



## Malcolm Proud

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**Language**

English

**Nationality**

Irish

**Country of Residence**

Ireland

**Year of birth**

1952

**Website Address**

[www.malcolmproud.ie](http://www.malcolmproud.ie)

**Year(s) in which you received lessons from Gustav Leonhardt**

1980-81

**The lessons were**

As a guest student at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam (Amsterdamsch Conservatorium, Sweelinck Conservatorium)

Individual private lessons

In public masterclasses as a player (participant)

In summer courses as a player

**How did you first come into contact with Gustav Leonhardt, and how did you get the opportunity to study with him? Did you have to wait before you could become his student?**

I arranged a private lesson with him at his home in the Bartolotti House in Amsterdam in early December 1977, and over the next couple of years attended courses he gave in Cologne and Dartington. He was on the jury of the 'Festival estival de Paris' harpsichord competition in September 1979 which I entered. Afterwards he complimented me on my performances of Scarlatti and Baumgartner. He accepted me as a guest student at the Sweelinck Conservatorium for the academic year 1980-81.

**Briefly describe your level of musical education when you started lessons with Gustav Leonhardt. How many years had you studied an early keyboard instrument? What academic qualifications did you have, if any?**

I graduated with my B Mus from Trinity College Dublin in 1973. Over many years I received organ lessons in Dublin from David Lee (himself a student of Thurston Dart) and in 1974 harpsichord lessons from John Beckett at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. I was awarded a Danish Government Scholarship enabling me to continue my keyboard studies during the academic year 1974-75 at the Conservatory in Copenhagen where my harpsichord professor was Karen Englund. The Dutch recorder player Eva Legêne was also a professor at the Conservatory and she invited Sigiswald and Wieland Kuijken to give a concert and seminar there in the Autumn of 1974 which I attended. I went with her students to the Bach Study Project in Den Haag in Spring 1975 attending seminars given by Don Smithers, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and others. That Summer I was a participant in the Haarlem 'Zomeracademie' receiving masterclasses from Anton Heiller (organ) and Kenneth Gilbert (harpsichord). I was one of the students chosen to perform at the student concert at the end of the course; I played a suite by Georg Böhm.

**What repertoire did you study with Gustav Leonhardt? You may answer along general lines or give a list.**

My studies centred on Bach's partitas and some of his preludes and fugues but I also worked on music by Cabezón, Byrd, Bull, Philips, Sweelinck, Frescobaldi, Froberger, Böhm, Purcell, d'Anglebert, Louis and François Couperin, Rameau, Duphly, Handel and Scarlatti.

**Did you present each piece of music only once, or more often? Was this your own choice?**

Only once because Leonhardt did not listen to and comment on one's interpretation of the same

piece more than once.

**Please describe a typical lesson or various types of lessons you received. For example: the frequency, length and location of the lessons, the specific instruments used, the number of pieces you typically presented, how much discussion there was, how much Leonhardt played and at what point during the lesson, etc.**

I received 20 lessons in total from Leonhardt, each lasting about 75 minutes. Of these, 19 took place on his two-manual Dowd in the Bartolotti House, the lid open on the short stick and Leonhardt sitting attentively against the facing wall. When they took place around midday a cacophony of chimes from numerous unsynchronised antique clocks would accompany my playing for several minutes. Depending on whether or not Leonhardt was in Amsterdam the frequency of my lessons would vary, sometimes only a few days apart, sometimes two weeks or more apart. At a typical lesson I would play a whole piece which could be a complete suite, after which he would make comments, demonstrating his points by playing relevant passages. This procedure would be repeated with a second piece and so on until the time was up. My final lesson took place on the Müller organ in Amsterdam's Waalse Kerk. I kept a diary and on returning to my apartment after each lesson I listed the pieces played and wrote down Leonhardt's comments.

**Did Gustav Leonhardt discuss and/or demonstrate keyboard technique, fingerings, hand and arm position, etc.? If so, did he relate these aspects to different periods, traditions and/or national styles of early keyboard music?**

At my first lesson Leonhardt commented on my posture at the harpsichord saying that I had a tendency to sprawl with my legs under the instrument and to look disinterested. He reminded me of Couperin's directions in this regard. For my 19th lesson I played the fifth of Rameau's 'Pièces de clavecin en concert' with two students from the conservatory in Den Haag: Bronwen Pugh (violin) and John Dornenburg (bass viol). He told us to remember the French attitude: 'agréable' - no dramatic gestures. One is playing to the audience, politely and without grimacing or sprawling; it is very different from the Italian style.

**Did he discuss historical? ? performance practice or different types of historic instruments, refer to musicological research, performance treatises, ornament tables, etc.? If so, in what particular situations and musical contexts?**

With reference to a Froberger suite in C minor I played, he cited a 17th-century continuo treatise which states that major chord endings to minor key pieces are to the German taste, but minor chord endings to minor key pieces are to the French taste. Leonhardt disagreed with 'certain harpsichordists' who believed binary rhythm gigue should be played automatically in ternary rhythm. He pointed out that although the binary rhythm gigue from Froberger's Suite in E minor of 1656 appears in ternary rhythm in the Bauyn manuscript, another gigue by Froberger notated in ternary rhythm appears in a French source in binary, so redressing the balance. Furthermore, he

said that whether a gigue is played in binary or in ternary the dance steps are not affected. He added that Giles and Richard Farnaby's giges from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book cannot be forced into ternary rhythm. When we discussed the fingering of English Virginal music, he agreed that by fingering the left hand ascending 1,2,1,2 and the right hand descending 3,2,3,2 as indicated in the sources, one is unlikely to achieve exactly the same effect easily. I mentioned how when teaching small children, I found they tended to finger 3,4,3,4 or 2,3,2,3 to which Leonhardt replied that it takes intellectual effort to learn to pass the thumb under. At another lesson he told me that some of Froberger's works were figured, but not by the composer and not in the Italian manner but rather 'with the beat'. With regard to unmeasured preludes, having heard me play d'Anglebert's G minor suite he thought the prelude needed to be much easier without dramatic waits. He advocated thinking of the melody or for experiment playing the main harmonies as simplified, straight chords so that one feels the 'moving onwards'. He also felt some bar lines to be in the wrong places. Regarding 'inégal' he agreed with my conjecture that it is a graceful, elegant technique rather than a rhythmical device. My last lesson was on the historic Müller organ in the Waalse Kerk. In Cabezón's 'Tiento del sexto tono' and Sweelinck's Chromatic Fantasia he advised me not to 'plod', the result of too much separation of the chords in chordal passages; rather I should 'fly over the bar'. Of course occasional big separations are necessary for emphasis but otherwise separations should not be audible to the listener. However, quavers can be well articulated and loose. In a general comment about organ playing, I should avoid too much 'plodding' separation - 'a present-day fad' in his opinion. Regarding pedal technique he felt that North German organists in the late Baroque could probably do anything, using the heel as well as the toe. On the 4th beat of bar 12 of Bach's chorale prelude on 'Jesus Christus, unser Heiland' BWV 665 he said it helps to over-hold individual notes when they form a chord. Later I noticed that bar 13 provides evidence of Bach's use of this harpsichord technique.

**Did you notice that he commented at greater length or with more enthusiasm on particular pieces, composers, or types of repertoire? If so, which ones?**

He enthused about the concurrent trills on the two F sharps three octaves apart in the first time bar of the second half of the gigue from d'Anglebert's G minor suite, and also about the 'unique' idea in the gigue from Bach's D major Partita of making the subject from the first half the countersubject in the second half. As against this, when I played him Handel's Suite in F minor, he felt that this was the best of the eight suites but found Handel to be a 'lazy' composer. He referred to 'silly' sequences in the gigue, a piece which he felt should go quickly and lightly and be played 'almost carelessly'.

**How did he engage with the works you presented? For example, did he offer stylistic considerations or make a formal analysis? Did he place the pieces within a larger context, musical or other? Did he use metaphors or make analogies when talking about the music?**

'Still easier' was a constant refrain and he talked about making certain pieces 'perfumed' through slurring and only slight articulation; the Allemande from Bach's Partita in A minor was a case in point. Sometimes he would suggest that I imagine how a violinist might play a certain motive.

Bull's Trumpet Pavan he felt I played 'too lushly' though he admitted that the instrument on which he taught me, a large 18th-century type of instrument by Dowd, encouraged such a style of playing. The instruments Bull knew were more direct and 'speaking'. He talked about creating the effect of old fingering by breaking up the semiquavers and how a more 'precise' effect could be obtained through thinking of dance steps. In Peter Philips' Passamezzo Pavana he pointed out that a particular phrase was identical to one which Dowland set to the words 'till death, till death doe come' and this should inform the way I played it. In Byrd's Fantasia (FVB CCLXI) he suggested I play 'more easily and amiably' the dancelike section near the end, what he called 'the more human element'.

**Did he ask you to defend your interpretive choices? More generally, did he approach questions of personal autonomy and individuality as a performer during your studies? In what way?**

No! He was always very positive, encouraging and gracious, and when teaching he made his points with admirable clarity. At the end of my longest lesson with him, one at which I performed BWV 894 and several of the preludes and fugues from Book 1 of the Well-tempered Klavier, I admitted that I found this kind of music the most difficult to play. He agreed that it is difficult but pointed out the wealth of ideas in the '48' and how each piece is different from the others.

**What did you hope or expect to achieve from your lessons with Gustav Leonhardt?**

For me he was the best harpsichordist and organist I had ever heard. Through study with him I hoped I would discover some of the secrets to his technical and musical mastery.

**After your period of study, did you have further contacts with Gustav Leonhardt that contributed to your development as a musician?**

Yes! Soon after completion of my studies he recommended me to WDR Köln which resulted in my making a recording of Duphly for that radio station. He invited me to perform the Art of Fugue with him in 1985 for the Manchester Early Music Series (6th March) and for the Oxford Subscription Society (7th March). I quote from the relevant postcard: "...in order to give you more credit, I thought that you should do a bit more than just the two mirror fugues. What about the 4 canons as well (I take them as a group)?" This was an example of his generosity of spirit. Naturally I accepted. My wife, Susan, and I met him at Manchester Airport and enjoyed his company on the train to Oxford. From what I recall the performances were a great success and he was full of praise for David Ledbetter's programme notes for the Manchester concert. At a concert on the 20th March 1987 at St. John Smith's Square, London I was the soloist in C.P.E. Bach's Concerto in D minor Wq.23 when Leonhardt directed the newly formed Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. On the 15th June 1988 at the Royal Naval Chapel in Greenwich I played continuo when Leonhardt directed OAE in performances of Bach cantatas and Valls' 'Missa Scala Aretina'. Later that year on the 14th December in the Adrian Boult Hall Birmingham I was the soloist in

another C.P.E. Bach Harpsichord Concerto, Wq.31 in C minor, when Leonhardt once again directed OAE. The next time I saw Leonhardt was when he attended a concert which violinist Elizabeth Wallfisch, cellist Richard Tunnicliffe and I gave at the Waalse Kerk in Amsterdam on 16th May 2004. We were touring a programme of Buxtehude, Muffat, Biber and Bach for 'Netwerk Oude Muziek'. As always he was gracious and positive about our performance and came for a drink with us afterwards in a nearby hotel. Three years later my wife invited Leonhardt to play in the annual concert series she organised, Music in Kilkenny. And so it was that on the 21st April 2007 Gustav Leonhardt performed in Kilkenny Castle on Christopher Nobbs' 1989 copy of an anonymous late 17th-century harpsichord in the Württembergisches Landesmuseum, Stuttgart. The harpsichord was loaned for the recital by Waterford Institute of Technology where I lectured on the Music Degree Course. This was also to be the last time I met him and heard his wonderful playing. Gustav Leonhardt harpsichord - The Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle, Ireland - 21st April 2007 - (For programme please see uploaded material) Incidentally, the only other time he played in Ireland was in 1954 when he gave a recital for the Royal Dublin Society in Dublin. He stayed in the Hibernian Hotel in Dawson Street where, in the middle of the night, the fire alarm went off. He enjoyed telling the story of how the hotel guests, on hearing the alarm, peeped out of their rooms, but seeing no sign of fire or smoke (the fire was in the kitchens downstairs) closed their doors and went back to bed. He thought this was 'typically' Irish.

**Did his approach to teaching influence the approach you have taken with your own students? If so, how?**

Naturally I have endeavoured to pass on to my own students what I learnt from Leonhardt.

**Has your perspective on your lessons with Gustav Leonhardt changed over the years? In what way?**

I have come to appreciate increasingly what an extraordinary privilege it was to have had the opportunity to study with Leonhardt and to work with him subsequently. When my recording of Bach's Goldberg Variations was released on the Maya Recordings label in 2001, I sent Leonhardt the cd. It is a measure of the man that he took the time and trouble to listen and write down some of his observations on a postcard which I have uploaded at the end of this questionnaire.

**What are the most important things Gustav Leonhardt taught you, or the ways he most influenced you as a musician?**

All great art is illusion and from Leonhardt I learnt that playing the harpsichord well means knowing how to create the illusion of loud and soft through articulation, slurring, over-holding and timing. He also taught me the importance of researching the primary sources of the music. When discussing, in late 1979, what form my lessons with him might take, he wrote on one of the plain postcards which he always used for correspondence with me, that he did not give continuo classes. He added, and here I quote: "in my view it is a matter of gift and experience only". During the

course of my performing career the truth of this comment about playing continuo has become more and more apparent to me.

## Curriculum Vitae

Malcolm Proud was born in Dublin where he studied piano with Elizabeth Huban, organ with David Lee and harpsichord with John Beckett. He graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1971 with a Mus. B. He was a finalist in the 1980 Bruges International Harpsichord Competition and in 1982 he won first prize at the Edinburgh International Harpsichord Competition after a year of study with Gustav Leonhardt at the Sweelinck Conservatorium Amsterdam. In 1985 he was invited to perform Bach's Art of Fugue with Gustav Leonhardt in Manchester and Oxford. He has also performed harpsichord concertos by C.P.E. Bach with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under the direction of Gustav Leonhardt in London and Birmingham. Organist of St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny since 1985, Malcolm Proud has given recitals on many historic organs such as the 15th-century instrument at Valère-Sion in Switzerland, the 1565 Antegnati in Mantua, the 1610 Compenius at Frederiksborg in Denmark and the 1766 Riepp at Ottobeuren in Germany. In the U.S.A. he has given organ recitals in Boston and Virginia. His CD of Bach's Clavierübung III, recorded on the Metzler Organ at Stein am Rhein in Switzerland was released in 2008 on the Maya Recordings label. Until 2014 when he retired from teaching, Malcolm Proud combined his work as a lecturer on the Music Degree Course at Waterford Institute of Technology with a busy international career as a soloist and continuo player performing at leading venues and major festivals throughout Ireland, the U.K., Europe, the U.S.A. and Japan. In 2010 Malcolm Proud played Bach's Brandenburg Concertos with Sir John Eliot Gardiner's English Baroque Soloists at the BBC London Proms and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Germany. He is principal harpsichordist with the Irish Baroque Orchestra and co-founder with Swiss violinist Maya Homburger of Camerata Kilkenny. Other leading period instrument groups with which he has performed include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Academy of Ancient Music, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, the Gabrieli Consort and the European Union Baroque Orchestra. He has toured Japan in a Purcell Quartet production of Monteverdi's opera Orfeo with Mark Padmore in the lead rôle and performed with Chandos Baroque Players in the USA and Canada. He works regularly with Chamber Choir Ireland, Resurgam, Sestina, Calmus Ensemble from Leipzig, as well as with Dutch soprano Lenneke Ruiten and Swedish soprano Maria Keohane. Malcolm Proud has recorded over 30 CDs on many different labels including Maya Recordings, Meridian, Hyperion, Virgin, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA, EMI and Soli Deo Gloria. He has recorded Bach's 5th Brandenburg Concerto with both the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the English Baroque Soloists. His solo recordings on the Maya Recordings Label include his critically acclaimed Bach's Goldberg Variations and Bach's Six Partitas for harpsichord as well as Bach's Six Sonatas for violin and harpsichord and Biber's Mystery sonatas with violinist Maya Homburger ('Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik' in 2007). Leading instrumentalists with whom he has performed are violinists Maya Homburger, Pavlo Beznosiuk, Elizabeth Wallfisch, Rachel Podger, Bojan Vukobratovic; cellists Steven Isserlis, Richard Tunnicliffe, Sarah McMahon; bass viol players Sarah Cunningham and John Dornenburg; flautists Wilbert Hazelzet, Lisa Beznosiuk, Sebastien Marc, Rachel Beckett and fellow harpsichordist Maggie

Cole. With his ensemble Camerata Kilkenny he has performed at all of Ireland's leading music festivals and toured to Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany, working with guest musicians and singers including sopranos Lenneke Ruiten and Maria Keohane, tenors John Elwes and Mark Padmore, bass-baritones Matthew Brook and Maarten Koningsberger, baroque flautist Wilbert Hazelzet, baroque violinist Bojan ?i?i? and the Calmus Ensemble of Leipzig. In the last few years Malcolm Proud has recorded several new CDs including works by Marin Marais and d'Anglebert with the American viola da gamba player John Dornenburg on the Centaur label; 'The Piper and the Fairy Queen' with Camerata Kilkenny and uilleann piper David Power on the RTE Lyric FM label; Bach arias and Swedish folk hymns with Camerata Kilkenny and the Swedish soprano Maria Keohane on the Maya Recordings label. In November 2018 in the Kevin Barry Room at the National Concert Hall, Dublin he curated a three-concert series of vocal and instrumental music to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the birth of François Couperin and in Spring 2020 a similar three-concert series on J.S. Bach, postponed because of the Covid 19 restrictions, will now take place in 2021.

### **Files / Docs**

[Kilkenny Concert 21 April 2007 - Hand written programme sent by Gustav Leonhardt to Susan Proud \(organiser of concert\)-5ed6619220196.jpeg](#)

[Post Card from Gustav Leonhardt to Malcolm Proud re interpretation of Goldberg Variations on Proud's CD recording-5ed661922130e.jpeg](#)

[Kilkenny Concert 21 April 2007 - Front cover of programme booklet for Gustav Leonhardt concert -5ed661922228d.jpeg](#)

[Kilkenny Concert 21 April 2007 - Page 1 of programme booklet for Gustav Leonhardt concert 1-5ed66195dd153.jpeg](#)

[Kilkenny Concert 21 April 2007 - Page 2 of programme booklet for Gustav Leonhardt concert -5ed66195de14e.jpeg](#)

[Kilkenny Concert 21 April 2007 - Page 3 of programme booklet for Gustav Leonhardt concert -5ed66195dfb2c.jpeg](#)