

The harpsichord builder Zacharias Hildebrandt

Stringed keyboard instruments made by German organ builders are often regarded as a by-product. It has been suggested that they were built mainly when the economic situation was bad due to a lack of organ orders.¹ It has even been suggested that stringed keyboards were mainly during winter when it was too cold to work in churches. The winter story has been identified as a fairy tale.² Nevertheless, this way of thinking, in which stringed instruments are regarded as secondary products, is still very prevalent about the German School.

The modern reception of the work of organ builder Zacharias Hildebrandt is symptomatic of this. None of his stringed keyboards are known to have survived, and research has generally not been very interested in those mentioned in written sources. For example, Ulrich Dähnert wrote a book about Hildebrandt which includes only 4 pages about his stringed keyboard instruments.³ He knew of 2 newspaper advertisements for Hildebrandt harpsichords,⁴ but instead of looking for more of them, which would have been comparably easy (the archives which contain those newspapers usually contain many of those newspapers), he decided to look for documents about his organ building activities, which are often hidden in some village archives and much more difficult to access. His efforts in this task however were admirable. In the Naumburg town archive there is a document known as the *Specificatio*, which lists 16 stringed keyboard instruments built by Hildebrandt between 1743 and 1745 in parallel with his largest organ building project, the organ of the Wenzelskirche in Naumburg.⁵ Dähnert's analysis of the *Specificatio* however has to be considered as outdated.⁶

Zacharias Hildebrandt (or Hildebrand) was born in Silesia in 1688. He was probably trained as a carpenter by his father and came to Freiberg in 1713, where he became a pupil of Gottfried Silbermann. After his training he worked some years in Silbermann's workshop and became independent in 1722. In the early 1730s he moved to Leipzig and 1750 to Dresden where he helped his old master to finish some large organs. He died in 1757. His son Johann Gottfried was also active as a harpsichord and organ builder and eventually moved to Hamburg. A certain Carl Daniel Hildebrandt, another harpsichord maker seemingly active in Leipzig in the mid 18th century, seems to be unrelated to Zacharias.

Zacharias Hildebrandt's astonishing reputation as a harpsichord builder has been overlooked until recently.⁷ 16 years after his death, a lexicon states that the most praised harpsichords in Germany, especially in Saxony, are by Silbermann, Friederici, Hildebrandt and Gräbner, followed by those by Mietke and Oesterlein in Berlin.⁸ Two of those four Saxon workshops are praised 1805, 48 years after Hildebrandt's death, by a Thuringian source: "The best harpsichords that we have today are by Friederici, Zacharias Hildebrand and so on".⁹

1 Felix Friedrich, 'Orgel- oder Klavierbauer? Historische und soziologische Annotationen', *Cöthener Bach-Hefte*, Heft 8, ed. Günther Hoppe (Köthen, 1998), pp.105-110.

2 Christian Ahrens, 'Organbuilders and the Making of Stringed Keyboard Instruments: A Wintery Sideline?', *Clavichord International*, (Vol. 20,2, Nov. 2016).

3 Ulrich Dähnert, *Der Orgel- und Instrumentenbauer Zacharias Hildebrandt*, (VEB Breitkopf&Härtel, Leipzig, 1962), pp.83-85 and 106-107.

4 Dähnert, 1962. p. 227. Footnote 375.

5 Zacharias Hildebrandt, *Specificatio*, Stadtarchiv Naumburg, (Leipzig, 1745).

6 Dähnert, 1962. pp. 106-107.

7 Leonard Schick, *Gravität und Vielfalt, Bachs Flügel*, (Basel, 2022, Schola Cantorum Basiliensis), pp.151-156.

8 Gottlieb Siegmund Corvinus, *Nutzbares, galantes und cürieuses Frauenzimmer-Lexicon*, (Leipzig, 1773), p.749.

9 'Die besten Flügel, die man gegenwärtig hat, sind die von Friederici, Zacharias Hildebrand, u. s. w. [...]' Gabriel Christoph Benjamin Busch, 'Clavecin, Clavicembalo, Flügel', in: *Handbuch der Erfindungen: Den Buchstaben C enthaltend, Band 3, Ausgabe 1* (Eisenach, 1805), p.150.

Saxon harpsichords are rarely described in detail before 1760. In 1731 a curious instrument for sale in Leipzig was described as having the "form of a 16' harpsichord", which must have been a familiar form if it was taken as a reference.¹⁰ In 1737 a lexicon published in Chemnitz states that usually harpsichords have 2 to 4 string choirs.¹¹ A later Saxon author, Grohmann, 1795, confirms that harpsichords have 2 to 4 string choirs.¹² Six surviving Saxon harpsichords are signed. four are by the Gräbner family (1722, 1739, 1774, 1782), one by Johann Daniel Silbermann (1758) and one by Jacob Hartmann (1765). All have two manuals and three choirs. The coupler mechanisms of the two oldest harpsichords (Gräbner 1722, 1739) is a French shove coupler and those of the later ones after 1758 are various systems based on the dogleg mechanism, sometimes with a moving lower manual.¹³ All have a square tail and are not painted or painted in a very plain way, unless they were redecorated later.

Zacharias Hildebrandt built a lute harpsichord, allegedly according to the wishes of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1740.¹⁴ It had three choirs: two of gut and a 4' of brass. It's not clear if both gut stops were at 8' pitch or if one was at 16' pitch. It was said to sound particularly close to the lute if one played the "Cornetzug" with the buff stop. The word "Cornetzug" was uncommon in Saxony, but the author from that description, Johann Friedrich Agricola, was from Berlin, where "Cornetzug" referred to a lute stop. However he could have meant the Saxon "Cornet", which was the normal upper 8'.¹⁵

Dähnert knew the lute harpsichord, the 16 instruments from the *Specificatio* and 2 instruments in advertisements. Those were probably 19 instruments, but we shouldn't exclude the possibility that the 2 instruments in the adverts could have been amongst the instruments in the *Specificatio*. I collected more sources for Hildebrandt harpsichords and clavichords. Some appeared in publications, some were found by colleagues¹⁶ or by me. My actualized list contains up to 62 instruments by Hildebrandt, however only 43 were clearly by Zacharias. It must be noted that some instruments might have been offered for sale more than once, which might be a factor which could mean that the total number of mentioned instruments was less than 62.

Before analysing the data, it is worth to look at the whole list of those instruments. Instead of presenting the original adds, which would be too long to keep track, I decided to give a standardised presentation style which makes comparison more easy. Some of the most important adds will be translated later word by word. I focused on musical aspects more than on decorative ones, some decorative aspects will be discussed later, but less systematically. I separated the harpsichords from other the keyboards. To make it concise, I adopted a short way of describing stop lists. Numbers like 8' or 4' refer to individual choirs. A little star (*) refer to a double plucking of the before-mentioned choir. If there is a slash between some stops, the numbers before the slash refer to the lower manual, the numbers after to the upper manual. I put into brackets all kind of information which seems likely, derived from my experience with other Saxon instruments. I put all instruments which were labelled as Hildebrandt, because only very few amongst them are known to be by somebody else than Zacharias.

Harpsichords

10 *Leipziger Postzeitung*, 23.10.1731.

11 *Johann Christoph Barnickel*, *Kurzgefaßtes musicalisches Lexicon* (Chemnitz, 1737), p.90.

12 Johann Gottfried Grohmann, 'Flügel', in: *Kurzgefasstes Handwörterbuch über die schönen Künste: Zweiter Band*, (Leipzig, 1795), p. 426.

13 Leonard Schick (2022), pp.97-99.

14 Footnote by Johann Friedrich Agricola in Jacob Adlung, *Musica Mechanica Organoedi*, Bd. 1, ed. Johann Lorenz Albrecht (Friedrich Wilhelm Birnstiel, königl. privileg, Berlin, 1768,), p.157.

15 Leonard Schick, *Gravität und Vielfalt, Bachs Flügel*, p.82.

16 I want to thank Uwe Fischer from the *Bachhaus Eisenach* and Christan Ahrens, Bochum, who provided me some of those.

Maker	Published	Owner/ Place	Year	Manuals	Compass	String choirs	Stops	Stop list	Price/ Value
Zacharias Hildebrandt ¹⁷	Naumburg (Speci- ficatio)	For mister Richter from the coffee house, Leipzig	1745	[2?]	?	[4?]	?	[16'8'8'4' ?]	120 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ¹⁸	Naumburg (Speci- ficatio)	Für mister Homilius in Dreßden	1745	[2?]	?	[3?]	?	[8'8'4' ?]	100 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ¹⁹	Naumburg (Speci- ficatio)	For Mister Hancke in Leipzig	1745	[2–3?]	[CC/FF– f''?]	[4?]	[4– 5?]	[16'8'8'4' ?]	185 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²⁰	Naumburg (Speci- ficatio)	For Johann Friedrich Doles, Cantor in Freyberg	1745	[2–3?]	[CC/FF– f''?]	[4?]	[4– 5?]	[16'8'8'4' ?]	185 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²¹	Naumburg (Speci- ficatio)	For Mister Friede in Leipzig	1745	[2?]	?	[3?]	?	[8'8'4' ?]	100 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²²	Leipzig	?	1761	[2?]	?	?	?	"very big"	
Hildebrandt ²³	Leipzig	?	1763	2	?	?	?	"various stops"	
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²⁴	Leipzig	At Mister Kranerd	1764	[1]	?	?	?	?	
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²⁵	Leipzig	At Mister Kranerd	1765	[1]	?	3	?	[8'8'4']	
Zacharias Hildebrandt ²⁶	Dresden	?	1765	2	?	?	4	? [8'8'*4' or 16'8'8'4']	
Hildebrandt ²⁷	Leipzig	At Mister Johann Peter Weickhart	1767	2	CC–f''''	4	[4]	[16'8'8'4']	
Hildebrandt ²⁸	Leipzig	?	1768	?	?	?	?	?	
Zacharias	Leipzig	Built after	1768	[1–2?]	?	3	[3–4]	<i>Lute hpd</i>	

17 Zacharias Hildebrandt, *Specificatio*.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 20.07.1761.

23 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 05.10.1763.

24 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 27.10.1764.

25 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 22.11.1765.

26 *Dreßdner gelehrte Anzeigen*, No.L, 10.12.1765.

27 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 06.04.1767,p.216 and *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 25.07.1767.

28 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 10.12.1768.

Hildebrandt ²⁹		the ideas of J.S. Bach 1740.						[8'8'4' or 16'8'4']
Zacharias Hildebrandt ³⁰	Leipzig	Cafetier Enoch Richter	1770	2 +Ped:	FF-f''' AA-d'	4+ 4	5+ 5	16'8'4'/8'* Ped: 16'16'8'8'*
Zacharias Hildebrandt ³¹	Leipzig	?	1770	?	?	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ³²	Leipzig	?	1770	2	FF-f'''	[4?]	4	huge [16'8'8'4'?
Hildebrandt ³³	Leipzig	?	1775	?	?	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ³⁴	Leipzig	?	1775	2	FF-f'''	4	5	16'8'4'/ 8'*4' +Coupler
Hildebrandt ³⁵	Leipzig	?	1775	1	C-f'''	2	[2]	[8'8']
Hildebrandt ³⁶	Leipzig	?	1776	?	?	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ³⁷	Leipzig	Carl Christian Heinrich Rost	1779	2	CC-f'''	[4]	?	16'-? [16'8'8'4']
Carl Daniel Hildebrandt ³⁸ (Totally new)	Leipzig	Carl Christian Heinrich Rost	1779	2	FF-f'''	[3]	?	8'-? [8'8'4']
Hildebrandt ³⁹	Leipzig	?	1779	2	FF-f'''	3	[3]	[8'8'4'] Coupler has been replaced by a dogleg
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁴⁰	Leipzig	Auction catalogue by Leonhard Cochius	1779	2	?	[3-4?]	[3- 5?]	Huge [Probably CC and/or 16']
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁴¹	Hamburg	Organist Makenthun in Harburg	1781	2	CC-f'''	4	3+1 bis 2	8'8'4'+? [16']

29 J.F.Agricola in Adlung (1768), p.138.

30 *Leipziger Zeitungen*, 29.05.1770.

31 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 21.07.1770.

32 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 06.10.1770.

33 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 11.03.1775.

34 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 04.10.1775 [Repeated 14.10.1775].

35 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 07.10.1775.

36 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 06.06.1776.

37 *Bey Carl Christian Heinrich Rost in seiner Handlung in Auerbachs Hofe zu Leipzig (...)*, Ostermesse 1779.

38 Ibid.

39 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 25.09.1779.

40 *Auktionskatalog der Bibliothek Leonhard Cochius*; 27.09.1779.

41 *Hamburgische Adreß-Comtoir-Nachrichten*. 04.01.1781.

Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁴²	Leipzig	?	1782	?	?	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁴³	Leipzig	?	1785	[2?]	?	?	?	The description "concert harpsichord" means it was huge.
Hildebrandt ⁴⁴	Leipzig	at the <i>Goldene Posthorn</i>	1786	2	FF-f'''	?	?	?
Zacharias (?) Hildebrandt ⁴⁵	Leipzig	At the <i>hommelischen Hause</i>	1790	?	?	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁴⁶	Leipzig	Universitäts-Proklamator Weigel	1791	3	CC-f'''	?	4 (5?)+ Buff	[8'8'*4' or 12 Louis d'or (=60 rthlr)]
Johann Gottfried Hildebrandt ⁴⁷	Leipzig	in Dresden	1791	2	FF-f'''	4	?	[16'8'8'4']
Hildebrandt ⁴⁸	Altenburg	Private society	1792	[2]	?	[4?]	?	16'+[8'8'4']
Hildebrandt ⁴⁹	Leipzig	?	1792	2	?	?	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁵⁰	Gotha	At Gottlob Pfeifer, Leipzig	1800	[1]	FF-f'''	2	[2]	[8'8']
Hildebrandt ⁵¹	Leipzig	?	1802	?	?	?	?	?

Other keyboards

Maker	Published	Owner/Place	Year	Instrument	Compass	Stops	Description /Price
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵²	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Soap maker Schneider, Leipzig	1745	clavichord	?	?	14 rthlr

42 *Leipziger Zeitungen*, 20.08.1782.

43 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 29.01.1785, Repeated 23.04.1785 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 13.04.1785.

44 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 16.05.1786.

45 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 11.12.1790.

46 Carl Christian Heinrich Rost, Christoph Gottlob Weigel, *Anzeige einer ansehnlichen Kupferstichsammlung [...]*, Bd. 10, 15.01.1791.

47 *Leipziger Zeitungen*, 16.03.1791.

48 *Deutsche Zeitung* 25.10.1792. p.714-716.

49 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 27.10.1792.

50 *Kaiserlich privilegierter Reichsanzeiger (Gotha)*: 28.08.1800.

51 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 01.05.1802.

52 Zacharias Hildebrandt, *Specificatio*.

Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵³	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mister Stallmeister	1745	clavichord	?	?	15 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁴	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Carl Gotthelf Gerlach	1745	clavichord	?	?	10 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁵	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Bailiff Hochhaußen in Bürgel	1745	clavichord	?	?	10 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁶	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mister Neühaußen in Leipzig	1745	clavichord	?	?	10 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁷	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mademoiselle Wiedemann in Leipzig	1745	clavichord	?	?	15 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁸	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Carl Gotthelf Gerlach	1745	spinet	?	?	24 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁵⁹	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mister Meyer	1745	spinet	?	?	24 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶⁰	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Gerlach in commission for a boy	1745	spinet	?	?	24 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶¹	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mister Winckler in Leipzig	1745	spinet	?	?	24 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶²	Naumburg (Specificatio)	Mister Gabler in Leipzig	1745	spinet	?	?	24 rthlr
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶³	Leipzig	At Hr. Gehrman	1762	clavichord	FF–e'''	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁶⁴	Leipzig	?	1764	spinett	[C]–d'''	?	+Buff stop
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶⁵	Leipzig	?	1764	clavichord	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶⁶	Leipzig	?	1765	spinett	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶⁷	Leipzig	?	1765	clavichord	?	?	?

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 02.01.1762.

64 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 15.09.1764.

65 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 27.10.1764 [Repeated 10.11.1764].

66 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 02.11.1765.

Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁶⁸	Leipzig	?	1766	clavichord	?	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁶⁹	Leipzig	Carl Friedrich Pfaffen	1767	clavichord	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁷⁰	Leipzig	?	1768	clavichord	?	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁷¹	Leipzig	At Mister Schultze	1768	clavichord	?	?	With a pantalon stop and a painting covered with amber
Hildebrandt ⁷²	Leipzig	At Mister Kirsten	1768	spinett	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁷³	Leipzig	?	1769	spinett	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁷⁴	Leipzig	?	1769	spinett	?	?	?
Zacharias Hildebrandt ⁷⁵	Leipzig	?	1773	clavichord	C–f ^{'''}	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁷⁶	Leipzig	?	1775	clavichord	C–f ^{'''}	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁷⁷	Leipzig	Auction	1796	fortepiano	?	?	?
Hildebrandt ⁷⁸	Leipzig	Auction	1796	spinets	?	?	?

These 62 instruments were 35 harpsichords, 15 clavichords, 11 spinets and 1 fortepiano. The first name of the maker of the fortepiano is unknown and it may have been a rebuilt harpsichord. However, it cannot be ruled out that Zacharias Hildebrandt built pianos and pantalons because his teacher Gottfried Silbermann introduced pianos to Germany. 43 instruments were by Zacharias (if the builder was called "the old Hildebrandt" in the add, I attributed the instrument to him), one by Johann Gottfried and one by Johann Daniel. 18 are by an unknown maker with the surname Hildebrandt. The high percentage of Zacharias make it statistically likely that many anonymous "Hildebrandt" instruments were by him as well. The instruments by Zacharias Hildebrandt in the list are 23 harpsichords and 20 others, namely 12 clavichords and 8 spinets.

The compasses extended between C–d^{'''} and CC–f^{'''}, which is 4 to 5 1/2 octaves. These large differences in compasses were relatively common in German production of the mid-18th century.⁷⁹

67 Ibid.

68 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 04.01.1766.

69 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 05.02.1767.

70 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 10.02.1768.

71 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 26.03.1768.

72 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 23.07.1768.

73 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 11.02.1769.

74 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 14.10.1769.

75 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 01.05.1773.

76 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 07.10.1775.

77 *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 30.01.1796.

78 Ibid.

79 See for instance Schick (2022), pp.180-188.

The compasses C–d^{'''}, C–f^{'''}, FF–e^{'''}, FF–f^{'''} and CC–f^{'''} used by the Hildebrandts were quite average for German builders. Also the way of using those compasses is quite normal: small instruments often had C as a lowest note. Those small instruments were spinets, single manual harpsichords and clavichords, except some clavichords which could have a larger compasses. Double manual harpsichords had FF or CC as a lowest note, GG was relatively uncommon as bottom note, in opposition to what the repertoire suggests.⁸⁰ CC will certainly surprise some readers: in fact it was built occasionally especially in Saxony, Hamburg and Danzig.⁸¹ It was understood as an extension of the 8' and could exist with or without a 16' stop (it is unknown if the 16' always went down to the bottom note. It could have stopped at C, like in the Stein Vis-à-vis in Verona, *Museo Civico*).

Saxon instruments were not usually painted. Decorative features are relatively rarely mentioned in advertisements. Some instruments by Hildebrandt were described as made of oak, at least one of maple and some were veneered in walnut. All those elements are similar to what can be said about Silbermann and Friederici. In one add we find as a decorative element a painting covered with amber, perhaps the most surprising decorative element.

Most interesting information from adverts can be deduced for harpsichords, rather than for clavichords and spinets. Hildebrandt's harpsichords probably all had French couplers with a sliding upper manual. This was the norm for Saxon harpsichords until the 1750's.⁸² Replacing couplers by a dogleg mechanism was common in the 1770's and there is an advert for a Hildebrandt harpsichord which has been modified in that way:

Leipziger Intelligenzblatt, 25.09.1779.

Ein hildebrandischer 3chöriger Flügel, mit 2 Clavieren, von F bis F, dessen Tractament sehr leichte ist, weil, nach einer Verbesserung, das obere Clavier ohne Kuppel mitspielen kann, ist aus der Hand zu verkaufen. [...]

Leipziger Intelligenzblatt, 25.09.1779.

A triple strung Hildebrandt harpsichord with two manuals, from FF to f^{'''}, whose *toucher* is very light, because after a modification, the upper manual can be played without a coupler, is for sale. [...] [Repeated 02.10.1779]

In a four-choir harpsichord we find an even more special coupler mechanism. It is important to look at the precise wording in order to understand it:

Hamburgische Adreß-Comtoir-Nachrichten

04.01.1781. Harburg. Ein großer Concertflügel, 10 Fuß lang, 2 Fuß hoch, von Contra C bis dreygestrichen F, mithin 5 1/2 Octav, von dem berühmten Hildebrand sen. aus Dresden, von bester Disposition, ganz Fehlerfrey, von 2 Manual, die gekoppelt werden können, vierhörig, das Hauptclavier alleine dreyhörig, das obere kann zweyhörig gemacht werden; 2 Züge von 8 und 1 von 4 Fuß; die Tastatur von schwarz Ebenholz und Elfenbein; der Kasten von gelben Ahornholz mit gelben Beschlag, ist allhier zu verhaufen und nähere Nachricht darüber bey dem

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid, p. 187.

82 Ibid, pp 97-99.

hiesigen Schloß- und Garnison-Organisten Makenthun einzuziehen. Die Briefe aber werden franco erbeten.

Hamburgische Adreß-Comtoir-Nachrichten

04.01.1781. Harburg. A large concert harpsichord, 10 feet long [2,86 m], 2 feet high [57 cm], from CC to f''', being 5 1/2 octaves, by the famous Hildebrand senior from Dresden [=Zacharias], of the best disposition, completely free of damages, with 2 manuals which can be coupled, four choirs, the main manual alone has three choirs, the upper one can be made two choirs; 2 stops of 8 and 1 of 4 feet [the fourth choir has been forgotten in the description. It was probably a 16', because that would have been common for 4 choirs harpsichords]; the keyboard of black ebony and ivory; the case of yellow maple wood with yellow hinges, is to be collected here and more detailed information about it is to be obtained from the local castle and garrison organist Makenthun for further information. The letters are requested carriage paid.

The coupler mechanism can be deduced from the information. As the text says, there are 3 choirs on the lower manual and a total of 4 choirs, so there can be only one on the upper manual. However, the upper manual "can be made" two choirs, as the text claims. There is only one way it could make sense: it refers to a special kind of coupler, used sometimes in 4 choirs harpsichords by Hieronymus Albrecht Hass from Hamburg. Hass used that system in the surviving harpsichord from 1723⁸³ and probably also in the harpsichord in 1734,⁸⁴ although the coupler of the latter has been removed during the 19th century. Hass' coupler masterfully combines the French coupler to dogleg, creating additional possibilities. In this system, the upper manual can move into 3 positions. The front position is totally uncoupled, the central and back position are coupled in the same way than with a French coupler. The 4' stop has dogleg jacks and only in the back position the upper manual can play the 4' stop. In other words, the upper manual is single strung, but "can be made" double strung by coupling.

Here is one of the most precise adds we have about Zacharias Hildebrandt:

Leipziger Zeitung, Nr. 105, 29.05.1770, S. 452.

Denen Freunden und Kennern musicalischer Instrumente wird hierdurch bekannt gemacht, daß bey Hrn. Enoch Richter ein Hildebrandischer Contra F Flügel mit 2 Clavieren, und ein Flügel Pedal von Contra A bis D von eben demselben Meister zum Verkauf steht, und ein ieder zu allen Zeiten diese Instrumente in Augenschein nehmen kann. Beyde Instrumente sind wohl conservirt. Der Flügel, welcher einer der ersten Größe, ist sauber mit Nussbaum furnirt, nebst Gestelle, hat 5 Registerzüge, als Principal 16 Fuß, Octavo 8 Fuß, Octavo 4 Fuß, Spinett 8 Fuß durch das halbe Clavier, Baß und Cornet 8 Fuß. Das Pedal, welches, wie man sagt, das einzige ist, welches dieser Meister verfertigt, hat 5 Register, als 2 Principal 16 Fuß, 2 Principal 8 Fuß und Quinta 8 Fuß. Wie dann der bloße Name eines Zacharias Hildebrandt, dieses so bekannten Künstlers, die größte Anpreisung beyder Instrumente ohne andere Lobsprüche seyn kann, und haben auswärtige Liebhaber sich an gedachten Hrn. Enoch Richter zu adressiren.

Leipziger Zeitung, Nr. 105, 29.05.1770, p. 452.

83 *Danish Music Museum*, Copenhagen, Inv.-Nr A 48.

84 *MIM*, Brussels, Inv.-Nr. 630.

[Sale] Friends and connoisseurs of musical instruments are hereby informed that Mr Enoch Richter has for sale a Hildebrand a Contra F harpsichord with 2 manuals, and a pedal division from Contra A to D [=AA-d'!] by the same master, and that anyone may inspect these instruments at any time. Both instruments are well preserved. The harpsichord, which is one of the first size, is neatly veneered with walnut, together with the feet, has 5 stops, as Principal 16 feet, Octavo 8 feet, Octavo 4 feet, Spinet 8 feet through the half keyboard, Bass and Cornet 8 feet. The Pedal, which, it is said, is the only one made by this master, has 5 stops, as 2 Principal 16 feet, 2 Principal 8 feet and Quinta 8 feet. The mere name of Zacharias Hildebrandt, this so well-known artist, can be the greatest praise for both instruments without any other praise, and foreign enthusiasts have to address themselves to the aforementioned Mr Enoch Richter.

This pedal harpsichord gains more importance by the fact it was owned by Enoch Richter, who was the owner of the *Richtersche Coffeehaus* in Leipzig. Enoch Richter was the main concurrent of Gottfried Zimmermann in whose coffeehouse Johann Sebastian Bach regularly performed. Richter opened his coffeehouse in 1731. From 1770 to 1772 he led the coffeehouse with his son Georg Wilhelm who finally took it over.⁸⁵ The sale of the harpsichord was probably due to the generation change in 1770. However, more interestingly, Enoch Richter took over the former *Zimmermannsche Coffeehaus* in the mid 1740s where Bach had been regularly performing.⁸⁶ Was this harpsichord part of Zimmermann's coffeehouse? We know that Richter bought a harpsichord for 120 rthlr from Zacharias Hildebrandt in 1745, but 120 rthlr seem not enough for this instrument, except if it was only the manual harpsichord or only the pedal division.

The pedal division of this instrument was the rarest feature of the harpsichord above, according to the advertisement. With five registers, it was truly impressive. The stop list of the manual division hides a small but important detail which has been overlooked so far: The order of the stop list is 16'-8'-4'-nasal 8'-normal 8'. This is unusual. Usually harpsichord stop lists in newspapers went from the largest number to the smallest, or vice versa. There are a few exceptions to this rule, usually when authors wanted to show which manual the stops belonged to. In this case I would say that it suggests that the 16', 8' and 4' were together on one manual. The "spinet" was the lute stop (nasal) and it was together with the "normal" upper 8', called "Cornet", which plucked the same string, on the upper manual.⁸⁷ It was standard indeed that harpsichords with 4 choirs had the 4' on the lower manual together with the 16' and one 8'. It is the case for the 1734 Hass harpsichord in Brussels, the 1786 Swanen harpsichord⁸⁸, the Stein Vis-à-vis in Verona⁸⁹ and also for some harpsichords in historical advertisements: namely some harpsichords by the brethren Wagner⁹⁰ and it seems also to be the case for a harpsichord by Silbermann in Dresden where the stops were listed in the same order 16'-8'-4'-8' exactly like in the above-mentioned advertisement of Hildebrandt's pedal harpsichord.⁹¹ This add has to be compared with the following one:

Leipziger Intelligenzblatt, 04.10.1775.

Es stehet ein vierhöricher schön mit Nußbaum furnirter Flügel von Zacharias Hildebrand zum Verkauf. Selbiger hat 2 Claviere von contra F. bis zum dreygestrichen F. Im Unterclaviere ist Principal 16 Fuß und Principal 8 Fuß. Auf dem oberen ist Cornet 8 Fuß und Octava 4 Fuß.

85 Maria Hübner, 'Die Kaffeehäuser von Gottfried Zimmermann und Enoch Richter in Leipzig' in *Bach-Jahrbuch* Bd. 104 (2018), pp.61-65

86 Ibid, p. 62.

87 see Schick, 2022, p.82.

88 *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers*, Paris, Inv.-Nr. 6615.

89 It's a half 4' which becomes an 8' in the treble.

90 Johann und Michael Wagner (Obm. in Schmiedefeld/Thüringen), in *Katalog Breitkopf u. Sohn*, (Leipzig, Breitkopf u. Sohn, zur Neujahrsmesse 1764).

91 *Dreßdener Gelehrte Anzeigen*, No. IV, 26.01.1768.

Zur Verstärkung der Bässe ist Spinnet 8 Fuß in 2 Octaven von Cornet entlehnet. Hierzu sind 5 Register, mit welchen bey dem Gebrauch der Kuppel sehr viele Veränderungen gemacht werden. Wo, erfähret man im Intell. Comt.

Leipziger Intelligenzblatt, 04.10.1775.

A four-choir harpsichord beautifully veneered with walnut by Zacharias Hildebrandt is for sale. It has 2 manuals from FF to f'''. The lower manual has Principal 16 feet and Principal 8 feet. On the upper one is Cornet 8 feet and Octava 4 feet. To reinforce the basses, Spinnet 8 feet in 2 octaves is borrowed from Cornet. In addition there are 5 stops, with which many changes are made when using the coupler. Where, one learns in the Intell. Comt. [Repeated on 14.10.1775]

The description is almost identical to Hildebrandt's pedal harpsichord. It has been suggested in previous publications that it was the same instrument, but that between 1770 and 1775 the harpsichord had been separated from its pedalboard.⁹² I have also believed so until recently, because I haven't been cautious enough while reading the details of the advertisement of the pedal harpsichord.⁹³ However there is a very important difference here: the 4' was on the upper manual. This difference is not a random detail. In the *MIM Berlin*, there is a so-called *Bachflügel* which is a surviving 18th century harpsichord made by Johann Heinrich Harrass in Breitenbach, Thuringia, with the stops 16' and 8' on the lower manual and 8' and 4' on the upper.⁹⁴ The disposition of the *Bachflügel* is not original, but it is nevertheless from the first half of 18th century.⁹⁵ This disposition with the 4' on the upper manual is usually called "Bach disposition" because according to a text written in 1899, it was invented by Johann Sebastian Bach who was its first owner.⁹⁶ We have no clear evidence that Bach ever owned the *Bachflügel* nor that he invented the disposition, but the existence of a harpsichord with a similar, otherwise unrecorded disposition in Leipzig, made by a maker who had good contacts with Bach, might be a good argument for taking the story of the "Bach disposition" seriously. Needless to say that when the "Bach disposition" was described for the first time in 1899, no one knew about Hildebrandt's harpsichords.

In the list, 4 harpsichords were described as having a 16', amongst them 3 being explicitly by Zacharias. A 16' stop can be more or less expected for about 5 to 8 further large harpsichords in the list. The reason for believing so are various. First of all, some are described as being big. In Saxony that was meaning something very impressive: a harpsichord by Silbermann with the compass FF-f''', 2 manuals and the stops 8'8'4' was offered in Leipzig in 1788 as being "not particularly big".⁹⁷ Some harpsichords were described as "Concertflügel", which means that they were big as well. That can be deduced from the fact that all Saxon "Concertflügel" which have been described in detail contain some large features, including a 16' or at least a manual down to CC. Others were described as having 4 choirs, which in Saxony would usually imply a 16' stop.

Zacharias Hildebrandt also built a triple manual harpsichord. The stoplist is unclear:

92 Matteo Messori, 'Ein 16'-Cembalo mit Pedalcembalo von Zacharias Hildebrandt', in: *Bach-Jahrbuch 2010 (Bd. 96)*, Hrsg. Peter Wollny (Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Leipzig, 2010), p.288.

93 See for instance Schick, 2022, p.129.

94 *MIM Berlin*, Inv.-Nr.316.

95 Horst Rase, 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis des mittel- und norddeutschen Cembalobaus um 1700', in: *Studia Organologica, Festschrift für John Henry van der Meer zu seinem fünfundsiebzigsten Geburtstag*, Hrsg. Friedemann Hellwig (Tutzing, Hans Schneider, 1987), pp.285–293.

96 Oskar Fleischer, 'Das Bach'sche Clavicymbel und seine Neukonstruktion', in: *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, Jg. 1 (1899/1900), p.62.

97 *Von Hagensche Kupferstich-Sammlung...worunter ein sehr wohlerhaltener Silbermannische Flügel*, *Auktionskatalog*. (G.A.F. Löper, Leipzig, 1788), 25.02.1788.

Carl Christian Heinrich Rost, Christoph Gottlob Weigel, *Anzeige einer ansehnlichen Kupferstichsammlung [...]*, Bd. 10, 15.01.1791.

Ein vortreflicher Flügel von Zacharias Hildebrand, in braun gebeiztem Holz mit 3 Claviaturen, er geht vom Contra C. bis drey gestrichen F. und hat folgende Register, als Lautenzug, Spinet, Cornet, Principal und Octävgen. Er ist in völlig gutem Stande. Uebrigens sind die Verdienste des Meisters zur Gnüge bekannt. 12.-

Carl Christian Heinrich Rost, Christoph Gottlob Weigel, *Anzeige einer ansehnlichen Kupferstichsammlung [...]*, vol. 10, 15 January 1791.

A splendid harpsichord by Zacharias Hildebrand, in brown-stained wood with 3 keyboards, it goes from Contra C. to f^{'''}. and has the following stops: buff stop, Spinet, Cornet, Principal and Octävchen. It is in completely good condition. Incidentally, the master's merits are well known. [Handwritten:] 12.-

Spinet refers to a lute stop, Cornet to the normal upper 8', Principal could be 16' or 8', The Octävchen (=small octave) should be a 4' (Octävchen was a common word for the 4' stop) and in any case it seems that there are not enough stops mentioned here to understand why there were three manuals in the harpsichord. In any case it seems that the stoplist could be read as a top view on the harpsichord, starting at the nut going back until arriving at the soundboard, starting with the buff stop, followed by lute stop ending with the stops which were in the gap. Maybe the manuscript of that source contained another "Principal" after the "Octävchen" which the non-musician copist omitted in the print because he thought of it as a repetition made inadvertently. That seems sensible, because it would be uncommon for a German harpsichord to have the 4' at closest to the soundboard. The disposition of that triple manual can be guessed on that basis like that (from the nut to the soundboard): buff stop-lute 8'-upper 8' (double plucking)-Principal 16' or 8', Octävchen 4' and Principal 16' or 8'. The surviving triple manual Hass harpsichord (*Musée instrumental de Provins*) has the following disposition: lower manual: 16'+buff), 2', second manual: 8'4', upper manual: 8'*. Except the 2', that disposition could have been the same on that Hildebrandt harpsichord. Triple manual harpsichords seem to have been more common in Hamburg than in Saxony and it wouldn't be surprising if Hildebrandt would have been inspired by those. Also his organ in Naumburg has some Northern German style features, such as the Quintadena 8' in the Rückpositiv and Quintadena 16' in the Hauptwerk, which most central German builders would have put on the same manual.⁹⁸

Stops being named Principal, Octave, Cornet and Spinet can be found especially often for Zacharias Hildebrandt. The same names appear also in other central German advertisements, including one for a Silbermann harpsichord.⁹⁹ But they cannot be found for builders from northern Germany, including those from Hamburg. That might be due to the fact the Silbermann and Hildebrandt were organ builders and it could be linked to the fact, that Hass, Fleischer, Zell and Mietke probably weren't organ builders. That's contrary to the still common believe that especially Hass' harpsichords with their extravagant dispositions show the vicinity between German harpsichords

98 Dähnert, p.98.

99 *Dreßdener Gelehrte Anzeigen*, No.IV, 26.01.1768.

and organs. In fact, the Silbermanns and Hildebrandts might have represented the links between those two instruments in a more complete way than their Northern colleagues.

Let's go back to the harpsichords from the *Specificatio*, which I included in the table above. I put some information brackets as suggestions of how big those harpsichords could have been. Here are the thoughts which lead me to guess like this. Hildebrandt didn't provide any description in the *Specificatio*, except the price. New prices of those five harpsichords ranged between 100 and 185 rthlr. Big price ranges within the production of one maker were normal: Friederici asked in 1755 for 60 to 200 rthlr for a harpsichord, depending on the features it had.¹⁰⁰ The limit between harpsichords by Friederici with one and two manuals was at 100 rthlr and his clavichords costed 20 to 40 rthlr. The brethren Wagner in Schmiedefeld (Thuringia) asked for 50 rthlr for a single manual harpsichord, 80 for a double manual and 150 for a harpsichord with a 16' stop.¹⁰¹ Their clavichords costed 20 rthlr. Friederici and Wagner seemingly were more expensive than Hildebrandt who asked for 10 to 15 rthlr for a clavichord. There are also references for 2 cheaper big instruments, both however anonymous: a newly built 16' harpsichord in Leipzig was recorded to be sold for 100 rthlr in 1750,¹⁰² a harpsichord with the stops 16'8'8'4' in Braunschweig costed 107 rthlr when it was built (it was offered in 1787 second hand for 70 rthlr, but the compass FF-d''' might suggest it was an instrument from before 1750).¹⁰³ If one takes into account that Hildebrandt's clavichords were notably cheaper than those by Wagner and Friederici and if we take in account that much cheaper 16' harpsichords existed than those by Wagner, it seems very likely that all five harpsichords in the *Specificatio* were quite large. They probably all had 2 manuals and one couldn't even rule out that also the cheapest ones could have had a 16' stop. At least the 2 most expensive ones must have had some very fancy features of musical or decorative nature.

This article is mostly about particularly big instruments. This is not only due to my interest, but also to the fact that those were the most appraised and most well described instruments in newspapers. Newspapers are not only good sources for discovering long lost instruments; they are also a good source for who used them. Amateur and professional musicians are listed in the *Specificatio* and both groups could own every kind of small and big instruments. Not only clavichords, but also spinets seem to have been very common as domestic and learning instrument. That can be seen about the spinet for a boy or the clavichord for Mademoiselle Wiedemann. The professional musician Gerlach even bought a clavichord and a spinet by Hildebrandt the same year. Private non-professional musicians also owned large instruments. The tax collector Weickart offered his large CC-f''' four choir Hildebrandt harpsichord for sale in 1767.¹⁰⁴ The professional musicians Doles and Homilius are listed in the *Specificatio* for very different priced and probably sized harpsichords.

Those large concert harpsichord are also interesting because some of them were owned by concert organizers. Indeed, the German harpsichord was not understood as a domestic, but as a public

¹⁰⁰ *Leipziger Zeitung*, 13.04.1755, p.232.

¹⁰¹ Katalog Breitkopf u. Sohn, (Leipzig, Breitkopf u. Sohn, zur Neujahrsmesse 1764). Johann und Michael Wagner (Obm. in Schmiedefeld/Thüringen).

¹⁰² Caroline Köhler &co (Hrsg), *Johann Christoph Gottsched, Briefwechsel, Band 6*, Juni 1750–März 1751, (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2022), p.37.

¹⁰³ *Braunschweigische Anzeigen*, 29.09/03.10.1787.

¹⁰⁴ *Leipziger Zeitung*, 06.04.1767, p.216 and *Leipziger Intelligenzblatt*, 25.07.1767.

instrument.¹⁰⁵ Instead of our modern concert halls there were coffeeshops, churches and court orchestras with a regular concert activities where such instruments were part of the inventory. Hildebrandt was working in Leipzig where nobility played a less important role and where there was no court orchestra. Nevertheless various instruments were owned by concert organizers. Enoch Richter, a regular concert organizer has been mentioned. A two manual harpsichord was offered in a guesthouse.¹⁰⁶ Most interesting is the harpsichord which was described in a private concert society in Altenburg.¹⁰⁷ It is not sure if it was by Zacharias, but it had a 16' and was the most important instrument in that group. The society owned a garden with a "garden house", which must have been a concert place outside of the city wall of Altenburg. This is very similar to Leipzig, where the coffeehouse owners Zimmermann and Richter had their gardens with garden houses outside of Leipzig. The garden house in Altenburg contained a concert hall where every week a group of people met, including 20 to 24 musicians to perform all kinds of instrumental music. The harpsichord was the only named instrument, but this society owned more instruments which were all paid by the members, which were 30 regularly paying people and many more occasionally paying people.

Many of the details in Hildebrandt's list of instruments may seem surprising to the modern reader, but most of the information is relatively average for a German maker in the mid-18th century. The wide variation in size and type of instrument was relatively standard in Germany. The number of instruments documented by Hildebrandt is high and can only be compared to those of the Silbermann dynasty. The documentation of Hildebrandt's harpsichords is also unusually full of interesting details, which are important for understanding the entire musical culture of the mid-18th century.

105 See for instance *Leipziger Monatsschrift für Damen* (Leipzig, Bey Voß und Compagnie, 1794), p. 71. It is only one text amongst others which emphasizes on the fact that harpsichords only sound well in big rooms.

106 *Leipziger Zeitung*, 16.05.1786.

107 *Deutsche Zeitung* 25.10.1792. p.714-716.

