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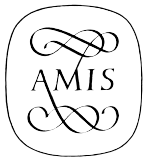

Regional Schools of Harpsichord Decoration

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UNLIKE the winds and bowed strings, early keyboard instruments could not rely on variety of overall form for charm. This was partly because they presented uniform large, flat, often rectangular surfaces which needed to be broken into smaller increments to prevent a clumsy box-like appearance. Some type of applied decoration was a continuing necessity to make these instruments conform to contemporary concepts of good taste; and with constant repetition traditional forms evolved. These forms were often closely related to concurrent furniture styles, but mutations of form and decoration peculiar to the instruments emerged in each region, which are interesting variations on the standard themes in the history of the decorative arts. These variations are also a useful archaeological tool in determining the pedigree of the many unlabeled (or dubiously labeled) instruments which continue to provoke the speculative curiosity of organologists.

It is clearly impossible in a brief overview to consider the full development of the harpsichord through its entire history in all the many regions where it was produced; we shall consider only the highest points of typical development in the five regions which have the greatest production and the greatest musical and decorative influence: Italy, Flanders, France, Germany, and England.

At these high points there is normally a degree of standardization, both musical and decorative, which represents not only the most typical productions of one time, but also polarizes the differences in regional expressions of form and decoration that have existed as tendencies in all periods.

Italy

Although the harpsichord was probably first developed in Burgundy by the early fifteenth century, it is the Italian harpsichord which had the widest influence throughout Europe, and almost any survey of its history must begin with Italy. Far more sixteenth-century instruments have survived from Italy than from any other country, partly because musically they changed little throughout their 300-year history, and therefore were never wholly outmoded;[1] and partly because they were simply too beautiful to be discarded. The sixteenth-century instruments—especially the spinets, which must often have been made for court ladies—are almost always more elaborately and expensively decorated than the later instruments.

Italian harpsichords were normally very delicate objects of thin wood, with case walls only three to five millimeters in thickness, placed within separate storage boxes. These earlier thin-case instruments relate to the violin-making tradition; they were fragile objects which were presumably removed from their storage cases and played on tables. The outer cases were usually made rather crudely by a different hand; they were simple wooden, harpsichord-shaped boxes with lids, often with large reinforcing battens on the sides and exposed end-grain at the joints. But the inner harpsichords were a total contrast, with their extreme fineness of workmanship, and, like violins and lutes, were generally unpainted. They were made of natural woods, with decoration mainly from the application of purfling, marquetry, and delicate moldings along jackrails and case tops and bottoms.

The great ornament of the instrument, as on lutes and guitars, was usually a circular rose of paper, parchment, or wood (sometimes two or three roses in early instruments), which is an anachronistic survival from gothic church rose windows, and is found even in the earliest representations of harpsichords in art.[2] The most elaborate ones

1. But see John Barnes, "The Specious Uniformity of Italian Harpsichords," in *Keyboard Instruments*, Ed. Edwin M. Ripin (Edinburgh, 1971), pp. 1–10, for an effective reminder that Italian harpsichords varied more than has been generally thought.

2. See, for example, several representations of harpsichords in Edmund A. Bowles, "A Checklist of Fifteenth-Century Representations of Stringed Keyboard Instruments," in Ripin, *Keyboard Instruments*, pls. 16–31.

FIGURE 1. Harpsichord by Faby da Bologna, 1677. Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire National de Musique, Paris.

penetrated deep into the instrument in several tiers like reversed wedding-cakes.

The fine craftsmanship of the thin-case Italian instruments relies almost exclusively on the use of natural materials, without the illusionistic painted decoration which is so often found on northern European instruments. Many forms of decoration can often be found together: full-relief sculpture of human or animal figures; *bas-relief* wood carving; mother-of-pearl inlay *alla certosina*, light- and dark-wood purfling; punched wood; gilt painted arabesques; wood marquetry; turned arcades on keyfronts; applied round ivory buttons on case tops; star-shaped wooden buttons; a layered and tiered punched-parchment rose; finely cut wooden moldings applied to the case; moldings cut directly into the layered jackrail; and gilded Latin mottoes.

All these fourteen forms of decoration can be seen in an area perhaps twenty centimeters square on just one Italian spinet, made in 1540 for Eleonora d'Este, Duchess of Urbino, in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.[3] None of them uses paint as an illusion of something else. When a Flemish builder wanted an effect of figured wood-grain, he printed it on paper and glued it to his plain wood lid, as in Figure 3. When a French builder wanted an effect of marble, he had it painted in *trompe l'oeil*, as on the keywell of the 1775 Collesse in the Chambure Collection in Paris.[4] But when an Italian builder wanted an effect of marble, he applied an actual piece of stone to the instrument, as can be seen on a spinet of 1564 by Antonius Irena of Rome.[5]

Most surviving Italian harpsichords are simpler than the early spinets, but the 1677 Faby da Bologna harpsichord in Figure 1 is far from plain. It has an elaborate decorative scheme in black and white, with cypress wood inlaid with ebony, black-filled engraved ivory and mother of pearl (even on the keys), and unusually turned ivory buttons. Only the soundboard (the first area to be decorated on

3. See Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments of the Western World* (New York, [1966–68]), pl. 20; *idem*, "A Spinettina for the Duchess of Urbino," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 1 (1968), 95–108.

4. Illustrated in G. Thibault, Jean Jenkins, and Josiane Bran-Ricci, *Eighteenth Century Musical Instruments: France and Britain* (London, 1973), pl. III, no. 4.

5. In the Paris Conservatoire, no. E.704.C.314.

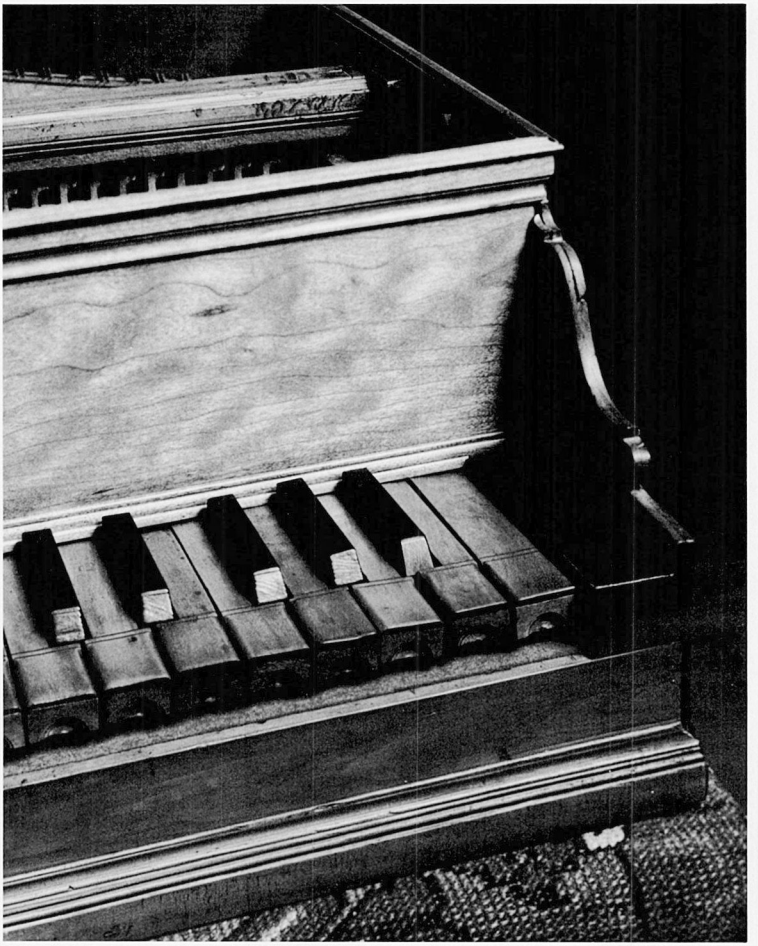

FIGURE 2. Anonymous Italian harpsichord dated 1693. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (The nameboard is typical but not original.) Photograph by Robert Lautman.

almost all northern instruments except in England) is in plain cypress, though with a fine parchment rose. The landscape painting in the lid is, of course, part of the separate outer case, and has been much overpainted. But it is nevertheless a convenient illustration of the Italian habit of confining the (relatively) inexpensive painted and illusionistic decoration to the separate, cheaper outer case. The harpsichord, in effect, is a stringed instrument. The outer storage box was painted to look pleasing in the room (for it was too big to put away like a violin in its case), but was not really part of the precious instrument itself.

But beautiful as are these sumptuously embellished early Italian instruments, there is equal beauty of line to be found in many finely made but plainer cypress or cedar thin-case instruments. The anonymous 1693 harpsichord in the Smithsonian Institution, shown in Figure 2, is an example. Its moldings, molded bridges, scrolled cheek bracket, arcaded key-fronts, and scrolled jackrail supports and bridge-ends are its only ornaments; originally, there was not even a rose in the bare spruce soundboard. The key-end scrolls are a double thickness of the case sides, so the case thinness is here disguised, just as the top moldings disguise it behind the nameboard. Yet, with so little ornament, the effect is sculptural, and very beautiful.

The string scaling of Italian instruments is short in the treble, and causes the plan view to be a deeply curved wing shape, often with a very long, pointed tail. The plan view is more graceful than the northern harpsichords, and Italian decoration usually emphasizes the plan rather than the elevation. The top and bottom moldings surround the body of the instrument behind the nameboard like rubber bands, leaving the projecting keywell isolated, a separate area. Ivory buttons (which frequently function as tacks through moldings) are often dotted along the top edges of the case, nameboard and jackrail, which further accents the contours in a manner suggestive of the modern "form follows function" aesthetic.

Line as contour is a quality of a sculptural rather than a painterly mind, and the Italians have historically leaned towards sculpture, even in the great paintings of the Renaissance. This sculptural thinking undoubtedly influences the tradition of using inlay and *appliqué* techniques to build up the object out of natural materials, rather than

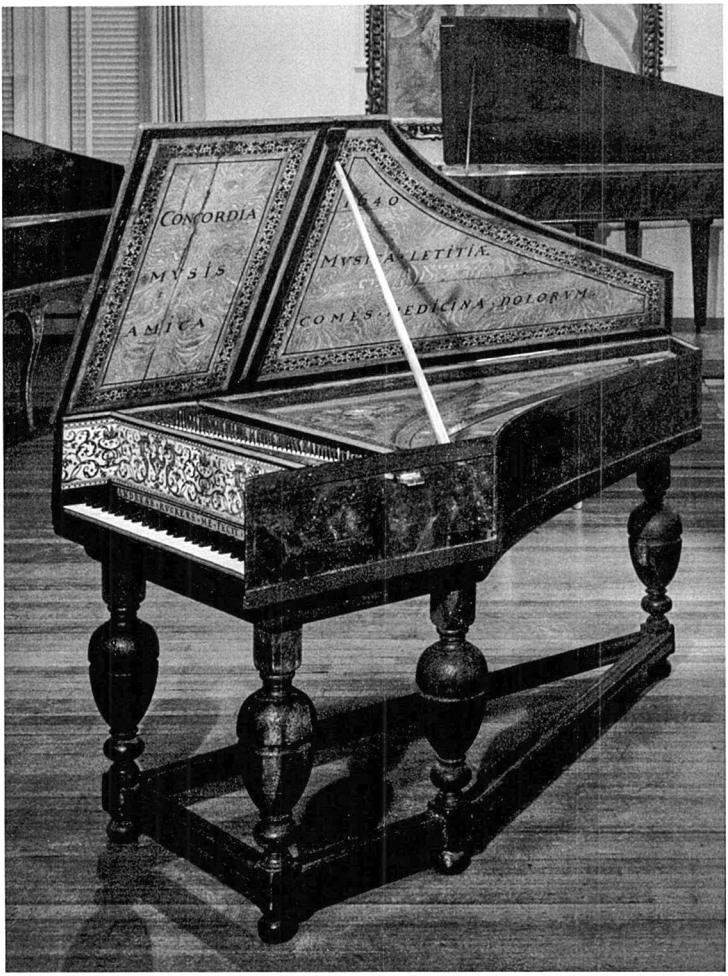

FIGURE 3. Harpsichord by Andreas Ruckers the Elder, Antwerp, 1640.
Yale University Collection of Musical Instruments. Photograph by Thomas A. Brown.

IGURE 4. Soundboard of virginal at quint pitch by Andreas Ruckers the Elder, Antwerp, 520. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (The soundboard has been overpainted, it follows the original design.)

making it flat and painting an illusion of relief upon it. Compare the complex effect of the moldings on the 1693 harpsichord (Fig. 2) with the painted illusion of top and bottom mock-moldings on the 1640 Andreas Ruckers harpsichord (Fig. 3), and the ribbon winding around a bar in space on the 1760 Stehlin (Fig. 5). The northerners created their three dimensions in paint on a flat "canvas." The Italians modeled their three dimensions into the object itself.

Outer case decoration took various forms—painted Mannerist grotesques, painted Baroque arabesques, painted floral garlands, gilded chinoiserie on various dark-colored grounds, decoupage (in Italy called *arte povera*, or poor man's art), or covering the outer case with cloth or gilt stamped leather like a book. (Interestingly, both decoupage and coverings of leather or cloth may be considered further examples of "applied" decoration.)

Lid paintings are not usually of especially high quality, though there are some exceptions. Some are serene pastoral scenes, but most are humanistic mythological scenes or allegories, full of agitated nudes, and often with a musical theme, such as *Orpheus* or *Apollo and Marsyas*. A harpsichord lid is a difficult shape to compose, and one of the most amusingly successful is that of the Alessandro

FIGURE 5. Harpsichord by Benoist Stehlin, Paris, 1760, before restoration. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Trasuntino of 1531.[6] A large, pneumatic nude reclining on one elbow completely fills the wing-shaped lid—another marvelous example of "form follows function," though in another sense of the phrase.

Italian harpsichord bases also reflect the sculptural penchant. Some, like the Donaldson Trasuntino, are simply three lathe-turned

6. In the Donaldson Collection, Royal College of Music, London. The lid painting is from the seventeenth century, as are presumably the outer case decoration and the stand. Illustrated as frontispiece, *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed., vol. IV.

legs—the front two attached to each other by cross-bars, the rear leg isolated on crossed braces. Some, of similar structure, follow the international fashion for twist-turned legs. But the prevailing humanism in Italy caused anthropomorphism in furniture. A surprising number of harpsichords are supported by gilded sculptures. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has an anonymous seventeenth-century gilt extravaganza where the instrument is supported or surrounded by no less than eight human figures, two dolphins, and a serpent.[7] Even when using a simple uncarved cabriole leg, based on the French Louis XV style, the Italians exaggerate the exuberance of the curves to give the instrument an animal-like energy. And in the more elaborately-carved abstract stands, such as that of the 1697 Grimaldi harpsichord in Nürnberg,[8] the gilded energy overwhelms the instrument, which becomes a mere accessory to the whole.

Although the history of the Italian harpsichord reveals little evolution in time, there was from the beginning a wide and imaginative variety of forms of the instrument. Besides the standard harpsichord at eight-foot pitch, there were four-foot harpsichords, clavicytheria, claviorgana, ottavina spinets in pentagonal and rectangular form, bentside spinets, polygonal virginals or spinets, and even an ogival spinet. The various spinets, especially the earlier ones, tended to be more elaborately decorated than the harpsichords; but the decorative formulae were the same for all types.

One major development did occur chronologically: the gradual emergence, beside the normal thin-case inner-outer instrument, of a second structural type with a heavy case some thirteen millimeters thick (like the northern instruments), and with no separate outer case. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries an odd transitional variety appeared, called by Hubbard the "false inner-outer" type.[9] The habit of seeing the separate molded inner instru-

7. Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 57.

8. Carlo Grimaldi, Messina, 1697. Illustrated in J. H. Van der Meer, *Wegweiser durch die Sammlung historischer Musikinstrumente* (Nürnberg, 1971), p. 30.

9. Frank Hubbard, *Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 20 and pl. IV. An example is the Boni da Cortona 1617 virginal (polygonal spinet) illustrated in Cynthia A. Hoover, *Harpsichords and Clavichords* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), pls. 19–21 and cover.

ment was, for a while, too strong to abandon. So the illusion of such a separate inner instrument was created by gluing thin cypress cheek brackets, moldings and "inner case walls" to the actual interior sides of the harpsichord.

Gradually during the eighteenth century this illogical transitional form gave way to a plain, heavy-case instrument with no illusions about it.[10] They were well but inexpensively made, perhaps largely for relatively poor owners and professional musicians, as the court ladies probably continued to play their dances and popular tunes on the older, more elaborate spinets. But the harpsichords played continuo in the operas of Rossini well into the 1820s. The last dated surviving instrument is a spinet by Alessandro Riva, made in Bergamo in 1839,[11] which indicates that, away from the great centers of culture, the harpsichord had a surprisingly long life in Italy.

Flanders

There was an early sixteenth-century Flemish tradition of harpsichord building which was strongly influenced by the Italians, both in using top and bottom moldings applied to thin wooden cases with gothic soundboard roses, and in polygonal spinet forms (but with inset, not projecting, keyboards); and this Italian influence probably

10. A 1705 bentside spinet by Feroci of Florence in the Württembergisches Landesgewerbemuseum, Stuttgart, is of this type, and in many details resembles instruments by Cristofori, also of Florence. The latter sometimes followed the false inner-outer tradition with glued-on key-scrolls and separate inner-case cypress veneer back to the jackrail (as on his harpsichord of 1722); and sometimes used the plain, unillusionistic heavy integral case (as on his pianoforte of 1726), and sometimes an illogical combination, as on his harpsichord of 1726, in which a false inner-outer heavy instrument is placed within a separate outer case. All three instruments, at the Karl-Marx Universität, Leipzig, are illustrated in George Kinsky, *Katalog des Musikhistorischen Museums von Wilhelm Heyer in Cöln*, vol. 1 (Cologne, 1910), nos. 84, 85, and 170, pp. 101 and 171.

11. Also in the Heyer Collection, Leipzig, no. 65. Inscription illustrated *ibid.*, no. 65, p. 255. Another spinet by the same maker, dated 1836, is in the Gallini Collection, Castello Sforzesco, Milan, which indicates that this was not an instance of an isolated or freak survival.

was transmitted through an intermediate German school.[12] But by 1579, when Hans Ruckers the Elder entered the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp, simultaneously founding the Ruckers dynasty of builders and initiating the great century of Flemish harpsichord building, there was already a strong indigenous tradition in Antwerp.

Since the Guild of St. Luke was the guild of the painters and printers as well as of the instrument builders, the Ruckers builders must have been considered professional decorators as well as builders. Certainly the fine sixteenth-century virginals show the very highest quality of professional painting and decoration in every detail. The 1581 mother-and-child virginal by Hans Ruckers the Elder in New York is a superb example.[13] The floral soundboard painting style is virtually identical to that of great Flemish illuminated manuscripts of the period.[14] Every part of the instrument is painted in great detail, without the use of printed papers, and even including the rare sixteenth-century feature of applied *bas-relief* portrait plaques. These were instruments fit for royalty, and extremely expensive to produce.

But by the seventeenth century, the decorators were no longer so meticulous or so professionally trained, and the instruments were

12. Because there are so few surviving German sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century harpsichords, this article follows the order of Hubbard and Raymond Russell (*The Harpsichord and Clavichord*, 2nd ed. [New York, 1959]) in discussing Flemish instruments after the Italians. This might seem to imply a direct succession of influence from Italy to Flanders; but in fact there is ample evidence that the Italian characteristics came to Flanders via an early German tradition. See John Henry Van der Meer, "Beiträge zum Cembalobau im Deutschen Sprachgebiet bis 1700," in *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums* (1966), pp. 103–133; *idem*, review of Hubbard, *Three Centuries*, in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XX (1967), 143–146; Edwin M. Ripin, "On Joes Karest's Virginal and the Origins of the Flemish Tradition," in Ripin, *Keyboard Instruments*, pp. 65–73; and Nicolas Méeus, "La Facture de virginals à Anvers au 16e siècle," in *Brussels Museum of Musical Instruments Bulletin*, IV (1974), 55–64.

13. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, illustrated in Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 26.

14. See, for example, the *Hortulus Animae* of Margaret of Austria, illuminated by Gerhard Horebout, early sixteenth-century Flemish (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek MS. 2706); Grimani Breviary, illuminated by A. and S. Bening and Gerhard Horebout (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana MS.110); The Soane Hours, Ghent-Bruges school, c. 1500 (Sir John Soane's Museum, London, MS.4); Prayer Book, Flemish, fifteenth-century (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS. Pal.153); an untitled pattern book, Anglo-Flemish, c. 1520–30 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum MS.1504).

being decorated with much greater economy to simulate an elaborate effect. The Andreas Ruckers harpsichord of 1640 at Yale University, shown in Figure 3, is one of the most typical surviving examples of what must have been the standard form of Antwerp seventeenth-century harpsichord decoration, and it represents the later, more economical methods.

The case and lid exterior are painted in red-brown *faux marbre*, with gray-green simulated raised, flat moldings top and bottom, casually indicated by unrealistic lines of light and shadow. Like the Italian case moldings, when the lockboard is in position the mock-moldings surround the entire instrument like rubber bands. But unlike the Italians, they include the recessed keyboard; and on virginals and the one surviving Ruckers polygonal spinet, the keyboard is recessed into the case instead of projecting like the Italian spinets and harpsichords. The natural keys are covered with bone (not the more expensive ivory of the Italians), and there are plain black-stained wood sharps. The key-fronts are normally covered with cutout layered paper trefoils, reminiscent of the gothic, on a bright red ground of glue.[15] The heavy melon-turned oak stand of the 1640 Ruckers is close to the Dutch and Flemish tables of the time, as can be seen in many paintings by Vermeer and other Netherlandish painters, and in the designs of Hans Vredeman de Vries.[16]

Woodblock-printed paper designs in black and white (darkened to yellow by varnish, as shown even in mid-seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings) decorate the keywell, the top of the jackrail, and the case and lid interiors. The designs are originally based on Venetian-Saracenic ornament, and some come from a book published in

15. According to microscopic examination of the unusually well-preserved key-fronts of the Ruckers 1620 virginal shown in Figure 4, by J. Scott Odell, Head Conservator, National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution.

16. Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Differents pourtraicts de menuiserie*, c. 1580, and *Variae architecturae formae*, 1601, popularized the Italian Classical-Mannerist style of furniture and architecture in the low countries, and his influence was dominant through most of the seventeenth century. See Th. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, "The Low Countries 1500–1630," in Helena Hayward, *World Furniture* (New York, 1965), figs. 159–162.

1554 by Balthasar Sylvius.[17] They form an inexpensive substitute for the complicated wood, ebony, and ivory marquetry in similar patterns that was fashionable throughout Europe, especially in north Italy, Germany, and at Fontainebleau. The central areas of the lids are papered with a woodblock-printed imitation of matched figured wood veneer, yet oddly the paper was printed in the unrealistic color of pale grayish khaki, so that it cannot have deceived anyone; it must be a conscious stylization. Divisions between various papers, bare wood strips, and black-painted outer borders are set off by casually painted lines of black India ink and vermilion tempera, with vermilion arabesques and "springs" placed to cover the joints and the simulated joints in the mock-woodgrain paper. In the center of each of the two lids is a black inked Latin motto, usually of a religious or musical sentiment. The maker's Latinized name is lettered in ink on the keybatten, "Andreas Rvckers me fecit Antverpiae" (though on virginals this is usually on the bare poplar or lime jackrail).

The spruce or fir soundboards were elaborately decorated. In the center is the maker's trademark, a gilt cast lead-alloy rose with a winged harpist and the maker's initials, placed so that the bottom is towards the keyboard. The beveled edge of the rose-hole is also gilt, but otherwise there is normally no gold on the entire instrument. The case-top moldings (which probably developed out of the Italian tradition) are cut directly into the thick (circa 13 mm) case walls and left in natural wood; but when polished or varnished and surrounded by dark paint and papers, they give a surprising effect of being gilded, and this may have inspired the later French habit of gilding case moldings. The incut moldings make the heavy case seem thinner, unlike the Italian cap moldings, which make the case appear thicker.

On the sixteenth-century virginals, the rose was surrounded by a spiraling circular design of arabesques in a *rinceau* pattern, painted in raised blue tempera. In the early seventeenth century this evolved

17. Balthasar Sylvius, *Variarum protractionum quas vulgo Maurusias vocant*, 1554 (Victoria and Albert Museum no. E.3367–1928). See Peter Ward-Jackson, "Some Main Streams and Tributaries in European Ornament from 1500 to 1750," in *Victoria and Albert Museum Reprints* 3 (III:2–4, 1967), pp. 58–71, 90–103, 121–134; and Peter Jessen, *Der Ornamentstich* (Berlin, 1920), for general and specific sources for Ruckers block-printed paper designs.

into a pattern of spiraling myrtle leaves (for immortality) with small stylized red and white myrtle flowers in the center of each spiral. This myrtle wreath (not laurel, as is often thought) became gradually simpler and less abstract, with larger flowers, as in Figure 4, until by 1630 it was an irregular wreath of garden flowers around the rose, similar to the later French tradition.

On the soundboard of the 1640 Ruckers at Yale, the floral wreath is of this latter type, and it is supported by two winged figures, possibly a seraph and a cherub. One is dressed in red, with blue wings, holding a rose; the other is dressed in blue, with gold wings, holding a sprig of leaves (the latter possibly a repaint, since on other instruments by this painter he holds a palm frond). These figures are clearly taken from very old pattern books, since they show the drapery and facial conventions of the fifteenth century.

Opaque blue raised tempera (probably with egg or size binder) was almost invariably used on seventeenth-century Flemish soundboards for scalloped borders around all the bridges and case sides, framing the areas remaining for floral decoration. Spaced along these borders about every twenty centimeters and in most of the corners are placed large, elaborate, symmetrical blue arabesques of generally triangular form. (The earlier style of Andreas Ruckers also uses many sporadically-placed round, unattached arabesques like snowflakes.) All are based on the same basic skeleton for each soundboard, but with no two alike in the development of details. They range in height from five to ten centimeters, depending on the individual painter and the available space.

Between the arabesques, sometimes crowding up against them and the scalloped borders, is painted in thick, opaque tempera a crowded garden of stylized flowers, fruits, vegetables, insects, birds, moths, food, animals, and occasionally even people—all things that can delight the senses in a garden. Indeed, it is quite possible that the harpsichord is deliberately decorated to represent an allegory of the five senses, which was common thinking at the time: birds for sound, flowers for sight and smell, food for taste, and the keys (and perhaps the furry caterpillar) for touch.

The seventeenth century was a period of symbolic sentiment, and there was also a strong overlay of resurrection symbolism. The

caterpillar and moth, frequently found on French as well as Flemish soundboards, was a common symbol of death's liberation of man's spirit from his body, which had been confined to crawl the earth in life. The goldfinch, commonly found as a resurrection symbol in "Vanitas" still-life paintings,[18] occurs frequently on Flemish and French soundboards. The French later emphasized the resurrection symbolism even more by placing the bird in a dead, broken tree (often a symbol of the Cross) which is putting forth new leaves—from death comes renewed life. Why resurrection particularly should so often appear on harpsichords as a symbolic motif is explained by a common motto on musical instruments: "Dum vixi tacui, mortua dulce cano." The wood speaks: "In life I was silent; in death I sweetly sing."[19]

From its beginnings, Flemish painting has been characterized by a kind of *horror vacui*, a love of profusion for its own sake, and a dislike of plain, undecorated spaces; and this is nowhere more clearly illustrated than on early Flemish harpsichords—and especially on the soundboards. It is unusual to find an area of ten centimeters square with no ornament touching it. The effect is crowded and full of sensual life, and very charming. But, always excepting the sixteenth-century instruments, the style of painting is relatively simple. As in most "primitive" art, profile and frontal views predominate, with few and highly stylized three-quarter views of flowers, little overlapping of forms, and strong outlines. The paintings are certainly not amateurish or unpracticed; the painters must have had some training, and worked closely from pattern books such as those published in Antwerp in the early seventeenth century by Clusius and

18. The tan and black European goldfinch *carduelis carduelis* should not be confused with the totally different and unrelated American goldfinch *spinus tristis*. For the symbolism of the goldfinch and other motifs found on harpsichords, see George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (Oxford, 1964), Section 1–2, *passim*.

19. I am grateful to Paul Guglietti for making me aware of the important connection between this motto and the hitherto puzzling recurrence of the resurrection theme on so many harpsichords; and to Dr. J. H. Van der Meer who recently contributed an expanded version of this distich as it appeared on the Tieffenbrucker viol in the Gemeentemuseum at The Hague: "Viva fui in silvis, sum dura occisa securi; dum vixi tacui, mortua dulce cano."

Gesner.[20] By constant repetition, they became very skilled and polished. But the style was limited and not ambitious; and occasionally, when one of the painters attempts something a little different and outside his usual repertoire, such as a bird in full flight, his limitations show in a delightful awkwardness.[21]

A most interesting aspect of Flemish practice is that each builder employed a different painter, who seems to have decorated all of that builder's soundboards for many years, in a uniquely individual and recognizable style—almost like another trademark. Joannes Ruckers the Younger (son of Hans the Elder)[22] employed one painter from 1598 until around 1625, then another painter until his death in 1642. Then that second painter went on working for Joannes's nephew Couchet (who took over the shop), and decorated all Couchet's soundboards until Couchet's death. The same pattern holds true for the two Andreas Ruckers. Andreas the Elder (also a son of Hans the Elder) had one painter from about 1600 until about 1630, and then a different artist until the builder's death, after 1644. That second painter then continued to work for Andreas Ruckers the Younger until the latter's death.

20. E.g., Carolus Clusius, *Rariorum plantarum historia* (Antwerp, 1601); Konrad Gesner, *Natural Historie* (Zurich, 1550–1560, and much reprinted throughout Europe); P. Mattioli, *Commentaries on the Six Books of Dioscorides* (Prague 1563, Venice 1565, and reprinted in fifty editions and several languages); Emanuel Sweerts, *Florilegium* (Antwerp, 1612); John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris* (London, 1629). Clusius and Gesner are especially close to the style of the painter of the later Andreas Ruckers harpsichords, c. 1630–1651.

21. See for instance the "dive-bomber" bird on the lid interior of the Andreas Ruckers 1624 harpsichord in the Gruuthuuse Museum, Bruges; and a flying heron or crane on the lid of the Andreas Ruckers 1615 harpsichord in the Vleeshuis Museum, Antwerp.

22. For a thorough study of the Ruckers-Couchet family, shops, dates, and social relationships, see the following by Jeannine Lambrechts-Douillez: *"Sic transit gloria mundi": Antwerpse klavecimbels in het museum Vleeshuis* (Antwerp, n.d.), with a genealogical chart; "Biographical Notes on the Ruckers-Couchet Family," *The Galpin Society Journal*, XXII (1969), 98–99; "Documents Dealing with the Ruckers Family and Antwerp Harpsichord-building," in Ripin, *Keyboard Instruments*, pp. 37–41; "Hans Ruckers and His Workshop," *Der Klangliche Aspekt beim Restaurieren von Saitenklavieren*, ed. Vera Schwarz (Graz, 1973), pp. 41–46; and "Archief documenten betreffende de Ruckers familie," in *Ruckers Genootschap 1969–1974* (Antwerp, 1974), pp. 33–53.

These four painters worked in such consistent, repetitive and identifiable styles, even to using different forms of border, arabesque, and alphabet in the mottoes, that any harpsichord labeled as Andreas Ruckers the Elder 1642, but which has a soundboard painting in the normal style of Joannes Ruckers the Younger of about 1620, must be considered suspect in some way. There was an enormous fashion for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ruckers and Couchet harpsichords in the eighteenth century, especially in France, and the high prices they commanded caused many astute forgeries of Ruckers harpsichords—especially when the forgery could be disguised as a *ravalement* of a smaller Ruckers to fit the extended range of eighteenth-century music. But some of the forgers did not correctly associate the style of the individual painter with the individual builder. For instance, the 1749 Goujon harpsichord in the Paris Conservatoire is labeled Hans Ruckers 1590, but the style of its soundboard painting is mostly that of the later Andreas Ruckers instruments, with some borrowings from the style of Joannes Ruckers the Younger. Thus a knowledge of the personal styles of the Ruckers painters can help to weed out the forgeries. It can also help to identify a harpsichord which has lost its rose and maker's inscription. The unlabeled transposing harpsichord of 1615 in the Antwerp Vleeshius Museum must be by Andreas Ruckers the Elder according to the painting style; and the 1611 virginal in the same museum, often called "Andreas or Joannes," is equally surely a Joannes Ruckers the Younger. The 1604 virginal in the Brussels Conservatoire, with an unoriginal jackrail saying "Hans et Andreas Rvckers me fecervnt," has a Joannes Ruckers the Younger soundboard painting, and may be presumed to be by that maker.

Unfortunately for organologists today, there was such a Ruckers-dominated, uniform style of building harpsichords in seventeenth-century Antwerp that there are very few structural clues that can help identify an unlabeled instrument. A rose is easily transferred from one instrument (usually an outdated virginal) to another (a more valuable harpsichord); or a new rose is easily forged. But a soundboard painting in the correct style is far more difficult to transfer or to forge convincingly, so it provides one of the surest bodies of

evidence for identification and the confirmation of identification.[23]

Some of the papered lids on harpsichords by Andreas Ruckers the Elder include flowers, birds, and insects scattered among the mottoes and vermilion arabesques, by the same painter as the soundboard, and usually repeating the same objects with minor variations.[24] These lids are especially valuable since, preserved from the usual dirt, wear, and water that have attacked most soundboard paintings, they show the colors (mostly strong vermilions and dark, strong greens), textures, and details of style of the paintings in an almost new condition. The lids of the Andreas Ruckers the Elder harpsichord of 1624 in Bruges's Gruuthuis Museum and of the 1615 Andreas Ruckers the Elder in the Antwerp Vleeshuis Museum are particularly useful, since their soundboard paintings have all but disappeared, but the same motifs appear in slight variations on the lids, perfectly preserved.

Many of the harpsichords (especially those of Joannes Ruckers the Younger and Jan Couchet) and some of the virginals have paintings rather than papers and mottoes inside the lid—landscapes, allegories, mythological scenes, and musical subjects are frequently found. Though many of these paintings postdate the instruments, some certainly are contemporary. A Ruckers built for the Infanta and later bought by Charles I of England was painted by Rubens, and the paintings doubled the price of the harpsichord.[25]

The very standardized and characteristic formulae for decoration,

23. The individual Ruckers painting styles, the working span of each painter, and clues to the identification and weeding out of soundboard painting forgeries, is the subject of a paper currently in preparation for publication by the present writer.

24. Lid arabesques and borders are always vermilion on the lids, just as they are always blue (not green, except from varnish, or black, as is sometimes thought) on the soundboards except for the very rare unflowered late soundboards—usually Couchets after 1650—which have gold borders and arabesques only: the P. J. Couchet of 1679 in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the Couchet 1671/Taskin in Maintenon, coll. Kenneth Gilbert, and the undated Jan Couchet in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (illustrated in Edwin M. Ripin, "The Couchet Harpsichord in the Crosby Brown Collection," *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, II [1969], 169–178, figs. 4 and 13).

25. See the Windebank-Gerbier correspondence relating to this instrument, quoted in Russell, *The Harpsichord and Clavichord*, 2nd ed., p. 68, and in Hubbard, *Three Centuries*, pp. 231–232.

both of cases and soundboards, which are shown so clearly on the Yale 1640 Ruckers, were repeated with little variation in Antwerp throughout the seventeenth century until harpsichord production ceased temporarily around 1680. The instruments reflect a strongly practical, bourgeois mentality, in producing a good and consistent product efficiently, at reasonable cost. Everything affecting musical function is neatly and precisely made; but no effort was wasted, and the boxes and bases are no finer than they need to be. Compare the effect of the 1640 Ruckers in Figure 3 with that of the Faby in Figure 1, or with the description of Eleonora d'Este's spinet, above. Both the Flemish and the Italian instruments are equally elaborate from a distance, equally "filled-up" with ornament. But one very moderately skilled man could decorate a whole Ruckers harpsichord case and soundboard in a few days. The decoration of Eleonora d'Este's spinet, so integral with the instrument itself, must have occupied a highly skilled craftsman for months. He had no mass-production methods of printed papers and formula painting to speed his task.

Antwerp harpsichords became visually simpler when production was revived in the eighteenth century, perhaps partly because of the deterioration in the economy of Flanders. Building was dominated by Dulcken and Bull in Antwerp and Delin in Tournai. Their cases are normally plainly painted or even bare oak, and bases usually follow the international trends. The soundboard paintings are simpler than in the seventeenth century, with lighter apple-green foliage and larger pastel flowers which are close in style to the Hass harpsichords of Hamburg. Their blue borders, if any, lack the many scattered arabesques that help to organize and give charm to the crowded seventeenth-century soundboards. These later instruments are musically very interesting, but are less characteristic of regional decorative traditions than the earlier Ruckers harpsichords.

It was in the seventeenth century that Antwerp harpsichords reached their highest degree of influence and of conscious visual style. There was, of course, some variation even in these earlier decorative schemes. Not all the harpsichords were painted in *faux marbre*. Some had illusions of iron strapwork (like iron-bound trunks) and even of huge cabochon "jewels" seemingly mounted on

the case.[26] (If an Italian had wanted such an effect, no doubt he would have mounted actual stones on the instrument!)[27] Usually the virginals, when closed, were as plain as black-painted coffins. Bases often had more slender turnings than the 1640 Ruckers, as on the 1627 Joannes Ruckers harpsichord in the Berlin Musikinstrumenten-Museum,[28] or had several balusters with carved cross-brace supports at each end,[29] the latter type found most often under virginals.

But despite all the possible variations, it was a firm and consistent style, and the 1640 Ruckers in Figure 3 probably shows as clearly as any surviving instrument what the standard Ruckers harpsichord was like when it left the maker's shop. It is amusing to reflect that the great 1646 Andreas Ruckers/Taskin in the Chambure Collection in Paris,[30] covered with superb grotesques over gold leaf in the style of Jean Berain, and flowers in the manner of Velvet Brueghel's school, on a fine gilt Louis XVI base, probably began life looking very like the 1640 Yale Ruckers. Its soundboard painting was originally by the same painter. But in stages, as the range was expanded to play the new French music, the case was entirely rebuilt and redecorated to French taste, the soundboard was overpainted to expand the design to cover the new wood and to freshen the worn paint, and the borders and arabesques were removed to facilitate moving the bridges. Beside the Chambure Ruckers, the Yale Ruckers would look naïve. But they began life as visual twins; and in their very different ways, musically and decoratively, they are equally great.

26. Compare the Andreas Ruckers 1637 harpsichord in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, MIR1073 (illustrated in Howard Schott, *Playing the Harpsichord* [London, 1971], pl. 1) to its twin, the Andreas Ruckers 1648 in the Musikhistorisk-Museum in Copenhagen.

27. This was in fact done on an extraordinary spinet by Annibale Rossi, Milan, 1577, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 809–1869 (illustrated in Raymond Russell, *Catalogue of Musical Instruments I, Keyboard Instruments* [London, 1968], no. 6). Almost two thousand (1,928) precious and semiprecious stones are mounted on the instrument, those on the case exterior and keywell set into panels of applied moldings which follow geometric designs reminiscent of the iron "strapwork" pattern of the Ruckers harpsichords.

28. Illustrated in Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 34.

29. Illustrated in Irmgard Otto, ed., *Musikinstrumenten-Museum Berlin* (Berlin, 1965), no. 2230, p. 135.

30. See Jeannine Lambrechts-Douillez and G. Thibault, *La Vie Musicale à Anvers au siècle de Granvelle* (Paris, 1972), no. 4.

To judge from surviving examples there was not a strong indigenous French school of harpsichord building until the mid-seventeenth century, and by then the instruments show a most interesting mixture of Flemish and Italian influences. Two Parisian ottavino spinets of 1672 and 1693, by Philippe Denis and Michel Richard of Paris,[31] show the mixed characteristics clearly. The Denis resembles a polygonal Italian spinet type in form, with thin case, applied top and bottom moldings, cut-down nameboard, projecting keyboard, carved gilt endblocks, a sunken parchment gothic rose, and gold chinoiserie on the black case exterior. Flemish influence shows in the printed (though engraved, not woodblock-printed) papers lining the case interior, the curve of the bridge, and a painted soundboard with blue borders and birds and fruit.

The Richard shows an equal mixture: Italian influence in the cut-down nameboard, the false inner-outer illusion of gluing a cheek bracket to the inside of the unpainted walnut case and using a top molding inside the fairly thin case, and the angled bridge with molded top. There is Flemish influence in the blue soundboard borders, painted flowers, and printed paper in the case interior.

But a wholly indigenous French tradition seems to be shown in both the instruments in the repetition of the soundboard flowers painted on the bare wood jackrail (which is found on many seventeenth-century French instruments); and the keyboards, which have ebony naturals, solid (not veneered) white bone sharps, and complex gothic trefoils (the trefoil idea perhaps borrowed from Italian roses and from Flemish key-fronts) carved deeply into the ends of the key-fronts. And in both instruments the blue borders abandon the scalloped line always used by the Flemish and substitute a continuous scrolling *rinceau* of Baroque design. This type of border is possibly influenced from South Germany directly, since it is closer to the southern German border of interlocking scallops with *fleuron*

31. Both in the Paris Conservatoire; Denis illustrated in Franz Josef Hirt, *Stringed Keyboard Instruments*, trans. M. Boehme-Brown (Boston, 1968), p. 182; another Richard bentside spinet of 1690 is illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pl. 44.

tulip ornaments than to the simple Flemish scalloped line with scattered arabesques.[32]

This combination of elements borrowed mainly from Italy and from Antwerp, mixed with the indigenous French elements, dominates most of the surviving seventeenth-century French harpsichords. Indeed, the Richard ottavino particularly, with its walnut bridges and inner case-top molding, so like the surviving Tibaut harpsichords, shows some aspects of what the eighteenth-century French harpsichord might have become if the rage for the old Ruckers instruments had not changed the course of French harpsichord building. But there was a fashion for taking the small four-octave Ruckers and expanding it to four-and-a-half and then to five octaves, even if it meant using only pieces from the old instrument. This caused a complete change in the scaling, and hence the overall form of the instrument, but many Flemish details of construction and decoration were incorporated into the new French tradition.

The Flemish-style moldings, cut directly into the (circa 13 mm) case tops, were gilded by most eighteenth-century French builders. Otherwise, besides the floral painted soundboards, the simplest eighteenth-century instruments had no other ornament than a Flemish-inspired cast metal rose with harpist and the maker's initials, often plain gold leaf bands on the case and lid, and perhaps carved gilt feet. However, instead of following the "rubber band" principle of the Italian case moldings and the Flemish painted illusion of continuous exterior moldings, the French divided each side of the harpsichord into a rectangle with the gold bands, thus compartmentalizing the instrument and emphasizing the vertical section rather than the plan view.

Gradually, as the seventeenth-century French keyboards were replaced during later *ravalements* in the mid-eighteenth century, the classic French keyboard of black naturals and ivory- or bone-topped sharps emerged, with Italian-inspired lathe-turned arcades for the key-fronts (though the Collesse of 1775, from Lyons, shows an

32. See below, p. 87, and the Mayer 1619 harpsichord in the Museo Carolino-Augusteum, Salzburg, or the southern German ottavino of c. 1600 in the Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, no. 2217, illustrated in Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 30.

interesting and perhaps typically Lyonnaise survival of the seventeenth-century carved trefoil keyfronts).[33]

The classic, minimally decorated instruments owned by the moderately rich and presumably by many professional musicians, in which only the soundboards are painted, are represented by the 1769 Taskin in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh.[34] It has had a particularly strong influence on the modern harpsichord revival because of its early restoration to playing condition, its beauty of sound and action, its simple elegance of decoration, and the purity of its pedigree as Taskin's own harpsichord. But in fact its color scheme, of pale chartreuse exterior and orange-tan or "ripe cantaloupe" interior, is not normal for French harpsichords. The darker color is usually on the exterior; and bright pastels are particularly uncommon on the exterior.

The commonest color scheme on French harpsichords, especially the plain ones which had only a painted soundboard and gold bands for ornament, was a rather pale vermilion interior (which, even when yellowed and darkened by varnish, was very different from the heavy, saturated, harsh red usually called "Chinese Red" today) and a very dark *merde d'oie* green (it often appears black except in strong daylight) on the exterior. Closed, it is all plain green-black. Open, it is like a jewel box lined with red cloth, a brilliant surprise. Normally, the only bare wood visible on an eighteenth-century instrument is its spruce or fir soundboard, bridges, soundboard moldings, and action.

These simple harpsichords have great elegance of line despite their sparseness of ornament. But many instruments were built for the rich and the noble, and decorated as lavishly as any court furniture. The Stehlin 1760 harpsichord in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, shown in Figure 5, is a representative example of the decorated late-eighteenth-century harpsichord. Its base is an early example of

33. Illustrated in Thibault, Jenkins, and Bran-Ricci, *France and Britain*, pl. III and no. 4.

34. Illustrated in Sidney Newman and Peter Williams, *The Russell Collection and Other Early Keyboard Instruments in Saint Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1968), no. 15. For a history of the influence of this instrument, see Raymond Russell, "The Harpsichord since 1800," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, XII, (1955–1956), pp. 61–74.

Louis XVI style, with gilded flutes and turnings on the gray legs; it and the harpsichord probably were made by the same atelier, since the wood, construction, and even the nails are the same.[35] But the French were specialists, by guild regulations, and the harpsichord maker normally turned to professionals for his painted decoration and his hardware.[36] He may often have used a chairmaker for his bases—much of the furniture industry was concentrated then, as now, in the same area of Paris, in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and a case could be easily moved to the painter's or *menuisier*'s atelier in a hay-filled cart.

Bases consistently followed prevailing furniture styles through all the Louis styles. But harpsichords tended to be conservative, and Rococo and even Regence-style stands are found as late as the 1770's, as on the Dedeban 1770 harpsichord in the Smithsonian Institution.[37]

The Stehlin case shown in Figure 5 is pale gray, with outer panel borders in blue, divided by a textured thin line of yellow ochre which makes little attempt to simulate either gold leaf or the light-and-shadow projections found on the Flemish harpsichords. Instead, it casually represents a bar in space, around which a white ribbon winds playfully, and from which beautifully painted garlands of

35. Information from J. Scott Odell, Head Conservator, N.M.H.T., Smithsonian Institution, who restored the instrument in 1968–1970. The inventory of instruments in Stehlin's shop at his death lists several instruments on stands made by himself: "sur son pied fait par led. St. Stehlin." Pierre J. Hardouin, "Harpsichord Making in Paris, Eighteenth Century," part II, *The Galpin Society Journal*, XII (1959), 73–85, especially p. 82. See also Colombe-Verlet, *Les Facteurs de clavecins parisiens* (Paris, 1966), p. 69, citing a Stehlin harpsichord sold six years later, "un clavecin de bois blanc sur son pied non fini" (a harpsichord in white wood on its unfinished stand). However, William Dowd, having examined the two surviving Stehlin instruments, feels that they are so different in fundamental design that he does not believe them to be by the same hand. This suggests that Stehlin may have merely finished cases he had bought, perhaps with their bases, from other harpsichord builders or *menuisiers*.

36. See Hubbard, *Three Centuries*, pp. 85–86, 193–195, 205, and 216. Pierre Hardouin notes that "Treyer owed a painter-varnisher 201 l., and that the latter would return a harpsichord case then being painted only after payment" (Hardouin, "Harpsichord Making," II, 77).

37. Illustrated in Sheridan Germann and Scott Odell, "Pleasing to Eye and Ear Alike: The Jean Mari Dedeban Harpischord of 1770," in *The William A. Clark Collection* (Washington, 1978), fig. 84.

flowers are suspended. This decoration is repeated on the lid exterior in ribbon-bound bouquets.

The entire interior of the Stehlin case and lid were once painted a pale vermilion, which was an inexpensive and very common color found under other decoration on many French harpsichords. At some later time, probably still in the eighteenth century, the Stehlin interior was repainted a dark ivory, and over this the sketchy landscape painting was executed. It successfully solves the awkward problem of the wing-shaped lid, by using a waterfall to connect an upper and a lower horizon. Most harpsichords this elaborate would also have had garlands painted around the keyboard and on the jackrail and case interior, often over a gold leaf ground, as can be seen on the Dumont 1697/Taskin 1789 harpsichord in the Paris Conservatoire and the Taskin 1788 piano,[38] and on the jackrail and keywell of the 1770 Dedeban harpsichord shown in Figure 6. But on the Stehlin, the gold leaf is confined to the base, moldings, and rose.

Chinoiserie case decoration was popular in France, and was almost always on a pure black exterior ground color, executed in gold and silver metals and earth tones only, using bronze powders as well as gold and silver leaf. The interior ground color was either black again, or light vermilion. The French did not normally use white, green, brown, and maroon grounds for chinoiserie, or execute it in polychrome, as did the Italians and Germans. The 1786 miniature Taskin harpsichord in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London[39] and the all-black-and-gold Goujon harpsichord in the Paris Conservatoire[40] are typical and very fine examples.

Late Baroque grotesques in the Jean Berain style on a gold leaf ground have survived on several instruments.[41] Regence-style grotesques, sometimes with *singeries*, in the manner of Huet and Au-

38. Dumont no. E.774.C.329; Taskin piano on loan to Paris Conservatoire, illustrated in Thibault, Jenkins, and Bran-Ricci, *France and Britain*, no. 7.

39. Illustrated in Russell, *Catalogue*, (above, note 27), no. 15.

40. No. E.233.C.326, illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pls. 21–23.

41. For example, the 1646 Andreas Ruckers/Taskin 1780 harpsichord in the Chambure Collection, Paris (illustrated in Lambrechts-Douillez and Thibault, *Vie Musicale*, no. 4) and a harpsichord labeled Joannes Ruckers 1620 in a private

dran, are found on cases,[42] and even designs and parts of harpsichords painted by Watteau have survived.[43] Garlands often decorate the aprons of bases as well as the cases. Trophies and cartouches of putti, lovebirds, or miniature landscapes are common. But decoupage was rare on French harpsichords (though engravings after Watteau are used as decoupage on two eighteenth-century psalteries).[44]

Lid interiors were painted with a variety of fashionable subjects: classical landscapes (often with putti), pastoral *bergeries*, allegories, and mythological scenes, often with a musical subject such as *Orpheus*, are favorite subjects. And some lid paintings were by great painters such as Watteau and Lancret.[45]

Virtually every form of decoration that was fashionable on furniture can be found on French harpsichords in the eighteenth century with four striking exceptions: marquetry, ormolu and porcelain mounts, and wood carving. Though very elaborate marquetry (or intarsia) is found on the seventeenth-century Tibaut instruments, virtually no surviving eighteenth-century instrument is veneered until the (heavier) pianos of the late 1780's.[46] Marquetry reached its greatest heights on mid-eighteenth-century Parisian furniture, yet it seems not to have been used for harpsichords. Equally absent are the ormolu mounts which almost invariably accompanied marquetry and chinoiserie on furniture. And the beautiful woodcarving so often

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collection in Paris, decorated by the same artist; and the Joannes Ruckers 1628 harpsichord at the Château de Versailles (illustrated in Hirt, *Stringed Keyboard Instruments*, p. 250) and a Couchet of 1652 in the south of France, also probably decorated by the same atelier.

42. A superb example is the François Blanchet of 1733 at the Château de Thoiry, where it has been since it was built except for an enlargement by Blanchet himself in 1745. The owner has a bill of sale from Huet for the harpsichord decoration; Huet also decorated a room in the château.

43. Illustrated in Ettore Camesasca, *The Complete Paintings of Watteau* (New York, 1968), p. 93.

44. Illustrated in Emanuel Winternitz, "The Shape of Music: Musical Instruments in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Lithopinion: Journal of Local One, Amalgamated Lithographers of America* (1971), pp. 31–32.

45. A lid attributed to Lancret on a harpsichord that belonged in the 1920's to the Duchesse de Talleyrand in Paris is illustrated in George Wildenstein, *Lancret: Biographie* (Paris, 1924); the instrument is now in New York.

46. For an example, see note 38.

found on Parisian furniture is, in harpsichords, limited to the bases—which may often have been built by separate *menuisiers*.

These anomalies may result from fear that veneer or carving would interfere with the resonance of the case; or that case vibrations might loosen the veneer (though no such considerations hindered the English veneered harpsichords, or those by Tibaut around 1680).[47] Makers feared, perhaps, that screwed-on ormolu mounts might rattle; possibly they were avoiding the complications of guild rules, which made the combination of various trades on one instrument legally complicated and cumbersome.[48] Probably, though, harpsichord makers were simply conservative. They made plain box cases, whose flatness was relieved by plain gold bands; or, if the customer wished to pay for more, a nearby professional decorator painted grotesques, garlands, or chinoiserie.[49] But the harpsichords themselves had reached their musical perfection, and perhaps their prestige as musical instruments raised them above the need to conform strictly to fashion as furniture. Many contemporary pictures show harpsichords in rooms where every other object is in the latest carved, veneered and gilded Louis XVI court style; yet the harpsichord has a simple, uncarved cabriole leg and a plain, painted case relieved only by straight gold bands, and belongs to the style now called "French Provincial." Only its prestige as a great musical instrument could have made such plainness tolerable in fashionable circles.

The one area that is always elaborately decorated on any French harpsichord is its soundboard. In the eighteenth century the pattern was consistent and firmly established: above the gap, facing the player (unlike the Flemish instruments, where everything except the rose itself is usually oriented to the bentside) is a very lively bird or two in a broken tree stump which is putting out new leaves. Often the

47. Such as the Tibault de Toulouse, 1679, in the Brussels Conservatoire, illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pl. 43, whose marquetry is cut into a solid walnut case and lid (information from William Dowd).

48. Hubbard, *Three Centuries*, p. 194: ". . . the application of a new material or technique to harpsichord making was quite likely to involve a lawsuit with another guild."

49. See Hardouin, "Harpsichord Making," II, 77.

bird is a goldfinch, the whole being a complex symbol of the resurrection of the dead tree in its new musical life.[50]

Borders (always blue, often of smalt, and usually slightly raised) line the bridges and the case. Often they are an improvisational Rococo *rinceau* design like that of the 1770 Dedeban in the Corcoran Gallery, shown in Figure 6, which is by the same painter as the 1760 Stehlin soundboard. But on the Stehlin this painter has used the other optional French type of border, borrowed from the Flemish tradition: a blue scalloped line, with blue arabesques. Here the scallops are much larger, and the arabesques are confined to the outer corners of the soundboard, instead of interrupting the flow of the design every twenty centimeters or so, as the Flemish did in their more *staccato* design.

Unlike the Flemish soundboards, whose design is largely based on a profuse and jolly scattering organized by intermittent arabesques, the French eighteenth-century painters used fewer and larger flowers, with more space within and around them, and with much concern for a continuous flow of line and rhythm from one flower to the next. Often there are only five or six flowers in each of the rows between bridges and along the bentside, in a space where the Flemish might have crowded thirteen flowers and twenty-eight arabesques on a much smaller instrument. The French omit most of the insects, animals, and food so popular with the Flemish, usually keeping only the small, decorative (i.e., appealing more to the eye than the stomach) fruits like cherries and currants; and occasionally a caterpillar, fly, or moth supplements the flowers.

The caterpillar, besides its symbolic value, was particularly popular for its convenient shape in covering original soundboard shims or scarf joints; the Stehlin-Dedeban soundboard painter used it for this purpose on two of his eight known soundboards: the Blanchet II of 1765 in Scarsdale and the imitation Ruckers-style soundboard on a 1636 Joannes Ruckers/Hemsch 1766 in Geneva.[51] The Blanchet I

50. For a fuller discussion of the symbolism found on French soundboards, and of the style of the Stehlin-Dedeban soundboard painter found on other instruments, see Germann and Odell, "Dedeban," pp. 99–104.

51. Blanchet II, coll. Robert Rosenbaum; Joannes Ruckers II/Hemsch, coll. Raymond Touyère.

FIGURE 6. Detail of soundboard and jackrail of harpsichord by Jean Mari Dedeban, Paris, 1770. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

soundboard painter preferred to use dragonfly bodies and the straight stems of narcissus for this purpose, as on the 1733 Blanchet at Château de Thoiry and the Vater 1737 in Newbury.[52] It must be reassuring to the modern builder to see how often, even in the gentle European climate without central heating, a new harpsichord left the builder's shop with shims and repairs in the soundboard wood—even when it was not a case of a rebuild of an older instrument. It also shows a delightful cooperation between the builder and his decorator, since in many cases the painter has been willing to violate his standard design in order to cloak the builder's embarrassments.

The Dedeban rose garland shown in Figure 6 is in the typical eighteenth-century French formula: a rich wreath of large garden flowers surrounding a blue ring which normally bears the maker's name in dark yellow (not gold) paint.[53] Sometimes the bridges and soundboard moldings are gilt on earlier instruments; but usually on the soundboard gold is confined to the metal rose and the beveled edge of the rose-hole in the soundboard wood. The rose itself is usually a winged harpist with initials, like the Flemish. On seventeenth-century instruments it is usually oriented towards the keyboard, as were the Flemish roses; but the eighteenth-century roses are usually oriented towards the bentside.

While the Flemish painters had used small, delicate wildflowers, the French preferred large, florid, frequently striped garden flowers—roses, open tulips, and every variety of anemone, single and double. Around 1760, the author of *The Florist* said that flowers should be painted when they are "ripened to a degree of looseness subject to be folded and play in the wind."[54] Gerard de Lairesse advised the painter to choose "choice and beautiful flowers . . . not poor or mean, but such as are large, beautiful, and in esteem . . . that the most noble and beautiful have the predominancy, and that by their placing they produce an agreeable mixture of colours, delighting and satisfying the eye; consisting in so ordering the strong and striped with the faint

52. Blanchet coll. Comte de la Panouse; Vater coll. Mrs. Hue-Williams.

53. The poisonous arsenic trisulfide, called orpiment, or "king's yellow," has been microscopically identified as the pigment for the maker's name on two soundboards by the Stehlin-Dedeban painter. See Germann and Odell, "Dedeban," p. 102.

54. *The Florist* (London, Robert Sayer and J. Bennett, c. 1760), p. 7.

ones, as to exhibit a lovely rainbow."[55] The Dedeban soundboard painting exemplifies these ideals as well as any flowerpiece in a frame; and its free-form, asymmetrical arabesques and whiplash energy, articulated in space like the wind-blown spray from a fountain, summarize the essential gesture of the exuberant High Rococo style.

The fact that guild rules forced the French harpsichord builders to turn to outside professional artists, instead of having their own "in-house" decorators as did the Flemish, caused a great contrast in the floral style of soundboard painting that goes beyond the differences between Flemish and French taste—or even seventeenth- and eighteenth-century taste. The French painters were clearly highly-trained professionals, and good ones. They never betray the labored effect of an artist who is straining against the limits of his training and abilities. They are quick, sure, casual, often free, unblended, and almost impressionistic in brushwork; yet every stroke finds its right place, and there is little overpainting to correct a mistake. No dilettante could imitate the style convincingly. The colors usually are gentle but not weak pastels, dominated by reds and soft pinks, with few yellows except for flower centers. But for all their sleek beauty, they often lack the charm of the naïve and stiff, but still lively, Flemish paintings. They are closer in feeling to pure decoration—more conventional, with less variety and representation of life.

French harpsichord painters seem never to have signed their work,[56] but there were a few studios supplying decoration to each

55. Gérard de Lairesse, "Of Flowers," Book XII in *The Art of Painting* (London, 1778), p. 240—an English translation of his *Het Groot Schilderboek*, 1707, which was widely translated and published throughout Europe. See Rosenberg, Slive, and Ter Kuile, *Dutch Art and Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 208–209 and pl. 170A.

56. But the Collesse 1775 harpsichord in the Chambure Collection in Paris (see note 33) has the following written on the back of the nameboard, "M. Mercié fera les fleurs et des girlandes" [sic], according to information from Mme Josiane Bran-Ricci. The "girlandes" may have referred to the unusual borders on the soundboard, or to the actual garlands of flowers painted on the case interior above the soundboard and over the *faux marbre* on the keywell, the latter interpretation being the more likely. The note seems to be an instruction to deliver the instrument to the decorator; this is the only French harpsichord decorator's name so far connected with a specific instrument. Another harpsichord with a soundboard by this painter, unsigned but probably also a Collesse according to structural evidence, is in the collection of Reinhard von Nagel in Paris.

generation of Parisian builders, and the handwriting of each atelier or painter is clearly distinct. Some painters worked for only one builder; some for many. The painter of the 1760 Stehlin soundboard painted for five different builders.[57] One of Taskin's painters worked also for Goermans II (Germain) and Dubois. And the studio which painted most of the surviving Nicolas Blanchet and François Blanchet I soundboards also worked for Marius, Bellot *fils*, Bellot *père*, Goermans I, Vater, and an anonymous psaltery builder; this same atelier is also responsible for many of the excellent forgeries of Flemish-style soundboards produced in Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Some of the ateliers decorated cases as well as soundboards. The painter of the 1786 Taskin soundboard also painted the chinoiserie on the case of that instrument.[58] In 1783/4 he also did the chinoiserie, presumably for Taskin, on the case of the anonymous 1764 harpsichord[59] (which already had a 1764 soundboard painting by the Stehlin-Dedeban painter) during Taskin's *ravalement* of that instrument. As with the Flemish builders, some clue to the identity of the builder of an unlabeled French instrument can be gained by a knowledge of the soundboard and case painting styles.[60]

Germany

Without pausing to consider the German sixteenth-century harpsichords (which were probably responsible for bringing the Italian

57. 1750 Stehlin in the Musée Antoine Lecuyer, anonymous 1764 (probably a Goermans, ravallé 1783–1784 by Taskin), coll. Edinburgh University; Blanchet II 1765, coll. Robert Rosenbaum; two Goermans, 1765 and 1771, coll. Kenneth Gilbert; Dedeban 1770 in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and a Joannes Ruckers II 1636/Hemsch harpsichord with an imitation Flemish-style soundboard, coll. Raymond Touyère.

58. In the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pls. 49–50.

59. Formerly known as "Mrs. Crawley's Couchet," now in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh, illustrated in Philip James, *Early Keyboard Instruments* (London, 1930), pl. 54. It is probably a Goermans; see Sheridan Germann, "'Mrs. Crawley's Couchet' Reconsidered," *Early Music*, VII (1979).

60. The complex cross-relationships between these harpsichord decorators and the builders for whom they worked (in some cases one might say with whom they conspired) are the subject of a study currently in preparation for publication by the present writer.

influence to the early Flemish instruments), one finds surviving German seventeenth- and eighteenth-century harpsichords strongly divided into three regional types: southern, northern, and central. The southern seems to be the earlier school, and is not unnaturally influenced strongly by the Italian style. Seventeenth-century harpsichords are thin-cased and wasp-waisted (from the relatively short Italianate scaling), with continuous top and bottom moldings, applied *bas-relief* and pierced carvings, gothic "wedding-cake" roses, carved or scrolled cheeks (cut down around a projecting keyboard like the Italians, but with bolder, more irregular Baroque scroll forms), and inlaid keys, nameboards, and jackrails.[61] The southern Germans seem to have inherited the Italian philosophy of applying real materials to the instrument in the sculptural sense. The harpsichord and clavicytherium shown by Praetorius in 1619 are of this type.[62]

One very un-Italian feature is the typical southern German soundboard, usually of bare spruce, painted with blue borders and flowers in a manner now seemingly reminiscent of the Flemish. But the flowers are smaller and far more delicately painted, with more open space and less crowding. Borders are typically composed of a doubled or crossed scallop pattern, forming pointed running ovals and diamonds, with intermittent tulip forms which are close to Renaissance decorative sources.[63] On Flemish seventeenth-century soundboards, paint is used with a value for thickness, mass, and solidity, even—perhaps especially—in the borders and arabesques. But these southern German painters use line with an ethereal delicacy and flawless precision in the borders and arabesques that is almost inhuman in its perfection, as if printed. It is probabale that the Flemings inherited the tradition of painted floral soundboards with blue borders from the Germans, rather than vice versa.

Several indigenous qualities which distinguish the south German style are a love of black and white "negative" contrasts, using mother of pearl and ivory inlaid into ebony and, especially, tortoiseshell. These (except the shell) were also used by Faby da Bologna in

61. On Italian influence in German instruments, see above, note 12.

62. Praetorius, *Syntagma Musica*, vol. II (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), pls. VI and XV.

63. See Ward-Jackson, "Main Streams," part II, figs. 5–10; and Jessen, *Ornamentstich*, *passim*.

north Italy (see Fig. 1), but in Italy they represent an occasional taste; in south Germany, this taste dominates. Even the natural key-tops are often inlaid with mother of pearl. Key-fronts tend to be cutout white crescents or trefoils (or their elaborations) within rectangles, laid against a colored ribbed (silk?) ground. Ebony moldings are often rippled (relating to the style most popular on seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish ebony picture frames and furniture),[64] and applied against burlwood veneer, which is used like tortoiseshell for texture and color. The moldings are sometimes applied as several rectangular and oval frames along the thin case sides. Since a separate outer case would conceal these decorations, we may presume that such outer cases were not intended.

Another unique south German characteristic is the expanding jackrail. It often grows from a few centimeters wide in the treble to more than double that width in the bass. The musical reason for this was to spread the plucking points in the bass for greater tonal contrast, and it created another large surface which could be as spectacularly paneled, veneered, and inlaid as the nameboard.

The Mayer 1619 harpsichord in the Salzburg Museo Carolino Augusteum is one of the most elaborate harpsichords in this style. And a clavicytherium by Martinus Kaiser of circa 1675 in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum uses not only the ubiquitous mother of pearl, ivory, ebony, and tortoiseshell, but even (though they were probably applied in the early eighteenth century) the carved gilt mounts on the corners that the French builders so pointedly neglected on their harpsichords.[65]

The anonymous ottavino shown in Figure 7 used to be labeled Hans Ruckers 1610, one of the many false attributions to Ruckers that have flourished since the seventeenth century. But it seems to be a southern German type of around 1600. The region produced many miniature and even mechanically activated ottavinos and toy instruments, often, as here, combined with sewing workboxes or built as

64. See Th. H. Lunsingh Schleurleer, "The Low Countries," p. 56.

65. Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum (1966), no. 13, illustrated in Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 88. See J. H. Van der Meer, "Beiträge bis 1700," pp. 113–115; and *idem*, "A Contribution to the History of the Clavicytherium," *Early Music*, VI (1978), 247–259, especially pp. 249 and 259, note 11.

FIGURE 7. Anonymous southern German ottavino spinet, circa 1600. Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire National de Musique, Paris.

drawers of *Prunkkabinette*.[66] The white Latin motto on a blue painted ground around the inner case, the delicately flowered soundboard and geometric rose, the negative effect of ebony nameboard set off with applied gilt embossed plaques mounted within black molded frames, all suggest southern German work. Another seventeenth-century ebony miniature spinet from the Augsburg school, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, carries this negative effect even

66. As was probably the anonymous south German ottavino of c. 1600 in the Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, no. 2217, illustrated in Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 30; for mechanical and toy instruments, see also Van der Meer, "Beiträge bis 1700," figs. 3, 5, and 6.

further, with the most delicate interlaced patterns formed by applied silver fretwork around silver-gilt, etched, engraved, and enameled plaques.[67]

In the eighteenth century the emphasis shifts to northern Germany, where the Hass family dominated the harpsichord field in Hamburg. Here the Flemish-style thick cases with in-cut moldings are found, but Hamburg harpsichords characteristically have a double-curved bentside with no separate tailpiece, and are, of course, very much larger. Harpsichords and clavichords tend to be elaborately painted inside and out. Two representative instruments are the 1723 H. A. Hass in the Copenhagen Musikhistorisk Museum[68] and the J. A. Hass of circa 1770 at Yale University.[69] These show a continuation of the earlier southern fondness for figured woodgrains and for the spectacular contrasts between tortoiseshell and mother of pearl, ivory, and ebony; the keyboards and keywells (and, in clavichords, tool-box covers) are often lavishly veneered with these materials. Sometimes the natural keys are ivory-topped, with ebony arcades and sharps; or with sharps veneered with tortoiseshell, often in a dizzying chevron pattern with ivory. On other instruments the colors are reversed, with naturals of ebony or tortoiseshell, ivory arcades, and sharps veneered with ivory or a complex arabesque or chevron pattern of tortoiseshell and mother of pearl. Occasionally the mother of pearl is engraved and filled with rose-red pigment in an arabesque pattern.[70] And all these rich textures are set against a vertical ground of olivewood or laburnum veneer or of painted chinoiserie around the keywell. These gorgeous keywells are treated as the visual heart of the instrument. One is reminded that the great stringed instruments of Tielke, also of Hamburg, exploit similarly lavish contrasts of dark and light materials in marquetry. They too often reverse the color schemes from instrument to instrument, the cutout negative of

67. Winternitz, *Western World*, pl. 35.

68. The lid exterior (along with another Hass harpsichord of 1732 and other furniture by the same chinoiserie artist) is illustrated in Hans Huth, *Lacquer of the West* (Chicago, 1971), figs. 148–154.

69. No. 251, illustrated in Hirt, *Stringed Keyboard Instruments*, p. 280.

70. For example, the J. A. Hass 1763 clavichord in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh, no. 22.

one becoming the positive of another, as with the contemporary tortoiseshell and brass Boulle-style marquetry in France.

Chinoiserie was extremely popular for case decoration among the Hamburg builders, and unlike the French they used a large variety of colored backgrounds, often with the chinoiserie executed in polychrome instead of the usual golds and silvers. The 1723 Copenhagen Hass has keywell chinoiserie in painted polychrome on an ivory ground with red striped borders. The rest of the case interior and jackrail are painted plain vermilion. The lid has two paintings; as usual in Hamburg, the flap is treated separately and at right angles to the main lid. (Some large Hamburg harpsichords have two flaps, separately framed.) Here the main lid represents chamber music with a harpsichord in the formal garden of a castle. The paintings are elaborately framed in vermilion, with gold-leaf border designs—a common Hamburg treatment. The case exterior, as so often in the Hamburg school, is painted in imitation of tortoiseshell, with mottled olive green borders, divided by thin gold lines into rectangular panels for each side of the instrument; and superimposed on the "tortoiseshell" are scenes in polychrome chinoiserie.

The Yale Hass has similar imitation tortoiseshell on the entire case exterior, but without the superimposed chinoiserie. The whole interior (except the keywell, which is veneered in striated laburnum wood in a herringbone pattern) is painted light vermilion. The case interior above the soundboard is left plain but for gilded moldings, but the lid interior and jackrail are covered with chinoiseries in various golds, silvers, and bronze earth tones.

On both these instruments, the soundboards are painted in a style partly reminiscent of both French and Flemish styles, but with no blue borders, and no rose-holes. The flowers are realistically painted and are large, full, and open like those of the French; and like the later French technique, they are generally executed in gouache rather than egg or size tempera. A single studio seems to have produced many of these Hass harpsichord and clavichord soundboards. The design is scattered and casual, and the flowers are rather stiff—both qualities of the Flemish style, but without the latter's energetic charm and naïve stylization.The colors are relatively pale pastels, but tend to be rather raw and unsubtle, especially the bright green foliage; and

the linear manner of rendering seems too harsh for the large fullness of the flowers, which the French painters usually broke up into softer forms with quasi-impressionistic brushstrokes or blendings. These Hamburg soundboards are so close in manner to the eighteenth-century style of soundboard paintings on Dulcken and Delin instruments—especially in the rendering of the apple-green foliage—that it is tempting to presume a decorative connection parallel to the Flemish influence found in the construction of the Hamburg instruments.

Perhaps the sheer enormity of many of these harpsichords (some of which had 16′ and 2′ stops, and a consequent jungle of bridges and hitchpin-rails on the soundboard) makes difficult shapes to design; and perhaps one misses the organizing factors of borders framing the soundboard areas and a rose with its garland;[71] but their soundboard paintings are rarely the most engaging visual feature of the Hamburg instruments. Their beauty usually rests in their spectacular chinoiserie decoration, and the superb craftsmanship of their inlaid keywells.

The harpsichord shown in Figure 8 represents none of the famous German builders, but is one of the most beautiful of all German instruments. It was decorated about 1710 by Gérard Dagly, who was perhaps the greatest japanner in Europe; he was in charge of interior decoration at the Brandenburg court at Charlottenburg from 1687 until 1713.[72] It has brilliant and delicate polychrome chinoiserie on a remarkably nonyellowed grayish-white lacquer ground which imitates the colors and textures of porcelain, an effect for which Dagly was famous. A reminiscence of the Italian false inner-outer illusion shows in the scrolled cheek-brackets glued to the actual square-ended cheeks. The brackets (whose bold Baroque shape is more reminiscent of seventeenth-century south Germany than of Italy) and the case interior with Italianate cap molding above the soundboard are bright maple, which enhances the illusion: but otherwise

71. The spectacular sunken parchment rose with surrounding canopies of the 1710–1724 Fleisher in the Berlin Musikinstrumenten-Museum is a striking exception; the rose itself shows south German influence.

72. Huth, *Lacquer of the West*, pp. 66–72; Hugh Honour, *Cabinetmakers and Furniture Designers* (New York, 1969), pp. 60–63.

FIGURE 8. Harpsichord, German (Mietke?), circa 1710. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin.

the entire case, lid, and base are painted in polychrome chinoiserie, with gold leaf accents. The absence of an apron under the keyboard is a courtesy to the seated player found on some Hamburg harpsi-

chord bases,[73] and the double curve of the bentside also points to that school.

This is one of the rare examples where a very great artist is known to have decorated an existing harpsichord, which makes it the more unfortunate that the instrument is not signed. But a reasonable attribution may be made to Mietke. Dagly is known to have lacquered harpsichord cases for the firm of Rost and Michael Mietke, harpsichord builders to the Brandenburg court, whose shop was in Charlottenburg.[74] This and a very similar chinoiseried black harpsichord at Schloss Charlottenburg, also perhaps decorated by Dagly, are probably both made by Mietke.[75] J. S. Bach traveled from Cöthen to Berlin to buy a double harpsichord from Mietke in 1719,[76] and it was probably on that occasion that he performed for the Elector Christian Ludwig, to whom he dedicated his Brandenburg concerti in 1721.[77] Bach is known to have preferred the short naturals and narrow octave spans found on Brandenburg instruments, as opposed to most German organs, and this harpsichord probably represents the small keyboard he preferred.[78] Certainly no harpsichord could better relate visually to the vivacity and elegance of these concerti, which may well have been played on this instrument.

73. For example, the H. A. Hass harpsichord of 1734 and clavichord of 1744, both in the Brussels Conservatoire, illustrated in Sergio Paganelli, *Gli Strumenti Musicali nell'Arte* (Milan, 1966), pls. 17 and 28.

74. Walter Stengel, *Alte Wohnkultur in Berlin* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 75–76.

75. Cf. Friedrich Ernst, *Der Flügel Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Frankfurt, 1955), pp. 71–72, who ascribes the instrument tentatively to Silbermann, c. 1725; but he was unaware of the decoration by Dagly, which dates the instrument in Berlin before 1713, the date Dagly left Berlin (Huth, *Lacquer*, p. 72).

76. Donald C. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1974), p. 113, "Mietcke," quoting from *Bach-Dokumente*, vol. II (Kassel, 1969), p. 74. See also Dr. Dieter Krickeberg, *Meine Herren, der alte Bach ist gekommen!* (Berlin, 1976), pp. 3 and 15.

77. The dedication is quoted in translation in Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, *The Bach Reader*, rev. ed. (New York, 1966), pp. 82–83. The Mietke stichmasse of 468mm is not only much narrower than normal German, Italian, and Flemish keyboards; it is even narrower than the average French stichmasse of 475; and the 36mm natural keyheads are almost as short as the French and much shorter than the average North German 41.5mm keyheads.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 258, translation of Agricola's opinion in Jakob Adlung, *Musica mechanica organoedi*, II (Berlin, 1768), 23–24.

But with or without association with Bach, this instrument is a visual summation of the eclecticism of German harpsichords. It shows influences from many regions: south Germany in the shape of the key brackets; Italy in the false inner-outer illusion and in other aspects noted by Ernst;[79] France in the disposition[80] (and possibly in the double-curved bentside, which, as with the Hamburg school, may have come from seventeenth-century French instruments such as the DesRuisseaux[81]); Flanders in moldings and structural details, and even in the fact that its decorator, Dagly, was born and trained in the lacquer-work center of Spa, in Belgium.[82] And it is living proof that "eclecticism" should not be a word of denigration.

Besides the Hass family, who dominated north German harpsichord production, another prominent harpsichord-building family dominated the trade in central Germany. The Silbermanns, working mostly in Saxony, were more famous as organbuilders, but also made harpsichords, clavichords, and pianos. The harpsichords and bentside spinets are very plain, but handsome, often following the English taste (which strongly influenced northern German furniture at that time)[83] in effective use of matched woodgrain veneer, but usually without the ubiquitous English cross-grained borders. The relatively plain cases had plain, paneled wood lids, and gracefully curved cabriole legs, with some French Rococo influence in the carving (though the carving here rarely protrudes from the leg silhouette as on French furniture, but is cut into the leg shape as if by an afterthought). The spruce soundboard has a cast metal, gilded geometric rose, but no paintings are found anywhere on the instruments.[84]

79. Ernst, "Flügel Johann Sebastian Bachs," p. 72.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 71. Actually this particular instrument illustrated is only a single manual 2×8′; but its virtual twin instrument, perhaps also decorated by Dagly, at Schloss Charlottenburg, is a double with 2×8′, 1×4′, with the usual French-style disposition and shove coupler.

81. Chambure Collection, Paris.

82. Huth, *Lacquer in the West*, p. 66; Honour, *Cabinet-makers*, p. 62.

83. F. Lewis Hinckley, *A Directory of Antique Furniture* (New York, 1953), p. xiii.

84. For example, the bentside spinet of 1767 in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MINe221, illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pl. 91; and the piano in Berlin, illustrated in Irmgard Otto, *Das Musikinstrumenten-Museum Berlin: Eine Einführung in Wort und Bild* (Berlin, 1968), pl. 22.

These Saxon instruments represent the least decorated of the major harpsichord-building traditions. It is probably not a coincidence that the early southern German and Viennese pianos were so similar, and usually equally plain, for it was Gottfried Silbermann who built the first pianos in Germany. The early pianos may have been influenced visually as well as musically by his style until, at the height of their fashion around 1800, they were elaborately decorated in the international Empire style. Had a Hass been the first German piano builder, there might have been German and Viennese pianos in painted chinoiserie.

Unlike the Italians and south Germans, who treated their instruments as sculptured precious objects; or the French, Flemish, and north German schools, which treated the case of the instruments as canvases on which to paint illusionistic scenes and representations of other materials, the Saxon school treated the harpsichord as a simple piece of furniture which happens to make music. And this leads directly into the major English tradition of harpsichord decoration.

England

Charles Burney was an unashamed chauvinist, but he may have had some reason for saying in 1773, "The Germans work much better out of their own country than they do in it, if we may judge by the harpsichords of Kirkman and Shudi; the pianofortes of Backers; and the organs of Snetzler; which far surpass in goodness, all the keyed instruments that I met with, in my tour through Germany".[85] The great English harpsichord-making tradition, after dusultory beginnings under continental influences, stems from the migration to England of Flemish, German, and Swiss builders, who revolutionized the indigenous school just as the Flemish harpsichord tradition overwhelmed the indigenous French school in the later seventeenth century. It is for the great German-inspired Kirkmans and Shudis that the English school is particularly noted; and like the Saxon instruments, they are decorated in wood, like furniture.

But the earlier English traditions must first be considered. The

85. Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, II (London, 1773), 145.

oldest surviving instruments show mixed Italian and Flemish traits. But in the mid-seventeenth century, two quite different traditions developed. The earlier was the rectangular virginal, which was clearly based upon the Flemish virginal in shape, scaling (though shortened in the treble), recessed keyboard, heavy case, cut-in case-top moldings—in virtually every major aspect except the wide range—and even in some minor details of decoration. Indeed, the English virginals could almost be considered a Flemish Provincial style—as early American furniture is English Provincial—though without the political dominance implied by the phrase.

The Leversidge 1666 virginal in Yale University, shown in Figure 9, is typical of almost all the eighteen surviving instruments of this type dated 1641 to 1679.[86] Closed, they are plain oak coffers with handsome iron strap hinges; open, they are spectacularly colorful.

The visual qualities that immediately separate them from the parent Flemish tradition are the frequent use of coffered lids, the unique stylization of the consistent pastoral lid scenes and of the soundboard paintings, occasional twist-turned legs, the use of embossed gilt paper decoration instead of the Flemish printed papers (even on the keyfronts), the raised framed paneling of the case fronts, and the casual scrolling designs painted on these panels. Natural keytops are sometimes of boxwood, with rosewood sharps; sometimes of ebony with ivory sharps. The decorative formula is so strong and consistently used that there is little important visual variation among any of these instruments. In fact, a single hand seems to have painted many of the lids and soundboards for several of the thirteen different builders.

The spruce soundboards have blue borders and arabesques, in placement similar to those of the Flemish, around flowers, fruits, and birds. But the Flemish arabesques were symmetrical and based on recognizable Renaissance designs, while on the English virginals they have often been greatly simplified to geometric figures or have disintegrated to a charming, casual, scrolling scribble, without symmetry or formal structure—more an expression of energy than of design. The birds and flowers are even flatter and more stylized than seventeenth-century Flemish ones; but in a sense they are more

86. See complete list in Boalch, "Makers," p. 203.

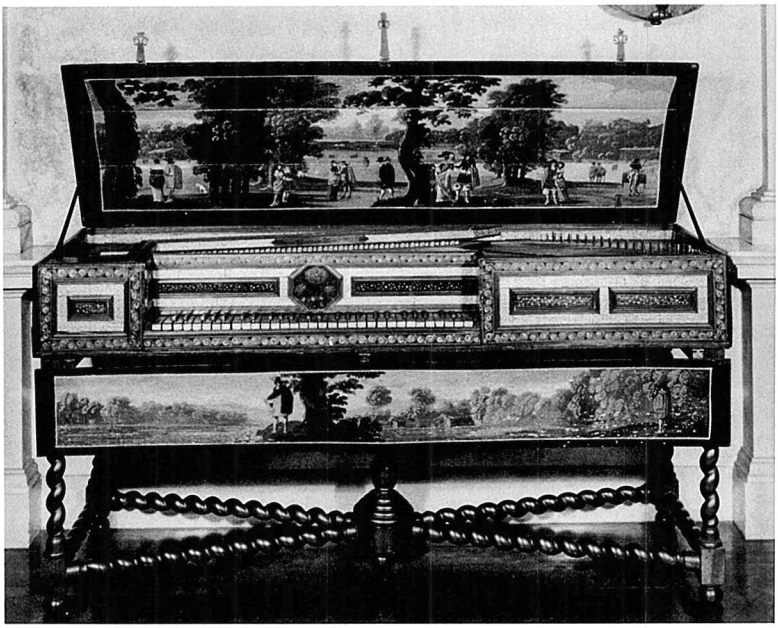

FIGURE 9. Virginal by Adam Leversidge, London, 1666. Yale University Collection of Musical Instruments.

sophisticated, for they are quick and casual and sure, never labored or overpainted, and are without the careful outlining of contours and details that characterizes the Flemish style (and virtually all other "primitive" styles). There are often several roses, of Italian gothic inspiration, each surrounded by a floral wreath, or spiraling blue arabesques, or both.

The so-called St. James Park scenes that fill the usually coffered lids and the matching dropboard paintings are equally stylized and casual, and cannot be thought of as primitive despite their naïve-seeming simplicity of manner; they are too sure of themselves. They are highly sophisticated and pseudo-naïve, like the stylized children's

book illustration of today. The lids generally belong to this same visual family, whose composition probably descends from the complex garden-party scenes in the lids of the great sixteenth-century Flemish virginals. The bases follow the Jacobean or Charles II styles of the period, using turned or twist-turned legs with stretchers; but original bases are rare.

Overlapping with and gradually supplanting this tradition after 1675 were the totally different bentside spinets. They owe little to any Flemish heritage, but are based on the Italian bentside form possibly introduced to England by 1660.[87] They have plain heavy wood (usually walnut, sometimes oak) cases, and usually a double-curved bentside with no exterior ornament except fine veneer and chased brass hardware. The soundboards are unpainted spruce, and normally there is no rose. The only richly decorated area is the keywell (and matching jackrail), where the nameboard is often in oysterwood veneer surrounded by triple stringing, or other wood marquetry. The keyboards are handsome, with ebony naturals (after 1700 usually ivory), and often with skunk-tail sharps of laminated ivory and ebony strips. For keyfronts, some seventeenth-century spinets borrow from the virginals the habit of embossed paper, but black or red, not gilt; later instruments have ebony or ivory turned arcades or boxwood moldings like the later harpsichords. The slanted cheeks of the projecting keyboard (the latter a reminder of Italian origins) are usually capped, as are the very thick cases, with a smoothly rounded strip of walnut veneer whose grain is perpendicular to the case grain; and the cheeks are often paneled with a triangle of triple stringing inlay. Sometimes, around 1700, the whole keywell, jackrail, and inner case are veneered in pale holly-wood (or, after about 1775, satinwood), with no ornament other than the triple stringing and the maker's name in ornamental "gothique" calligraphy. Usually there is no rose in the soundboard.

Like the German instruments from Saxony, these English spinets are treated as simple furniture, with no illusionistic decoration. Their bases follow prevailing Jacobean and Restoration styles, with trestles of turned or twist-turned legs. Unlike the virginals, whose natural

87. Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, p. 37: Hubbard, *Three Centuries*, pp. 107 and 151.

view is open, these seem to be most striking when closed, when their richest ornament, the pierced and chased brass hardware, is visible. Two characteristic examples are an anonymous spinet and a Thomas Hitchcock of about 1705, both in the Russell Collection in Edinburgh.

The later eighteenth-century spinet changed very little visually, beyond the use of ivory naturals and boxwood straight-molded keyfronts, cross-banded veneer on the case exterior, the use of mahogany instead of walnut; a separate, angled tailpiece; and straight legs on the trestle. This type is also well represented in the Russell Collection by the Baker Harris 1776 spinet and the Neil Stewart 1784 spinet.[88]

The extreme difference between these two nearly contemporaneous types of seventeenth-century instruments—the virginals and the bentside spinets—is underlined by the fact that some makers worked in both forms, but without visual carry-over from one to the other.[89] The conventions were firmly established for each form, and the builders conformed to them. There is nothing to prevent a bentside spinet's being decorated in the virginal style, with painted soundboard and lid and embossed gilt paper; or a virginal's being decorated only with oysterwood veneer and brass hardware; but they were not. The two instrument types existed side by side for over a generation, as if unaware of each other.

English harpsichords before 1730 were close to the bentside spinets in decoration.[90] But the indigenous English harpsichord-making tradition was swept aside by the influence of Flemish, German, and Swiss builders in the early eighteenth century. The harpsichords of Shudi and Kirckman and other English builders, however, continued

88. All four spinets are illustrated in Newman and Williams, *Russell Collection*, nos. 9, 10, 17, and 18.

89. Cf. the 1668 virginal of Stephen Keene (*ibid.*, no. 8) with his spinet of c. 1675 (J. J. Wolff Collection, New York, illustrated in N. E. Michel, *Historical Pianos, Clavichords and Harpsichords* [Pico Rivera, Calif., 1970], p. 1970); or the John Player 1664 virginal (The Hague: Gemeetemuseum no. EC.10–57) with his undated spinet in the Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 466–1882, illustrated in Russell, *Catalogue Victoria and Albert II*, no. 19.

90. Though a "Cassus" or "Jesses" harpsichord of circa 1650 follows the English virginals in the decoration of its interior; however, the instrument itself and its exterior decoration seem to be Italian, and it seems more likely to be a partially redecorated import. It is illustrated in Boalch, *Makers*, first ed., pl. XXI.

the tradition established with the bentside spinets, of treating the harpsichord like a piece of furniture, without painted decoration. Like the eighteenth-century spinets, they generally have ivory naturals, ebony accidentals, molded boxwood strips on the keyfronts, and gothic inked lettering of the maker's name in Latin on the nameboard. Unlike the spinets, they have a gilt cast metal (but still gothic-inspired, like the Italians) rose, with the maker's initials, as the only ornament on the unpainted soundboard. Like the spinets, they rely for their basic decorative effect on rich wood veneering and ornamental brass hardware.

The Shudi of about 1743 in Figure 10 is representative of the eighteenth-century English harpsichord. Cross-banding, first used in English furniture at the end of the seventeenth century, became standard for virtually all English harpsichords and pianos through the mid-nineteenth century. Its use forms an interesting contrast to the Italian concept of the plan view accented by "rubber band" moldings. With the English, the elevation is the major view. Instead of unifying the entire instrument, the cross-banded panels compartmentalize it into many sections. The French and Germans normally made a rectangular panel for each side of the instrument, but the English usually go further and divide even the bentside into two or often (on single harpsichords) three rectangles, so that the lines divide the shape of the whole instrument into a grid, rather than unifying it.[91]

There is infinite variety of texture in the matched figured woodgrain veneers, often with burlwood in the keywell. A very few of the most elaborate instruments have fine marquetry in the keywell and inner case.[92] There are rich brass accents in round stop-lever knobs, lid

91. See Nicolas Pevsner's *The Englishness of English Art* (Harmondsworth, 1956) for a fascinating discussion of various abstract motifs which have dominated most English art, many of which are as clearly expressed on keyboard instruments as in painting or architecture.

92. The style of the marquetry is often out of date, as can be seen by comparing the jackrail of one of the more elaborate Kirckman's such as the 1755 in the Russell Collection (illustrated in Russell, *Harpsichord and Clavichord*, pls. 66–67) or even the 1772 Jacob Kirckman in the Hill Collection, Oxford (illustrated in David Boyden, *Catalogue of the Hill Collection of Musical Instruments in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford* [London, 1969], pl. 44) with the similar Kaiser inlay; see note 65.

hooks on the case sides, and large, tupil-headed strap hinges. The spruce soundboards are always unpainted, and the lids left in bare wood, or veneered and cross-banded. Like the bentsides, the lids are usually divided into compartments. These harpsichords are distinctly furniture, not surfaces to be decorated by painters. The only painted English eighteenth-century harpsichords seem to be those that are *ravalements*[93] (or forgeries)[94] of Flemish instruments; and even then the cases were sometimes veneered.[95]

Harpsichord bases follow all the contemporary English furniture styles until 1700, and then quite oddly cease to do so. The 1743 Shudi sits on a Jacobean trestle base that was outdated in other furniture by 1710; yet this same trestle continues to be found until the end of the century.[96] The normal Queen Anne plain cabriole leg and the Chippendale cabriole leg carved with ball-and-claw foot are never found on harpsichords as they are on furniture, with a simple S-curve from case to floor. Instead, the builders clung to their trestles with stretchers halfway up the leg. When they did use the cabriole legs, they confined them to the bottom half of the leg below the stretcher, retaining the Jacobean turnings above the stretcher. This is an illogical combination of styles that is not found on any other

93. For example, the Joannes Ruckers 1612 harpsichord, *ravallé* in England in the eighteenth century and painted black outside and vermilion inside (without the gold bands usually found on French harpsichords), loaned by Her Majesty the Queen to the Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House, Hampstead, illustrated in "Royal Harpsichord on Loan," *Connoisseur*, 128 (1951), 119.

94. For example, the "Ham House Ruckers," a presumably English eighteenth-century forgery of a 1634 Joannes Ruckers harpsichord, Victoria and Albert Museum, illustrated in Alan Kendall, *The World of Musical Instruments* (London, 1962), p. 95. It has the requisite *faux marbre* on the case exterior, with painted illusions of moldings; but it divides the bentside into two rectangles, following established English tradition instead of the continuous horizontal Flemish "rubber-band moldings," top and bottom.

95. Examples are the Andreas Ruckers of 1614 owned by Leonard Elmhirst at Dartington Hall (Boalch no. 78, citing Boddington Collection, Manchester, *Catalogue*, no. 12); and the Andreas Ruckers 1609 harpsichord owned by Peter Williams in Edinburgh (illustrated in "Some Early Keyboard Instruments," *Apollo* [Sept.–Oct. 1943], p. 99).

96. The Shudi base is not original to this instrument, since the harpsichord was originally part of a claviorganum, but it is of the period, and typical of bases under similar harpsichords then and later.

London furniture, and the stunted proportions must have seemed very odd to the educated taste of the time.

When the turned leg was finally abandoned for the square tapered Neo-Classic Hepplewhite-style leg, the stretcher was still kept—even under the small, light square pianos of the early nineteenth century (which, in America, often had no such support between the legs, though the instruments were virtually identical otherwise). There was a conservatism among English harpsichord makers, and a concern for stability of structure over grace of form or fashion, which may be parallel to the French builders' neglect of marquetry and ormolu; perhaps the English harpsichord also had reached such musical perfection of its type that it was above the need to conform to mere changes in fashion. Certainly there was no physical necessity for the persistent stretcher, for other very heavy English furniture, and Dutch, Danish, German, and French instruments, consistently used the cabriole legs without further support—even under heavy pianos.[97]

But whatever one thinks of their reactionary bases, the English harpsichords must be acknowledged to be masterpieces of furniture-making, massive but beautiful in their proportions, rich in textures of wood and brass, and built to last forever. If there is less interest today in building reproductions of English harpsichords than other types, it may be partly because the originals were so solidly made that many survive in excellent playing condition with minimal restoration. The latest dated surviving English harpsichord was built in 1800,[98] a convenient date for the end of the history of the harpsichord until its later revival. Harpsichords may occasionally have been built later in Italy, and used later in Italian opera, but probably the English were the last to build them on a large scale.

* * *

97. E.g., a Laeske harpsichord from Amsterdam (illustrated in Laurence Libin, "A Dutch Harpsichord in the United States," *The Galpin Society Journal*, XXVIII [1975], 43–49); a 1768 Danish virginal in Rosenborg Castle (illustrated in Kaj Nordstrom, "To spinetter på Rosenborg slot—en praesentation," *Dansk Musiktidsshrift*, XLII [1967], 7–9); a 1776 J. H. Silbermann grand piano in Berlin (illustrated in Otto, *Musikinstrumenten-Museum Berlin: Einführung*, pl. 22); and many French harpsichords on cabriole bases.

98. A. Joseph Kirckman, Boalch no. 95, Colt Clavier coll., Bethersden, Kent.

FIGURE 10. Harpsichord by Burkat Shudi, London, circa 1743. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (The stand, though not original to this instrument, is of the period and typical of those found under similar harpsichords and spinets. The lid is a reproduction.)

It is interesting to turn again to the Italians in relation to English eighteenth-century harpsichords, for they have something important in common, despite the great contrast of English size, weight, and general massiveness with the delicacy of the Italian instruments. Both schools tend to be linear in concept. The Italians used line as unifying contour, like sculpture, to emphasize the plan view. The English used line as network, as grid, to divide and compartmental-

ize the vertical surfaces and make them less massive. But both are linear, not painterly, in feeling.[99]

The Italians treated the harpsichord like a violin. The English treated it as a piece of furniture. Neither normally painted the soundboards, and, in both schools, natural wood was the basic material to be emphasized. Between the Italian and the English schools, the Flemish, French, and north German traditions have been examined, in all of which the harpsichord was generally treated as a surface to be ornamented with paintings representing "something else"; almost any fancy which might be found on wall decoration found its way onto harpsichords in the North. The largeness of the flat surfaces must have been irresistible to the painterly imagination. But the Italians and the English (always excepting the Flemish-inspired English virginals) used decoration which avoided representation and emphasized the object itself. So different in size, weight, structure, sound, and musical effect, the English and Italian schools shared the modern attitude towards form and decoration: they are subordinate to and derived from structure and function.

The Smithsonian Institution

99. See Pevsner, *English Art*, *passim*.