

Presenting and Interpreting Cultural Heritage of the Moravian Church, focusing on Music

Alice Caldwell, Christina Ekström and Joel Speerstra

The Moravian settlement of Christiansfeld was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2015. Since then there has been renewed interest in exploring and performing music from the Christiansfeld collection. Most recently, the symposium *The Music of Christiansfeld: The Moravian Musical Heritage in Denmark and Beyond*, organized by the ensemble Concerto Copenhagen was held in November 2025. The symposium was as part of the preparations for their upcoming project devoted to the performance of music from the music collection in Christiansfeld. This panel takes its point of departure from themes that emerged at the symposium and highlights strategies for disseminating findings from research as well as for introducing and making current scholarship and musical performance of Moravian music accessible to singers and instrumentalists who want to explore music from Moravian collections. The emic–etic distinction originating from linguist Kenneth Pike constitutes a recurring conceptual framework throughout the panel.

Individual papers and biographies

Christina Ekström, University of Gothenburg

Strategies for presenting results from the project "Music-making in the Single Sisters' House in Christiansfeld" outside the academy

In Christiansfeld, as in other Moravian Church settlements, the unmarried women had their own house where many of them lived, worked and worshiped. Previous musicological research offers glimpses into their house suggesting the existence of musical performances, and possibly even an orchestra. This inspired an in-depth study, focusing on why, when and where music-making occurred, what the repertoire included, and who the listeners were. Diaries, memoirs, policy documents, and sheet music were examined through content analysis and performative experiments, respectively. A strict organization and limited opportunities for individual initiatives proved beneficial for developing the music environment in the sisters' house. The study also revealed a woman who acted independently and made decisions that went beyond norms. At the Christiansfeld Symposium 2025 I presented a selection of findings from the study. At the Bethlehem conference, I will discuss strategies for communicating the findings to an audience outside the academy.

Biography

Christina Ekström is a docent and an associate professor in Musical Performance at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg. She earned her doctorate in musicology with the dissertation "*Gör dig en sång uti mitt bröst*", *Musikalisk gestaltning i herrnhutisk tradition* from Gothenburg University in 2007. Ekström's research interests are primarily related to aspects of the Moravian Church, its theology, including topics such as music aesthetics, musical performance, hymnology, emotional culture, and music education. Examples of articles are "Performing Music from Moravian Archives" in *Journal of Moravian History* (2023) and "Lasset uns dem Herren singen – Ja, singet alle meine Glieder," Musikalske aktiviteter i Brødremenigheden 1773–1778 in *En by på kongens mark, Grundlaeggelsen av Christiansfeld 1773* (2023). Ekström received the University of Gothenburg's Pedagogy Prize in 2015. In 2019, she was awarded the Harald Göranson Prize from the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. This prize was motivated by Ekström's extensive and diverse studies of the music and musical life of the Moravian Church.

Joel Speerstra, University of Gothenburg

Embodied music-making as Global Cultural Heritage: the clavichord from a Moravian perspective

The Early Music movement of the 1970s turned 18th-century keyboard culture in central and northern Europe into Global Cultural Heritage. The clavichord was the last of the keyboard instruments to be carefully revived for reasons that can be unpacked and discussed in this presentation. But we know that the instrument played a key role in informing the aesthetics of Moravian music culture in Europe and America. Until its revival in the late twentieth century, this role was mostly interpreted through the study of no-longer-playable objects, scores, and written descriptions. These descriptions often point to a special role that the instrument played in training musicians to embody music. It was this embodiment of a particular expressivity related to the *Empfindsamkeit* that seems to also have been most cherished by Moravian communities. In 2022, the author participated in a conference at Christiansfeld organized by Christina Ekström on women's musicking and proposed that the 1749 Hamburg-built Hass clavichord in the Christiansfeld Museum in the collection could be reconstructed. The proposal was accepted and the instrument was reconstructed by the author and Per Anders Terning in Sweden and inaugurated in November of 2025, at another recent conference in Christiansfeld, providing a new tool to explore the keyboard music preserved in the Christiansfeld archives. An argument can be made that without reconstructing these instruments carefully, we cannot communicate and preserve an embodied way of music-making for which the clavichord was always praised. The author and two other Principal Investigators launched a new European Research Council project in September of 2025 called REM@KE (Reconstructing Embodied Music-making at the Keyboard) to study what could be called an "intangible global cultural heritage" of performance. A presentation of the project could include an introduction to the new copy of the clavichord in Christiansfeld, as well as a discussion of the way Tannenberg's preserved instrument in Nazareth PA could increase our knowledge of the instruments of the organ builder Silbermann, lifting the Moravian builder and his community into the larger story of the intangible cultural heritage of performance around the Bach family itself.

Biography

Joel Speerstra is an associate professor at the Academy of Music and Drama, University of Gothenburg. He earned his doctorate in musicology with the dissertation "Bach, the pedal clavichord, and the organist" from Gothenburg University in 2000. Speerstra teaches organ and related keyboard instruments and is active as a musicologist, instrument builder, and performer. Through the Organ Research Workshop at the University of Gothenburg, he led process reconstructions of numerous historical clavichords. His research on the pedal clavichord was awarded a national prize in musicology from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. His current research project from the Swedish Research Council looks at riddle games in published keyboard music from the seventeenth century. He has also just been awarded a six-year EU Synergy Grant, "Rem@ke: Reconstructing Embodied Musical Knowledge at the Keyboard," along with two other Principal Investigators at the Universities of Pavia and York. It is the first Synergy Grant to be awarded to music research. He is also the 2025 recipient of the Early Music America Joan Benson Clavichord Award.

Alice Caldwell, Independent Scholar

Supporting the Work of Performers Approaching Moravian Music with Historical and Cultural Authenticity

At the November 2025 conference, Music of Christiansfeld, I presented a paper on the origins and methodology of Heinrich August Jaeschke's 1847 musicianship manual, *Sammlung der gebräuchlichen Choral-Melodien der evangelischen Brüder-Gemeine*. The paper concluded with a summary of Jaeschke's later activity as a missionary and language scholar in Tibet. In line with one theme of the conference, I emphasized the transnational arc of Jaeschke's career, starting with his teaching in Christiansfeld and Niesky and continuing with his move to Tibet, where music still had a role in his mission work. I also brought out the chief concern of Jaeschke's teaching method, which was to impart a high level of musical accuracy to the singing of chorales by those students who were not receiving advanced training in music. Discussion following the presentation linked Jaeschke's methodology to the Moravians' renown for musical excellence in all their communities. Concerto Copenhagen concluded the conference with a performance of works from the Christiansfeld archives which amply attested to the musical sophistication of Moravian communities. Concerto Copenhagen's stated mission of performing music with an understanding of its cultural context—"to engage with the full picture behind the musical score" - presents a model of historical performance that is especially relevant to Moravian music. I will present some suggestions for supporting the work of performers approaching Moravian music for the first time and solicit ideas from conference participants based on their experience and knowledge.

Biography

Alice Caldwell earned degrees in organ performance and historical musicology, completing her PhD degree at New York University with a dissertation on Moravian liturgical music. Since then, she has continued research in Moravian music on topics including sacred vocal music, chorale singing, keyboard music for children, and the life and music of Herrnhut composer Christian David Jaeschke (1755-1827). She is a certified music educator who taught in the public schools of Redding, Connecticut. As a member of the Organization of American Kodaly Educators, she mentors students for acceptance and participation in the OAKE national choir program. She has maintained a career as a church musician across several denominations and has been in her current position at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Fairfield, Connecticut, for over twenty years.