

Address by Richard Beattie Davis at Henselfest 2006

(October 2006) I very much regret that I am unable to be present at the 3rd. International gathering of the Adolph von Henselt Society, due to recurrent medical problems which have affected my mobility. My dear wife has kindly agreed to step into the breach and will have many matters to report to the society.

For myself, I was honoured to be asked to write the sleeve notes for the CD of the 24 Studies played by Piers Lane and recorded by Hyperion which I hope will help to popularise these exquisite masterpieces. It was a great pleasure to hear one played on the BBC a few weeks ago. Perhaps each person here could encourage the playing of Henselt's music on other stations throughout the world?

I am extremely glad to augment the Henselt archive with 28 first and other editions from my personal collection. I am also sending 21 photocopies (5 from the British Library) most of which are already in the catalogue but which help to complete the overall picture of Henselt research. I would like, once again, to request a revision of the blue catalogue so that people can search for the remaining editions which I listed, but which I have yet to find. These particularly apply to Russian editions and arrangements. It is clear that much can be done to improve the image of this composer, to which Russia as well as Germany are indebted. I would also point out the need to search out second hand copies to be found in old book shops and catalogues and to make copies from libraries where no other edition is available. Perhaps it is not necessary to point out that variations in texts of different editions are of great importance in case, one day, somebody will compile an Urtext.

I am asking, once again, a question that is of great interest to me....It is evident from the music of Seeling and Haberbier that the influence of Henselt abounds. For those of us who know these studies, the quality of the music is such as to make them worthy of recording. It is known that both these composers were in St. Petersburg at about this time. Does anyone here have any knowledge of these composers?

I should like to congratulate Natalia Keil-Zenzerova on her dissertation and I look forward to completing my translation into English. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that so much biographical material is in German and Russian and thus somewhat inaccessible to English readers.

One other point that we would like to mention. At the beginning of this year a Henselt letter appeared in a catalogue. We were told that there was no money to purchase it and we couldn't let the opportunity pass, so we secured it. Luckily, money was found, but we would ask if it is possible for a fund to be established so that original materials are not lost to the archive for ever. We would like to start by making a small donation and we wondered whether a membership subscription has now been established, and if so, could part of it be held for this purpose?

My wife, Gillian, is pleased to present on my behalf, my last remaining original letter from Henselt. I present it to the care of Herr Kindl who has already done so much to establish the smooth running of the Henselt Archive and we look forward to a translation from Herr Dippert, who specialises in this hard task.

I also want to present a letter written to me by the late British Chopin scholar, Arthur Hedley, in which he dispels any possibility that Chopin met Henselt. This idea may have originated with Friedrich Niecks, who, according to Hedley, was very inaccurate.

We should also like to mention that we were pleased to be able to secure the republication of the Henselt Trio, which Daniel Grimwood very kindly proof read. The firm of 'Fountayne Publications' has been set up by a violinist friend of ours who plays at Glyndebourne. He is looking forward to printing the duo (in all its instrumentations) in the near future and also hopes to produce the chamber version of the piano concerto. We are trying to interest him in the piano music but it would really be ideal if the Henselt Society could issue this themselves and make some money, as computer reprinting is really quite viable now.

The Society is much indebted to Herr Roland Schmid and Herr Jürgen Söllner and all the committee for their industry in securing a 3rd International Henselt Festival. It is encouraging to note that the Society is becoming better known and we particularly welcome our visitors from the United States. I send my best wishes to everybody, adding once more my regrets at being absent.