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Walter Senn and Karl Roy. *Jakob Stainer: Leben und Werk des tiroler Meisters 1617–1683*. Fachbuchreihe das Musikinstrument, 44. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Edwin Bochinsky, 1986. 484 pp.; 416 photographs, 173 facsimiles, 11 illustrations, all black and white. ISBN: 3–923639–69–4 DM284.

The important news to state at the outset is that this is a masterwork, a major addition to the literature of instrument making, especially violin making and viol making. It is all the more significant because it is a study in depth of one of the greatest masters of this craft and art, Jakob Stainer (c. 1617–1683), whose instruments were among the most admired in Europe—in fact, thought by many to be the very best—from the time of their construction until early in the nineteenth century. Seemingly surpassed tonally after that time by Italian masters, and certainly neglected in more recent times, they have made a sensational comeback as the taste for earlier music has rapidly spread, and their truly wondrous tonal qualities have been recognized anew. At the close of my review of the 1983 publications from Innsbruck marking Stainer's tercentenary (this *Journal* 13 [1987], 118–21) I said, "It remains for a highly qualified expert to resolve [the issue of identification and publication of Stainer's own work] in a carefully researched and fully illustrated monograph." The needed book was in production as I wrote, but I was unaware of it.

The present work places Jakob Stainer's perhaps surprisingly controversial life in the context of his environment. Stainer was caught up in the religious conflicts of the era, was tried for his convictions by an ecclesiastical court, and served a prison sentence. The book reproduces and transcribes the rich original documentary sources, and on 107 plates illustrates nearly as many instruments, usually in three views. Since all of these wonderful violins, large violas, viols and basses appear to be absolutely and indisputably by the same unflagging master hand, there can be little doubt that they are by Jakob Stainer himself. None of them can have been made by the legion of followers and copyists (or the spurious and mythical brother Marcus) who until now have obscured the genius of this solitary maker who worked without an identifiable master or any pupils in a village near the cosmopolitan center and seat of government of Innsbruck, capitol of the Archduchy of Tyrol in Austria.

This new, substantial book, heavily illustrated, joins the pathetically small number of really valuable reference works on the violin and viols, which no one denies are among the most significant instruments in

western musical history. Every library must have this important work, destined to become a classic—an island of security in a sea of maddening unreliability and mystification. It will enrich every violin maker, student, dealer, and scholar. Hurrah!

The gestation of this book has been long, more than a half-century, and it could not have been concluded without the remarkable collaboration of the two authors. In 1949 the late Professor Walter Senn (d. 1981) of the University of Innsbruck signed the foreword (reprinted at the front of the new volume) to his initial work of documentation on Stainer's life.¹ Senn largely demystified Stainer by means of archival research, but circumstances prohibited the inclusion of all but the scantiest illustration, and the 1951 monograph therefore could not really inform the reader about the precise physical characteristics of the great Tyrolese master's instruments. The vastly expanded book before us is the joint effort of Senn and Karl Roy, the distinguished director of the world-famous violin-making school at Mittenwald in Southern Bavaria, north over the mountains from Innsbruck. While Senn had been charged in 1975 with the production of this new work, it is Roy who undertook the final labor, adding a comprehensive and richly illustrated article on the vexing question as to which of the surviving labels are authentic and which are not, a puzzle not yet fully resolved.

Much more could be written praising this substantial book (printed in oblong quarto, weighing in at two kilos without the useful protective carton in which it is shipped by the publisher). There are faults, however, that must be addressed. The most serious of these, in my opinion, concerns the decision to publish the work in German without summaries in other languages, especially English. I do not believe I can be accused of chauvinism if I say that English is the international standard language for serious publications on historical violin making, and most German experts, dealers, collectors, and players who are interested in the topic have made it their business to learn that language. One wonders why this volume, which is, and should have been, aimed at the broadest international readership, insists on the exclusive use of German. There is, to be sure, beginning at p. 64, a four-page article in English summarizing Stainer's biography, but it is not a direct rendering of any German text in the volume. A sort of bone tossed to foreign readers, its translation is credited to Dr. Karl N. S. Arndt of New Hampshire. If the publishers

1. Walter Senn, *Jakob Stainer, der Geigenmacher zu Absam: Die Lebensgeschichte nach urkundlichen Quellen* (Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner, 1951).

decide to bring out an edition or editions in other languages, many readers will be dismayed at having to buy an expensive book all over again in order to become more closely involved with its massive text.

The photographs reproduced are not all of equal quality, although many are very good and some are excellent. But a number of them are too dark; the purple of some violins cannot even be seen, for example. Others are not in focus, while still others have highlighting problems. Although control of significant factors such as these is now within the competence of the most serious writers and publishers, it would be unfair not to point out that many photos must have been supplied by third parties, and that the quality of these could not be readily controlled.

Despite the criticisms noted, this is a grand effort worthy of high praise, and a most distinguished addition to the literature.

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Laurence Dana Dreyfus. *Bach's Continuo Group: Players and Practices in His Vocal Works.* *Studies in the History of Music*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Christoph Wolff, 3. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987. xii, 264 pp.; 28 facsimiles, 14 tables, 20 musical examples, 2 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN: 0-674-06020-2 \$35.00.

The concept of basso continuo seems a simple and known quantity: its foundational role in eighteenth-century music is taken for granted, and its practice is frequently thought to be obvious. Yet so many decisions go into realizing a basso continuo that players will be grateful for this fundamental study in which Laurence Dreyfus examines a myriad of clues and sheds a great deal of light on J. S. Bach's continuo practices.

To organize his study, Dreyfus asks four questions: which keyboard instrument accompanied Bach's sacred vocal works; how continuo players executed the bass parts in recitatives; when Bach used doubling bass instruments such as the bassoon, cello, and violone; and whether instruments such as the viola da gamba, the lute, or the violoncello piccolo ever played continuo. A chapter is devoted to each question and its implications.

There is much controversy today regarding Bach's choice of continuo instrument for his sacred vocal music. Many assume that the organ is automatically the instrument of choice, but Dreyfus believes that this view overlooks a considerable quantity of documentary and notational evidence, and he marshalls his evidence to form a new theory of "dual accompaniment." His belief is that while the organ is indeed basic to