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***The Historical Harpsichord: A Monograph Series in Honor of Frank Hubbard.* Edited by Howard Schott. Vol. 3. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992. viii, 161 pp.; 37 black-and-white photos, 14 black-and-white figures produced in the text and separately on celluloid foil negatives. ISBN: 0-945193-26-2. \$48.00.**

The first volume of this series was devoted mainly to an essay by William Dowd on the instruments of the Blanchet workshop. Volume two, by Martha Goodway and Scott Odell, dealt with the metallurgical properties of historical music wire. The present volume, consisting of two monographs—Hubert Henkel’s “Bartolomeo Cristofori as Harpsichord Maker” and Denzil Wright’s “The Identification and Authentication of Italian String Keyboard Instruments”—continues to present research on the cutting edge of our knowledge of the history of the harpsichord and clavichord.

Hubert Henkel was curator of the musical instrument museum at the University of Leipzig during the years it was called Karl Marx University. Since one of the three pianos and all five of the harpsichords still extant by Cristofori are in that collection, Henkel was uniquely positioned to study what remains of the oeuvres of that Florentine genius. One of the harpsichords is unsigned and undated, but on the basis of internal evidence Henkel assigns it “at the very least to Cristofori’s workshop or that of a direct follower” (p. 2). He makes the same attribution for a spinettone in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Eight or nine instruments are not much of a legacy from an important builder, whose lifetime output Henkel estimates at something like 170 harpsichords and 30 or so pianos. Nevertheless, even with five harpsichords to examine, one is struck by Cristofori’s fecundity.

Two harpsichords (the 1722 and the undated, unsigned one) are conventional integral-case Italian instruments with cypress soundboards and $2 \times 8'$ dispositions. The third is an extraordinary symmetrically-shaped oval spinet of 1693 with the uncommon disposition of $2 \times 8'$ and a mechanism for playing either one or both sets of strings. The fourth could be described as an elongated quasi-bentside spinet. (A similar instrument was called *uno spinettone da teatro* [large spinet for the theater] in the 1700 inventory of the Medici collection of keyboard instruments.) This instrument has both $8'$ and $4'$ strings, a rare disposition for a spinet of any sort. Further, Cristofori provided a mechanism for playing either of the stops alone as well as both together.

The fifth instrument is a unique harpsichord, with string choirs of $1 \times 8'$, $1 \times 4'$, $1 \times 2'$. Interestingly, it does not seem possible to play all three sets of strings together. Through an ingenious combination of register extensions protruding from cheek and spine, and stop levers mounted on the wrest plank, the $8'$, $8' + 4'$, $4'$, $4' + 2'$, and $2'$ registrations are accessible. Henkel questions the usefulness of $4'$ and $2'$ stops alone, but their presence indicates that the Italians may well have viewed octave stops as instruments in their own right, rather than simply as a means of enhancing $8'$ tone. Accordingly, this instrument could be thought to combine a normal harpsichord with a $4'$ *ottavino* and a $2'$ spinet.

Aside from novel shapes and dispositions, there are other unconventional things about Cristofori's harpsichords, such as unusual registration mechanisms, independent hitch-pin rails, combined box guides and lower guides, and the simultaneous use of touch rail and head stops. Of course, his greatest invention was that most peculiar harpsichord of all, the *gravicembalo col piano e forte*. Who'd have thought it would catch on!

There are many ways by which we may attempt to assign a provenance, time, or builder to an anonymous undated instrument: scale lengths, apparent units of measurement, shape, constructional and decorative details, and the use of particular materials are some commonly used. In "The Identification and Authentication of Italian String Keyboard Instruments," Denzil Wraight convincingly rejects all of these as realistic determinants of maker or even place of origin. He even dismisses the presence of a builder's name as a means of identification, since many instruments that passed through Franciolini's shop emerged with false attributions. Instead, he proposes that, if possible at all, the identification of Italian builders must depend on the two elements unique to each craftsman: case moldings and keyfront arcades.

Wraight reports on a number of identification problems he has solved by comparing photographic negatives of some of the moldings typically found on Italian harpsichords and clavichords. In an appendix he identifies thirty-nine possible locations for moldings on these instruments. He goes into considerable detail on how to take an impression, what materials to use, and how to avoid injuring the molding. He also recounts earlier attempts to identify instruments by molding profiles, a technique he traces back to 1910.

Until the advent of modern machines, such as shapers, moldings were made either with special planes whose beds and blades mirrored the

shape of the desired molding, or scrapers called scratch stocks with molding profiles ground into them. The arcades glued to the fronts of the keys were made with a circular cutter chucked in a drill. Planes do a nice, smooth job when the grain of the wood is fairly straight or uphill; but when the grain is uneven or goes downhill, the wood tends to tear rather than plane off in thin shavings. A scratch stock scrapes rather than planes, takes longer, and does not do as smooth a job; but it does not tear out wood, no matter which direction the grain takes. Scratch stock cutters can also be sharpened more easily and accurately than molding plane blades.

Although either planes or scratch stocks could have been used to make the moldings on Italian instruments, Wraight finds little tear-out, which would be an indication of planing against the grain. Since much of his argument rests on the close replication of the molding profiles, he concludes that the scratch stock was the tool of choice. Yet, in his short article "An Attribution of an Unsigned Spinnet" (*FoMRHI Quarterly* 70 [Jan. 1993]: 45–46), Wraight allows that one of the moldings on a spinet in the Shrine to Music Museum does not quite match a similar molding on another instrument and thus could have been made with a plane. Without getting into the matter too deeply, one must assert that Wraight cannot have it both ways. But this minor criticism is aimed only at his explanation in this particular instance. His methodology has been carefully thought out and his arguments are convincing. He does not often falter.

Both monographs represent significant contributions to the history of the harpsichord and continue the high standards of practical scholarship established earlier in the series. This sort of detailed investigation is not uncommon these days, but such was not always the case. When Frank Hubbard's *Three Centuries of Harpsichord Making* was published by Harvard University Press in 1967, it stood alone—both as a magnificent achievement and as an example of what could be accomplished by close examination of instruments. Ten years ago, in the introduction to the first volume of this new series, Howard Schott stated that its purpose would be "to continue and build on the research initiated by Frank Hubbard" (p. x). So far, *The Historical Harpsichord* has fulfilled that pledge.

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