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The real strengths of the book, however, lie in the detailed discussions of piano mechanism; the inclusion of several excerpts from London newspapers (although the reader must be cautioned against an excess of self-praise on the part of some piano makers); and new biographical material on Backers, Zumpe, and Beyer. Having stated some reservations, I must add that his discussions are entertaining. Personal as they are, they make good reading and provide us with fascinating possibilities. One can thank the author for daring to set forth these ideas. Speculation often generates further investigation, which in turn can lead to truth.

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David Rowland, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xiv, 244 pp. ISBN: 0-521-47470-1 cloth; -47986-X paper. \$64.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

This is the sixth instrumental entry in the *Cambridge Companions to Music* series, an ongoing collection of volumes devoted to individual composers and instruments. The series editors do not appear to be constrained by arbitrary preconceptions of length, since in 1997 they offered a volume of 361 pages dedicated to brass instruments, and in 1999 they released a 242-page entry devoted entirely to the saxophone. However, their decision to publish a 244-page volume covering not only the history of piano construction but its repertoire as well seems largely arbitrary, suggesting that economics or other considerations may have overruled the creative judgments necessary to make this a laudable contribution to the series. To be sure, concision itself is often a value, but *The Harvard Dictionary* does not remain a respected adjunct to *The New Grove* purely because of its brevity—or even due to its accuracy—but because its information is clearly organized for ease of reference. In this realm the piano *Companion* is somewhat deficient, because even though its twelve commissioned essays proceed more or less chronologically, specific facts about the piano's history and construction are not always easily accessed. The book tries to cover so much ground that—at the very least—it would be helpful if its index contained subdivisions, so that information about eighteenth-century piano hammers, for example, could be accessed without checking all references to “hammers.”

The volume is divided into two sections of approximately equal length—"Pianos and pianists" and "Repertory"—each containing six essays. For the most part, the subjects addressed have been chosen intelligently, and the nine British contributors are highly qualified to undertake their tasks. But a work dealing with piano construction that promises to be "a valuable source for the piano performer, student and enthusiast" might be expected to offer at least some discussion of the piano industry in the twentieth century, and such commentary rarely appears. That rationale may best be summarized by one contributor who insists that there have been "no significant technological improvements in the piano for the last hundred years" (p. 112). But the omission is regrettable, since in his chapter on "The piano since c. 1825," David Rowland, the volume's capable editor, shares some fascinating and tantalizing figures concerning piano ownership up to 1910. It seems likely that an updated discussion of such matters—as well as at least some survey of contemporary manufacturers—would have held considerable interest for the work's intended audience.

A more serious limitation is a deficit of practical information concerning the modern instrument's tuning or maintenance, which cannot be attributed to space limitations. Instead, the book offers only an article by Bernard Richardson, a professor of physics and astronomy, on "The acoustics of the piano," which focuses largely on scientific equations and formulas involving sound waves. To be sure, some artists, teachers, and hobbyists may welcome this discussion, but given the intended audience, one wonders at his decision to favor such issues over a more thorough explanation of "Temperaments and tunings" (which he limits to a page and a half), and in lieu of any discussion at all concerning voicing and regulation. However, it should also be said that other articles from section one are filled with worthwhile and highly entertaining insights. Kenneth Hamilton's wit and intelligence graphically capture the color of a bygone age, making his essay "The virtuoso tradition" a pleasure to read. Commenting on a live Chopin performance recorded by Vladimir de Pachmann in the 1920s, he wryly observes that the pianist's exaggerated *rallentando* makes it sound "as if the audience might die of old age before he gets to the final note" (p. 74).

But there is less to praise in the book's second section, which attempts to survey the history of keyboard literature from Bach's sons to the present in less than one hundred pages. Again, if resources were limited, one wonders why the editors did not simply focus their energies toward a more substantial book on the piano itself and refer the reader else-

where for discussions of repertoire (for example, the excellent *Cambridge Companion to Chopin* extends to well over 330 pages). The informed reader soon begins to marvel not at the contributions of the composers themselves, but at the skill and deftness with which a given writer manages to cope with such impossible limitations. Except for some isolated remarks scattered throughout the volume, Beethoven's thirty-two Sonatas receive only a page; Schubert's, only a paragraph. David Rowland's few observations are highly intelligent, but anyone who knows these works will view such condensation as analogous to Olympian images viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. J. Barrie Jones is given about four pages to discuss all of Brahms's piano output, and—remarkably—he manages to mention nearly every major piece, plus the duets and the two-piano works. But given such limited space, a commitment to “mention” a fixed number of works is more likely to preclude, rather than foster, meaningful discussion, and these commentators deserve far better.

Even when original insights appear, they often arrive at the expense of more substantive matters, as when Jones devotes two paragraphs to the virtually unknown paraphrases on “Chopsticks” (p. 173), a four-hand “committee” composition written by Liadov and several other Russians. His remarks are informative and enjoyable, but his failure to devote so much as a complete sentence to Rachmaninoff's large two-piano Suites—which today are very much a part of standard two-piano repertoire—can scarcely be justified. And if a scholar does exhibit bias, those prejudices are likely to be magnified by unreasonable space constrictions. However pianists may interpret Mervyn Cooke's comment that “Boulez's three sonatas have earned themselves a firm place in the repertory” (p. 205), does such advocacy really justify the elimination of Prokofieff's nine sonatas from his discussion of twentieth-century piano music? Or worse, can there be any firm grounds for eliminating *all* of Copland and Barber's works from the same discussion? Brevity can also severely hamper a scholar's ability to defend a fresh viewpoint. Brian Priestley writes with authority about “Ragtime, blues, jazz and popular music.” But many readers might wish for some amplification of his remark that the list of serious compositions which have successfully incorporated jazz and blues into European styles “might well begin and end with Ravel's Piano Concerto in G” (p. 216).

The book's chief value is the strength of some of its individual essays, especially when the topic is not so massive as to preclude meaningful commentary within the confines of a brief exposition. To this end, in

addition to the Hamilton piece cited above, Robert Philip's essay "Pianists on record in the early twentieth century," and an article that discusses changing fashions in nineteenth-century repertoire ("Repertory and canon") by Dorothy de Val and Cyril Ehrlich, are especially worth reading. Those who have an interest in these questions and who enjoy seeing them treated with freshness and originality may find the present *Companion* well worth the price. But all too often, the book's contributors have been faced with impossible assignments, since an imprudent condensation is sometimes worse than an outright omission.

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Bernard Brauchli. *The Clavichord*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xix, 384 pp.: 122 black-and-white illustrations, 13 line diagrams, 5 musical exx., 1 table. ISBN: 0-521-63067-3. \$120.00 (cloth).

Although the clavichord has received attention in a number of organological articles over the years, there has never in any language been a full-length book to survey the subject in a comprehensive manner. Bernard Brauchli's publication is the first to achieve that goal. His enthusiasm for his subject, evident throughout the book, has helped to drive the clavichord revival in recent decades. His knowledge of the instrument's history is thorough, and we are all in his debt for the present work.

The book is clearly written and well organized. Christopher Hogwood's witty foreword presents one of the themes to be developed by Brauchli: the importance and prevalence of the clavichord during almost half a millennium. There follow an introduction and seven chapters. The introduction gives a concise account of the basics of clavichord design. The first chapter discusses the clavichord's origins, and one chapter each is devoted to the instrument in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries, with a final chapter outlining "Aspects of clavichord performance practice." This last is followed by a "Conclusion," barely more than two pages, perhaps too briefly summarizing the clavichord's revival period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Three appendices provide a list of iconographical documents (probably close to definitive since the iconography of the clavichord has been Brauchli's special study for