17th-century repertory, using meantone tunings and string players with gut strings and Baroque bows.26 As a soloist and with these ensembles, he made frequent radio and television appearances that further solidified his reputation in his home country.

It was Leonhardt’s turn towards more historically orientated harpsichord models, however, that spurred major developments in his playing style. Dissatisfied with the modernized harpsichords available in the 1950s, Leonhardt sought alternatives, but found few. He ordered a new instrument for the Amsterdam Conservatorium upon assuming the professorship there: a Graebner copy from the Rück workshop in Nuremberg, one of the first European historically orientated builders.27 In 1956, recorder player Kees Otten introduced Leonhardt to Martin Skowroneck, another pioneering builder using historical principles, thus beginning a long-standing collaboration between them.28

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the Boston area had become an epicentre of historical harpsichord building after World War II, through the work of Frank Hubbard and William Dowd.29 Leonhardt made frequent visits to Hubbard and Dowd’s workshops during his American travels, a relationship that would prove symbiotic: his endorsement of their
harpsichords carried great weight, while they, in turn, helped Leonhardt to connect with American harpsichord enthusiasts.\textsuperscript{30} Several of Leonhardt’s future students had contact with the Dowd workshop while undergraduates at Harvard, including Peter Wolf, who worked there as an apprentice for two summers as a college student (eventually building his own harpsichord), and Lisa Goode Crawford, who (like Wolf) used the workshop space to practice.\textsuperscript{31} Wolf and Goode Crawford brought their Dowd instruments with them upon travelling to the Netherlands in 1965, which Leonhardt had Martin Skowroneck examine closely.

Skowroneck, consolidating his knowledge and wishing to spread it to other builders, published a landmark essay on historical harpsichord-building in 1968. Remarkably, this appeared in the German audiophile magazine \textit{Hifi-Stereophonie}, part of its series of features on historical instruments that year.\textsuperscript{32} Skowroneck’s article, and other features on early flutes and violas da gamba, were published amidst record reviews and glossy ads for stereo equipment (often featuring beautiful women), ‘old instruments’ curiously juxtaposed with ‘high-fidelity’ equipment like stereos and amplifiers. This suggests that audiophiles were a particularly enthusiastic audience for historical instruments, likely because their timbres and thinner textures effectively showcased high-quality stereo equipment. A \textit{New York Times} record reviewer noted as much, remarking that ‘Dealers across the country discovered some years ago that one of the most effective demonstrators of superior play-back equipment was the latest super-hi-fi disk of Scarlatti’s harpsichord sonatas’.\textsuperscript{33}

3 Telefunken’s 1967 Das Alte Werk recording of music played on original Dutch, Italian, German and English harpsichords

This affinity between record collectors, high-fidelity enthusiasts and period-instrument devotees was not lost on record companies. By the mid-1960s, Telefunken’s Das Alte Werk marketing campaign heavily promoted Leonhardt’s alliance with historical harpsichord-builders and with antique instruments.\textsuperscript{34} Particularly ground-breaking was the 1967 \textit{Music for the Harpsichord Played on Old Instruments}, which featured recordings on original Dutch, Italian, German and English harpsichords.\textsuperscript{35} Remarkably, the album cover features the instrument—and a 17th-century painting (‘A Young Woman playing a Harpsichord to a Young Man’, by Jan Steen)—
prominently, not Leonhardt himself (illus.3). Unlike other contemporary harpsichordists such as Igor Kipnis, Rafael Puyana or Ralph Kirkpatrick—and in marked contrast to his colleague Frans Brüggen, another heavily promoted Telefunken artist—Leonhardt himself only rarely appeared on record covers.\textsuperscript{36} Instead, Telefunken differentiated Leonhardt's albums from competing harpsichordists by using the unique sound of antique instruments, and unusual repertory choices (Sweelinck, Froberger, Frescobaldi) as marks of distinction.

As Leonhardt transitioned to performing on historical harpsichords or more faithful copies in the 1960s, his approach to articulation at the instrument noticeably evolved; this is particularly audible in comparing his three recordings of the \textit{Goldberg Variations}, made in 1953 (Ammer), 1965 (Skowroneck, Dulcken copy (illus.4)) and 1978 (Dowd, Blanchet copy).\textsuperscript{37} Leonhardt’s unique approach to making the harpsichord expressive through articulation was frequently cited by his former students as a fundamental aspect of his teaching and playing. As Lenora McCroskey, who studied with Leonhardt during the 1968–9 academic year, put it:

\begin{center}
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Leonhardt taught me primarily by example. I would play my piece of the week—seldom repeating from one week to the next—and he would usually say ‘good’, and then sit at the harpsichord and play it, explaining as he went along what more I could do. He made marks in the music for various articulations and expressions—dots and wavy lines were most prominent. I still use the same marks.\textsuperscript{38}

Anthony Newcomb, who studied with Leonhardt from 1962–3, concurred, noting that: ‘What I remember vividly, of course, is that what he taught me was how to make this music speak and that means articulation and timing’, using markings in the music to emphasize breathing and silence as a way of making dynamics and variegated phrasing at the harpsichord. Leonhardt also applied similar techniques in teaching the organ, using the ornamented preludes from Bach’s \textit{Orgel-Buchlein} and Leipzig chorales to help his students learn ‘to make them breathe, to make them work like a singer’.\textsuperscript{39}
HIP harpsichords: between cultural diplomacy and counterculture

If recordings were Leonhardt’s initial point of contact with American audiences, his reputation was further strengthened in the 1960s through his frequent touring in the USA, building on his growing network of former students, his university contacts and his connections to the harpsichord-building community. In perusing newspaper reviews and concert listings in major newspapers such as the Boston Globe and New York Times, one obtains an impression of Leonhardt’s demanding schedule of touring, lecturing and teaching. In summer 1960, his first American tour, Leonhardt’s travels took him to Boston, where he gave masterclasses at the New England Conservatory that June, a recital at Brandeis University in July, and an organ recital at Harvard in August; and to New York City, where he gave a series of lecture-recitals on Baroque performance practice at Union Theological Seminary in July and August. As Alan Curtis recollected, he visited the University of California at Berkeley campus in 1961 or 1962, where Curtis had joined the Music Department, staying for a longer period in October 1964 for a Froberger festival, and then returning nearly every year thereafter. In 1964, he also played recitals and taught masterclasses at Skidmore College in August, Boston University in October, and visited Cornell University in November, where he gave a recital with Frans Brüggen. In May 1966, he gave his New York City recital debut at Hunter College. Leonhardt returned to the USA on a concert tour in 1968, taking advantage of the publicity afforded by the recent release of Straub-Huillet’s film Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach, and the ‘small avalanche’ of new recordings made for Telefunken and RCA. This is an exhausting—if by no means exhaustive—accounting of Leonhardt’s concertizing in America that decade. As Allen Hughes quipped in a 1968 New York Times review, ‘If Gustav Leonhardt is not the busiest harpsichordist in the world just now, it is not because he isn’t trying’.

Such an extensive schedule of recitals, lectures, recordings and masterclasses solidified Leonhardt’s reputation in the USA as the leading harpsichordist of his generation. Particularly noteworthy about Leonhardt’s engagements in the 1960s was that so many took place at some of America’s most prestigious and selective colleges and universities, often facilitated through his connections with former students. HIP and the harpsichord found a particularly welcoming environment at Berkeley and Harvard. In 1960, Berkeley was, as Alan Curtis put it:

so ‘with it’ and so on top of things and so ‘avant-garde’ in all fields of music research that people there … knew that Leonhardt and others in Holland were where it was all happening.

Boston was also a logical historical performance hub, given its preponderance of colleges and universities. Martin Pearlman, who studied with Leonhardt from 1967–8, observed that Boston-area universities have long provided historical performers with a sophisticated musical audience of students, and faculty with an intellectual bent. Harvard had owned a harpsichord as early as 1915; thereafter, concerts of pre-1800 repertory were frequently featured in Music Department-sponsored events. In this erudite community, the ownership of a harpsichord became a prestigious status symbol: in contrast to mass-produced, industrialized post-war consumer
products, harpsichords connoted Old World aristocracy, wholesomeness, authenticity and handmade craftsmanship. Instruments manufactured by the Dowd workshop, as Jessica Wood notes, were priced ‘based on what a beginning professor at Harvard could afford, indicating the targeted demographic for custom-built historically-informed harpsichords’. 45

Leonhardt thus found an especially receptive audience in Boston, and favourable reviews of his recordings and concerts appeared frequently in the *Boston Globe* from the mid-1950s on. In the Fall 1969 semester, Leonhardt was invited to teach at Harvard as the Horatio Appleton Lamb Lecturer, where his former student, Anthony Newcomb, had joined the Music Department faculty the previous year. 46 That semester, Leonhardt presented two public recitals and taught a course on Bach’s *Art of Fugue*, attended, among others, by Lisa Goode Crawford (who commuted from Philadelphia to hear his lectures), and John Koster, then a Harvard undergraduate. Leonhardt was also frequently away on the weekends playing concerts elsewhere in the USA. 47

Leonhardt’s engagements at academic institutions positioned him as a more serious and scholarly-orientated performer than his more flamboyant predecessor Wanda Landowska, or to most other contemporary harpsichordists working in the USA. Moreover, university performances and professional contacts also helped him to recruit students. Peter Wolf, for example, first heard Leonhardt play live at Skidmore College in 1964, while Lisa Goode Crawford likewise recalled hearing Leonhardt perform in Boston as an undergraduate at Radcliffe, and meeting him after a recital. 48 As they became established professional musicians in their own right, Leonhardt’s former pupils formed an extensive network that effectively functioned as a referral system. Martin Pearlman, for example, studied harpsichord with the university organist while an undergraduate at Cornell, who was himself one of Leonhardt’s first students. 49 As a Berkeley undergraduate Anthony Newcomb learned of Leonhardt through his contact with Alan Curtis. Curtis also helped to send many Berkeley students on Hertz Traveling Scholarships to the Netherlands to study with Leonhardt, Brüggen and other Dutch historical performers. These included Bruce Haynes, who studied recorder with Brüggen and performance practice with Leonhardt from 1964 to 1967 before turning to the Baroque oboe, and four violinists who later became members of Les Arts Florissants. 50

It was the Fulbright program, however, that played a particularly important role in supporting the historical performance studies of many American students at Dutch conservatories. Established by Congress in 1946 through legislation introduced by Senator J. William Fulbright (Democrat, Arkansas), the Fulbright program was created to facilitate cultural exchange between Americans and people from other countries, under the administration of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State. Netherlands–US fellowships were instituted in 1949, just a few years prior to Leonhardt’s engagement at the Amsterdam Conservatorium. The Fulbright program soon became a veritable pipeline, providing Leonhardt with high-achieving students eager to learn about the harpsichord and its repertory. As Leonhardt himself acknowledged, ‘students flocked to Amsterdam, mostly because of the Fulbright system. So I
had many, many, many American students, some very good ones indeed, because they were chosen already—quite well chosen on the whole.’ Leonhardt also fondly recollected having met Senator Fulbright himself during one of his trips to the USA. A comparison of a list of Fulbrighters with a list of Leonhardt’s students shows that many became prominent American harpsichordists, organists and early music specialists, with the peak flow of students arriving in the 1960s (see Table 1). Leonhardt’s longtime association with the Fulbright program also further strengthened his reputation in America as a performer engaged in serious, scholarly pursuits.

Table 1 Gustav Leonhardt students with Fulbright Awards, 1955–88

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fulbright Award Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955–6</td>
<td>John Fesperman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957–8</td>
<td>Alan Curtis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958–9</td>
<td>Leonard Raver</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959–60</td>
<td>Clyde Holloway</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thomas Spacht</td>
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<td>1961–2</td>
<td>Carl Fudge</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962–3</td>
<td>Anthony Newcomb</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Turnbull</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963–4</td>
<td>James Tallis</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965–6</td>
<td>Lisa Goode Crawford</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peter Wolf</td>
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<td>1967–8</td>
<td>Martin Pearlman</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Frederick Renz</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979–80</td>
<td>Jillon Stoppels Dupree</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987–8</td>
<td>Robert Zappulla</td>
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</tbody>
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The Fulbright program was initially created to promote ‘international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science’. For the United States,
fostering technological developments and spreading American culture and values are understandable in light of Cold War politics: the Fulbright program, like the Marshall Plan, complemented military and foreign policy goals while promoting a favourable image of America abroad. In this regard, the Netherlands was designated a key strategic country. This was, however, not a unilateral relationship: while American jazz, popular musics and other cultural products were exported to the Netherlands, so too did the Dutch government promote its art and culture in the United States. Fulbright and other cultural exchanges between the USA and the Netherlands, including the sponsorship of touring artists, reached a peak in the 1960s, becoming an important form of cultural diplomacy. As the historian James C. Kennedy remarked, cultural exchange ‘would turn out to be a long-term commitment in the first decades of the Cold War, when the political and military ties of the Atlantic Alliance seemed to require parallel cultural ties’.

But what particular interest could the Department of State (even if indirectly, via the Fulbright program) have had in funding harpsichord studies? By way of an answer, I would posit several explanations. First, state funding of artists and musicians abroad was an investment: it ‘credentialized’ them, lent them prestige, and, upon their return to the USA, served in turn to revitalize the American arts scene. The Fulbright program thus allowed American harpsichordists to become enculturated in European musical traditions, returning to the USA to share their knowledge and spread an authoritative ‘Dutch Baroque’ style of performance at home. Second, given that European classical music was an imported product to the USA, ‘soft’ or cultural diplomacy efforts by Americans served to demonstrate their prowess in the ‘high arts’, particularly to Europeans wary of the hegemony of American popular culture. Third, the harpsichord itself, with its connotations of aristocracy, European heritage, elitism and intellectualism, corresponded fittingly with the aims of a selective and prestigious fellowship competition.

The Fulbright program thus tended to attract a particular type of harpsichord pupil to Leonhardt’s studio: typically, an intelligent, middle-class, university-educated (not conservatory-trained) student, often from an Ivy League or other selective institution, one seeking an alternative career trajectory than the professions expected of them. Such demographic characteristics bear some similarities with those of apprentices drawn to the workshops of Hubbard and Dowd in the 1960s and 70s, for whom harpsichord construction represented an ideology of ‘outsider authenticity’—the authenticity of living and working outside the trajectories of technological progress, professional advancement, middle-class domesticity, and capital accumulation.

HIP, with its more intellectual approach, likewise presented an appealing alternative to the mainstream classical music world and to its music conservatories. Goode Crawford, for example, a serious pianist in high school, chose Radcliffe (Harvard’s affiliated women’s college) over a
traditional conservatory so she could pursue her varied intellectual interests and, ultimately, the harpsichord. As she put it:

I had gone to Interlochen [National Music Camp] for some summers in high school, and I had felt that the whole atmosphere at music camp, where there was an intense feeling of competition and where there were ‘superstars’, was not a place where I fitted in. I just thought, ‘This is not my tribe!’ But being at Harvard and being a musician, a performer, was a totally different thing, because you were giving recitals not for your peers in a studio, but for an audience of intelligent, interested, mostly non-musicians. And for me, that was a great place to perform … it was about showing them this repertoire, this instrument that they had never seen, probably, so it took the focus off me as a performer in a way, and on to ‘let me show you this amazing music on this amazing instrument’.60

Similarly, Bruce Haynes began his career as a modern oboist, already obtaining professional work with the San Francisco Ballet and Opera orchestras upon graduating from high school; disenchanted, he soon quit ‘when I saw what it really was like playing in that orchestra, and the atmosphere, and people very depressed and unhappy with what was going on’. He returned to education, beginning university studies at Berkeley (initially in Japanese before returning to music), ultimately finding in HIP a more satisfying outlet for his creative energies.61

During their period of study in the Netherlands, Leonhardt’s American students recalled protests and disturbances to varying degrees. Peter Wolf, during his Fulbright orientation in August 1965, noticed anti-Vietnam War graffiti on a wall near the University of Leiden, heightening his awareness of American involvement in the conflict; Vietnam protests indeed occurred remarkably early in the Netherlands, as an indigenous pacifist movement critiqued the Dutch parliament’s support of US intervention in south-east Asia.62 HIP had an especially strong anti-establishment component for Bruce Haynes, for whom protest movements in Berkeley, the Netherlands and early music were closely linked. During his studies in Amsterdam in the mid-1960s, Haynes became very interested in the activities of the Provos, noting that, ‘some of that atmosphere I still feel is in Frans Brüggen’s playing and his approach to music, and I really picked up on that too’. Haynes had ‘come to Amsterdam directly after the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley … I was there and I was tempted to be part of it, but I wanted to go to Amsterdam and I was afraid that if I got arrested, I wouldn’t be able to leave … But I arrived in Amsterdam with that feeling.’63 Goode Crawford, also studying with Leonhardt in 1965–6, found Amsterdam relatively quiet then; she had heard of the Provos but was largely unaware of their activities that year. By contrast, she was shocked by what she observed on a return visit in 1971, when Amsterdam seemed dramatically changed, and ‘overrun, like going to Berkeley in ‘67 or ‘68’.64 By the late 1960s it was thus not only the HIP scene that drew young people to Amsterdam. For many (particularly Americans disenchanted with the Vietnam War and US foreign policy), the Netherlands seemed to present an attractive alternative: a quasi-utopian society, one marked by its culture of tolerance, non-conformism, radicalism and free thinking,
and one that had much in common with American student, anti-war and Civil Rights protest cultures.\textsuperscript{65}

On the latter point, Leonhardt was hardly a central or sympathetic figure, despite his frequent musical collaborations with Brüggen, Haynes and other more politically engaged musicians.\textsuperscript{66} However, Leonhardt could hardly have failed to notice that his own contacts in the USA with universities and students took place at a particularly volatile time on American campuses. The University of California at Berkeley was both a centre for HIP, and for student unrest. As Alan Curtis recollected, Leonhardt was on campus teaching a Froberger workshop in October 1964, just as tensions in the Free Speech Movement were escalating. Berkeley was rocked by particularly heated protests in 1968 at the same time that Curtis was hosting a François Couperin festival celebrating the 300th anniversary of the composer’s birth. This was a jarring juxtaposition: he remarked, ‘Imagine in the midst of tear gas and riots and Vietnam was a Couperin concert with—for the first time ever in California—a Baroque violin and a Baroque transverse flute, and a Baroque cello!’\textsuperscript{67} Even Harvard experienced a series of student strikes during Leonhardt’s residency. As Koster recalled:

Things were relatively quiet in Fall 1969, but I remember one brief strike called which would have affected one of Leonhardt’s classes. He remarked that politics should have no place in a university—I forbore replying that that itself was a political statement!—but in any case I justified myself going to his class since he was Dutch and had nothing to do with Washington or Vietnam.\textsuperscript{68}

Leonhardt had planned a recital on 15 October in Sanders Theatre, the same day that a massive Vietnam War protest (Moratorium Day) shut down classes at university campuses across the USA, including Harvard.\textsuperscript{69} Tillman Merritt, chair of the Music Department, declined to postpone the event; his report contrasts the ‘sheer hoodlumism and wilful destruction’ of some student protestors with Leonhardt’s refined playing, interpreting the concert as ‘a telling example of the effect and popularity of good music upon students’. Despite the university’s shutdown the concert was well received, with ‘an audience consisting predominantly of students who listened with obvious rapt attention and delight to a superb, but delicate, concert and who showed their appreciation at the end by uproarious applause’.\textsuperscript{70} Revealingly, Merritt presents a narrative of Leonhardt’s ‘good’ music soothing political tensions, serving to steer young and ‘not fully formed’ students in a more productive educational direction.

But what of Leonhardt’s American audiences? Leonhardt himself described them in the beginning as ‘small but extremely devoted of course. They felt a little [like] being a part of the inner circle.’\textsuperscript{71} However, by the late 1960s and early 70s, audiences had mushroomed; as Goode Crawford recalled, ‘in those years, when he came to the States, people drove from 200 miles away to go hear a Leonhardt concert’.\textsuperscript{72} As such, critics frequently described Leonhardt as a quasi-spiritual leader of the early music revival (the \textit{Washington Post} even referring to him as ‘The Grand Guru of Baroque Music’), with the fervour of his fans and disciples amounting to a
‘cult following’, using 1960s-era language to describe the seemingly religious phenomenon of his fandom. Paradoxically, it was Leonhardt’s sober stage presence and seriousness of purpose that lent him a certain otherworldly ‘coolness’ factor with young people (‘In tails,’ wrote an awestruck Cornell student, reviewing a 1972 concert, ‘Gustav Leonhardt resembles more than a little an aging Count Dracula’). How else to account for Leonhardt’s 1973 appearance on Het gat van Nederland, a satirical Dutch television show, during which Leonhardt appears in a segment entitled ‘living with the past’ (juxtaposed with segments on leftist writer Hugo Claus, and a male prostitute at Amsterdam Central Station). Leonhardt is shown practising the harpsichord in his antique-furnished canal house on the Herengracht, his tastes, music and opinions sharply contrasting with those of the show’s targeted young adult demographic. While the episode pokes fun at Leonhardt’s seemingly austere lifestyle (entirely in keeping with the Provo spirit), Leonhardt’s out-of-syncness with his own time also lent him a certain hipness.

As for Leonhardt himself, he eschewed any connection between HIP and the social unrest of the late 1960s. The impact of 1960s demonstrations and disturbances, not surprisingly, was far more significant for Leonhardt’s students, younger collaborators, and for his audience members than for him personally. Nonetheless, Leonhardt’s serious persona, aristocratic image and self-conscious distancing from political events stand in stark contrast to popular perceptions of ‘the 1960s’. His remains a voice of sobriety during a turbulent period—or, perhaps, to a younger generation, he appeared an unlikely anti-hero to those who heard in his distinctive performing style a revolt against the classical music mainstream.

Footnotes


13 B. Heyman, Samuel Barber: the composer and his music (Oxford, 1992), pp.318–19. As a Resident at the American Academy in Rome, Barber was said to be playing through Bach’s keyboard music as he worked through the compositional challenges of his own piano sonata (Heyman, Samuel Barber, p.299). I am grateful to John Kamitsuka for relating this aspect of Barber’s biography to me.

14 G. Leonhardt, interview by the author (Amsterdam, 3 July 2008).


Leonhardt later distanced himself from these recordings. ‘Gustav Leonhardt: an interview’, *English Harpsichord Magazine*, i/2 (April 1974), pp.34–5 and 63, at p.34.


A. Curtis, interview by the author (4 August 2012). Note that Leonhardt would have been 24 or 25 when this recording was made in 1953; liner notes for the CD reissue (Vanguard VBD-175) note Leonhardt played an Ammer harpsichord.


Interview with Wolf Erichson, in T. Otto and S. Piendl, *Erst mal schön ins Horn tuten: Erinnerungen eines Schallplattenproduzenten; Gespräche mit Wolf Erichson und Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Gustav Leonhardt, Stephan Schellmann, Yaara Tal & Andreas Groethuysen und Bruno Weil* (Regensburg, 2007), p.109. Erichson states that this was a CNR Rood recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* from about 1960, which I have not been able to trace. However, Leonhardt did make several chamber music recordings for CNR with Frans Brüggen, Hubert Barwahser and Frans Vester during this period.

In ‘Gustav Leonhardt: an interview’ (p.34), Leonhardt notes he was engaged by the Amsterdam Conservatorium in 1953 and began commuting there from Vienna, but according to Curtis he was only just beginning to teach at the Conservatorium in 1957.


28 Skowroneck, Harpsichord construction, p.263.


31 P. Wolf, telephone interview by the author (1 August 2012); L. Goode Crawford, telephone interview by the author (19 July 2012).


34 Leonhardt also made several recordings on historical instruments with the Massachusetts-based independent label Cambridge Records in the 1960s and 70s, though these did not circulate as widely as those made for Telefunken.

35 Cembalomusik auf Originalinstrumenten aus den Niederlanden, Italien, Deutschland und England um 1650–1750 (Harpsichord music on original instruments), LP, Telefunken Das Alte Werk SAWT9512.


37 Bach Guild BG536 (1953); Telefunken SAWT9474-A (1965); Deutsche Harmonia Mundi GD77149 (1978).

38 L. McCroskey, email correspondence with the author (12 July 2012).

39 A. Newcomb, interview by the author (New Orleans, LA 2, November 2012).


Curtis, interview by the author.

M. Pearlman, telephone interview by the author (29 July 2012).


J. Koster, ‘Gustav Leonhardt at Harvard, Fall 1969’, (July 2012), unpublished essay. I am grateful to Koster for sharing his recollections with me.

Wolf, telephone interview by the author; Goode Crawford, telephone interview by the author.


Curtis, interview by the author; B. Haynes, interview by the author (Montreal, 13 September 2008).

Leonhardt, interview by the author. He also noted that some of his American students in Vienna also had Fulbright awards (see n.49 above).

Frank Hubbard acknowledged that his research on European harpsichords was also supported in part by a Fulbright grant. See F. Hubbard, *Three centuries of harpsichord building* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), p.xii.

I am grateful to the Office of Academic Exchange Programs at the US Department of State and to Menno van Delft for providing me with data on Netherlands Fulbrighters and Leonhardt’s students respectively. Note that there was a steep decline in the overall number of Fulbright awards after 1969 due to Congressional budget cuts precipitated by the Vietnam War, government agency restructuring, and controversies over cost-sharing with foreign countries. See R. Arndt, ‘Questioning the Fulbright experience’, *The Fulbright experience, 1946–1986: encounters and transformations*, ed. A. P. Dudden and R. R. Dynes (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), pp.13–32, at pp.31–2 (and the introduction to this same volume, p.4); R. T. Arndt, *The first resort of kings: American cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century* (Dulles, VA, 2005), pp.429–36.


58 Arndt, The first resort of kings, pp.360–1 and 401–3.

59 Wood, Keys to the past, p.27; see also pp.166–89.

60 Goode Crawford, telephone interview with the author.

61 Haynes interview.

62 Wolf interview; R. van der Maar, “‘Johnson War Criminal!’”, p.104.

63 Haynes, interview by the author (13 September 2008).

64 Goode Crawford telephone interview with the author.

65 See Farber, ‘The hidden soul of Europe’s hip youth capital’; Jobs, ‘Youth movements’.

66 On the political activities of Brüggen, Ton Koopman (also a former Leonhardt student) and other Dutch historical performers, see Rubinoff, ‘Cracking the Dutch early music movement’, pp.6–8.

67 Curtis, interview by the author. As Curtis recollected, in the audience at that concert were Mario Savio, a leader of the FSM, and Alice Waters (future Slow Food activist, chef and owner of Chez Panisse restaurant).

68 Koster, ‘Gustav Leonhardt at Harvard’.


71 Leonhardt, interview by the author.
Goode Crawford telephone interview with the author.


The episode aired on 29 November 1973 on the VPRO (Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep), formerly a Protestant broadcaster that by the 1960s aired some of the most controversial and liberal programming on Dutch television.


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