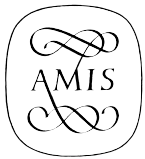
Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME II • 1976



In Memoriam
Edwin M. Ripin

I SAW Edwin Ripin's collection of instruments only once, immediately after a trans-Atlantic flight, and it made all the more vivid an impression on me since the details were so blurred by jet lag. It was a small but fastidious collection, made by a connoisseur rather than an enthusiast. It was immediately clear that each instrument had been acquired only after extremely careful thought—for each was a gem of its kind—and they had all been subject to intense scrutiny and loving care. Moreover, Ed continued to study his instruments closely, to learn as much as he could about the particular so that he could better understand the general. We could have expected, I think, a series of brilliant studies that, in one way or another, grew out of his intimate knowledge of a small group of highly selected examples.

The collection was in some ways symptomatic of the man. I came to know the fastidiousness of his mind, and his intense concern to get things exactly right, in the course of an extensive correspondence on matters related to the new edition of *Grove's Dictionary*. His collaboration in this vast project was made easier, of course, because of his experience in the publishing business; he had been senior editor at Random House from 1966 to 1970. But quite aside from their orderly presentation, characteristic of an experienced editor, Ed's articles were always distinguished by the care with which he had thought out their content. Ed was one of the few contributors who was always eager to know how his articles related to plans for the dictionary as a whole, and few things were ever finally settled in his mind; he would continue to polish, change, and improve what he had written, as he thought more about the problems involved, and as he learned more about the nature of particular instruments. Such concern, of course, sometimes caused

some impatience on the part of those whose job it was to keep things moving, but such concern explains why his articles will be among the best in the new dictionary.

His friends were dismayed to think that his disappointment at not being appointed curator of instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where he had worked for several years after leaving Random House, would have a disastrous effect on his continuing investigation of the nature and history of instruments and their uses, and we were delighted that he was establishing himself as a university man, first at the State University of New York at Purchase (1973–1974), and finally in the graduate faculty of the Department of Music at New York University,

where, we thought, he would continue to grow as a scholar. His death on November 12, 1975, cut short a career that was in a sense just beginning, even though his achievements were already impressive, and, indeed, by any yardstick he must be counted among the finest organologists of our generation.

By saying that his career was just beginning, I mean to suggest more than that he had taught at a university for only a few years. Many of his articles—those in the *Galpin Society Journal*, for example—are concerned with a detailed investigation of a single instrument or a small group of instruments. This approach was characteristic of his work. His article on two-manual Flemish harpsichords (*GSJ*, XXI), for example, produced new insights from a close study of several paintings. The article was in refreshing contrast to the iconographers' obsession with gathering material rather than evaluating it. Ed showed us how we should be using pictures, and his article stands as a model for others to follow.

Similarly his article on the early clavichord (*The Musical Quarterly*, LIII) used a handful of pictures to support his conclusions, but in that study he could draw on a number of different kinds of evidence, not only pictures but also treatises, and existing instruments. That article, too, serves as a model, but of a different kind. It teaches us how to bring together material of various sorts to argue our case, and it does present a new view of the development of an instrument over a considerable span of time. The shorter articles on harpsichords formed a series of preliminary studies and we expected many more articles from him that would eventually have produced a synthesis.

But Ed's career was at its beginning, too, in the sense that his work marks a new stage in the history of the history of keyboard instruments. The book he edited, *Keyboard Instruments* (Edinburgh, 1971), may be characterized as the inauguration of a fresh wave of studies of keyboard instruments, following after and based upon the fundamental books by Russell, Boalch, and Hubbard. Ed helped to steer these new investigations in the right direction, and they will be all the worse because they will now go on without him.

Moreover, he had begun to work on a number of problems that he did not have the time to finish. His interest in the early clavi-

chord led on to a fresh investigation of the nature of that mysterious fourteenth- and fifteenth-century instrument, the chekker, and to a new critical approach to the sixteenth-century organologist Sebastian Virdung, unfortunately an unsatisfactory man to have to acknowledge as the father of our discipline, since his understanding of instruments was not always correct or free from contradictions. Ed's years as an instrument curator encouraged him to consider the differences between restoration and forgery, and his book on *The Instrument Catalogs of Leopoldo Franciolini* (Hackensack, N.J., 1974) presents the primary material necessary to a study of one of the most fascinating figures in the instrument world in modern times, the Florentine dealer whose imaginative creations, most of them incorporating some bits and pieces of old instruments, may be found in many of the world's most famous instrument collections. Someone needs to study thoroughly all the products of Franciolini's fertile imagination, as well as the genuine old instruments that he sold to collectors and museums. We had hoped that Ed would be the man to untangle that extraordinary story, but at least he has made it immeasurably easier for whoever undertakes the job.

In short, though Edwin Ripin is gone—and the tragedy of his life was that he could not finish what he had begun—he was with us long enough to show us how to solve a number of fascinating and important historical problems. In a real sense, then, he will be with us for a long time to come, not least of all in the corporate identity of the American Musical Instrument Society, the organization he helped to found and which he helped to direct in its first crucial years of existence.

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