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"Makers of the Piano, 1700-1820." By Martha Novak Clinkscale

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Book Reviews

Martha Novak Clinkscale. *Makers of the Piano, 1700-1820*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. xv, 403 p. ISBN 0-19-816323-1.

"Open the door, and let us go into your room. I am most anxious to see your pianofortes."¹ In this letter of October 14, 1777, Mozart renders a lively account of his meeting in Augsburg with the celebrated keyboard builder Johann Andreas Stein. In *Makers of the Piano, 1700-1820*, Martha Novak Clinkscale opens the door to some 2200 surviving pianos by almost 870 individuals or firms. Framing "The Makers and the Pianos" section, the heart of the book, are important introductory matters, a comprehensive bibliography, an annotated list of collections worldwide, and a useful glossary.

Makers of the Piano is a dictionary of musical instruments and builders. The opening installment in printed format of a computerized relational database (*Early Pianos 1720-1860*) containing at present over 4000 pianos and several hundred makers, it is indeed, as proclaimed on the dust jacket, "the first book to present details about all known extant pianos built during the earliest years of the instrument's existence." Organization is alphabetical by maker, from John Adlam to Johann Christoph Zumpe, probably London's first builder. A typical entry offers biographical information, the dates and locations of workshops, the styles of instruments built, and any innovations attributed to the maker or firm. Then, in smaller type, follow listings of the maker's existent pianos, arranged by category, with each instrument assigned a chronological number. Thus, for example, Clinkscale presents detailed descriptions of 66 squares by John (Johannes) Broadwood, 36 squares by John Broadwood & Sons, 11 grands by Johannes Broadwood, 92 grands by John Broadwood & Son [sic], and 13 uprights. A representative individual listing will include such fields of reference as date, compass, length, width, depth, total height, case, inscription, strings, scale, naturals, sharps, knee levers, pedals, former and present owners, and references.

¹Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Mozart and His Family*, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1989), p. 316. In Mozart's original, the crucial phrase reads, "ich bin so begierig ihre Piano forte zu sehen," *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, coll. & ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch, and Joseph Heinz Eibl (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1962-75), vol. 2, p. 55.

A three-page "Note to the Reader" imparts much essential information. For instance, all measurements are in centimeters. Geographical names stem not from the present day, but rather from the time of the makers. General abbreviations and US Postal Code abbreviations are cited. Potentially problematic reference categories are defined. "Compass," for example, is the "extent of the keyboard from its lowest note to its highest" (p. xiv). An ambitious cross-referencing system facilitates comparisons and connections. Alternative spellings substantially reduce the confusion that notoriously loose eighteenth-century orthography can engender: p. 238, Johannes Scheible(y) (Scheibly, Schibeley). Charts clarify especially complex networks of builders, namely, the Geib Firm (p. 118) and the Silbermanns (p. 265). Translations likewise provide welcome assistance. For example, in 1779 Johann Bernhard Katterfeld of Brunswick was making a "neu verfertigtes Piano-Forte von 5 Octaven, klavierförmig mit 4 Forte-Auszügen..." (a new five-octave fortepiano with four forte hand stops, p. 163). Potential pitfalls are carefully noted, such as, "One needs to view with particular caution any number inked, painted, or stamped on a case" (p. xi). Similarly, the issue of conflicting measurements for the same instrument is handled aptly (see p. xi). The author's personal opinions are clearly labeled as such, while evident throughout is her command of bibliography. On page 183, to cite but one example, she can state authoritatively that two more recent sources supersede information contained in Rosamond E.M. Harding's *The Piano-Forte*, an earlier standard reference work.

The reader will encounter many familiar names, among them Broadwood, Clementi & Co., Benjamin Crehore, important for the development of the entire American piano industry, Bartolomeo Cristofori, complete with a description of the earliest surviving piano, Érard, Stein, and Walter. Although clearly a book for specialists—fortepianists, keyboard scholars, curators, restorers, and collectors—the volume also offers a browser many attractive paths. In addition to individual makers, one encounters fascinating groups like "The Twelve Apostles," active in London. Many builders were inventors, among them Americus Backers, who devised the English action; William Rolfe, who, with Samuel Davis, patented a janissary mechanism; David Loeschman, who described a piano with 33 tones to the octave; and Jean-Henri Pape, inventor of the French downstriking grand action, felt hammer covers, tempered steel wire, and the small cross-strung upright piano. On the grisly side, Tobias Schmidt was possibly the "co-inventor of the guillotine, which he built in his shop for the price of a good harpsichord" (p. 255).

Several builders practiced outside professions prior to, subsequent to, or together with their instrument-building activities. Several were joiners.

Józef Długosz was a master carpenter who headed the Warsaw carpenters' guild. Domenico Del Mela was a priest, Friedrich Wilhelm Pfrang a monk. At the other extreme, Carl Leopold Röllig served as musical director of the Ackermann Theater Troupe in Hamburg, while Charles Trute moonlighted as an innkeeper. The versatile Friedrich Carl Wilhelm Lemme functioned as organist, author, inventor, and keyboard builder. Some interacted with, or had an impact on, famous composers: John Bland and Haydn, Johann Schantz and Haydn, John-Joseph Merlin and Charles Burney, Johann Evangelist Schmidt and Leopold Mozart, Nannette Stein Streicher and Beethoven, Fryderyk Buchholtz and Chopin, and, ultimately, Ignace Pleyel and Chopin. Several were women: Anne Bland (and perhaps her partner, E. Weller), the Widow Brulé, Mademoiselle Daujard, the Widow Naderman, and Nannette Stein Streicher, one of the finest builders of her day and, in her childhood, the subject of an important Mozart letter about performance practice, especially time, "the chief requisite in music."² Several, finally, suffered painful or gruesome deaths. Johann Georg Hambo, Johann Jacob Könnicke, and Johann Heinrich Stein died of lung disease (cancer or tuberculosis). Joseph-Gaspard Lauterborn "drowned under mysterious circumstances in the Seine at Bougival" (p. 178). John Osborne "committed suicide by leaping from a 14th Street window" (p. 213).

Several unrelated asides catch the reader's eye. To cite a representative few, the debt-ridden Jan Ladislav Dussek escaped to the continent, leaving his father-in-law, Domenico Corri, to the fate of arrest and imprisonment. Adam Georg Gottlieb Immler is one of many who lived long, married often, and fathered numerous progeny. Only one Krämer piano survives, the sole representative of a line once "as highly prized and as sought after as violins by Amati and Stradivarius" (p.173). Johann Jacob Schnell narrowly escaped the guillotine, one built by Tobias Schmidt, perhaps?

To shift from people to places, *Makers of the Piano* transports the armchair traveler through time and space to an altered yet strangely familiar landscape. Prodigious activity in Vienna, Paris, and London attests to the centrality of those cities in the instrument's development. Other communities will resonate according to the reader's background and interest. Having once played an instrument from that provenance, I was struck by the vigorous activity in the American Moravian centers of Lititz, Reading, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Positively seductive, the exotic terms applied to some early keyboard instruments suggest the abundance of nature itself: *acousticum*, *anémocorde*, *clavilyra*, *Ditanaklasis*, *Lyraflügel*,

²Letter of October 23-24, 1777, Anderson, *Letters*, pp. 339-40.

melodika, orphica, Panmelodicon, polytoni-clavichordium, Saitenharmonika, schrankenförmige Harfe, Tangentenflügel, and Xaenorphika.

Makers of the Piano is well-designed and attractively printed, in two column-format. Careful preparation and conscientious editing are evident throughout. Some typographical errors have slipped by, as on page 126: "Jakob Schelke (Schelkle) a [sic] obscure piano maker in Währing, near Vienna." Occasionally, a sentence rambles (p. 132, col. 2, under "Hambo"), or the sequence of clauses momentarily obscures a sentence's true meaning (p. 230, col. 1, under "Röllig"). Having chosen a cutoff year, Clinkscale deals effectively with the difficult decisions to be made in the gray area around 1820. Jonas Chickering (1798-1853), for example, receives a biographical entry. Since no surviving pianos predate 1820, however, no descriptions appear in this volume. Strangely, for a book filled with figures, we are never told exactly how many pianos and how many makers this first installment includes, nor are we given a model check list of items that could appear in an individual listing. As one to whom the term was new, I would have welcomed the inclusion in the glossary of the word "ormolu."

Such minor criticisms in no way compromise Clinkscale's extraordinary achievement. The chief frustration I experienced lies beyond the author's control: the total lack of information about several builders, or the murky history of an important family of keyboard instrument makers such as Dulcken. The author hopes that comparable frustration or sheer curiosity will generate further research, as is already the case with Dulcken.³ Indeed, she welcomes submission of new information to refine and augment the database.

Studies of the piano assume many forms: (1) decorative books, (2) general overviews, (3) monographs about the better-known makers, (4) monographs that address a specific repertoire, (5) technical studies, (6) discographies, and (7) a magisterial book devoted to the keyboard performance practice of the Classic Period.⁴ Until now, however, there has been no comprehensive

³Personal communication from the author (December 1993).

⁴See, for example, (1) Günther Batel, *Handbuch der Tasteninstrumente und ihrer Musik* (Braunschweig: Arbeitskreis für Klavierkunde, 1986); (2) *The New Grove Piano*, ed. Edwin M. Ripin, et al (New York: Norton, 1988); Edwin M. Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons and Other Pianos* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); (3) David Wainwright, *Broadwood by Appointment: a History* (London: Quiller Press, 1982); (4) A. Peter Brown, *Joseph Haydn's Keyboard Music: Sources and Style* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); (5) Robert Winter, "Striking it Rich: the Significance of Striking Points in the

dictionary of the instruments and their makers. Adapting the paradigm developed by Donald H. Boalch for harpsichord and clavichord, Martha Novak Clinkscale has filled a conspicuous gap in piano research.⁵ Lecturer in Music at the University of California, Riverside, fortepianist, and keyboard scholar, she has produced a reference work valuable not only for specialists, but also for students of performance practice in general. While the volume is not intended to guide us in the articulation of a phrase or the execution of a turn, it points toward the singular products on which the composers and performers of the Classic Period and early Romantic years expressed themselves. It is from careful study of these instruments that we may hope to solve basic performance problems of pedaling, range extension, styles of touch, and tone production.⁶ Eagerly anticipating the arrival of his Broadwood, Beethoven wrote on February 3, 1818, "I shall look upon it as an altar upon which I shall place the most beautiful offerings of my spirit to the divine Apollo."⁷ Can there be a more primary component of performance practice study than these precious artifacts whose vital statistics are now accessible in a single volume?

Malcolm S. Cole

Evolution of the Romantic Piano," *Journal of Musicology* 6 (Summer 1988): 267-92; (6) Ann P. Basart, *The Sound of the Fortepiano: a Discography of Recordings on Early Pianos* (Berkeley: Fallen Leaf Press, 1985); (7) Sandra P. Rosenblum, *Performance Practices in Classic Piano Music: Their Principles and Applications* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁵Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord, 1440-1840* (London: G. Ronald, 1956).

⁶I paraphrase William S. Newman, *Performance Practices in Beethoven's Sonatas: an Introduction* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 34.

⁷This quotation appears in Michael Freyhan, "Sentimental Journey: Beethoven's Broadwood Piano Makes an Encore Appearance in London," *Piano Quarterly* no. 159 (Fall 1992): 35.