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David Rattray. *Masterpieces of Italian Violin Making (1620–1850): Important Stringed Instruments from the Collection at the Royal Academy of Music*. Second edition. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2000. 192 pp.: 230 color photographs, 4 black-and-white photographs, 1 map, 1 table. ISBN: 0-8108-3976-8. \$125.00 (cloth).

This second and substantially revised edition of *Masterpieces of Italian Violin Making* provides information on a further fifteen instruments from the Royal Academy's collections in addition to those shown in the 1991 first edition. Detailed color photographs in place of the original black-and-white ones, and a revised text that reflects some advances in violin research during the last decade, mean that this edition is decidedly more valuable to the scholar of the violin than its precursor.

In order to convey the importance of this publication, it is relevant first of all to describe exactly what it is not. The title and presentation of David Rattray's book gives the sense of a museum or exhibition catalog; indeed, by the time this review is published, some of the instruments included will be forming a part of the Academy's new museum in London. The format has obvious influences from recent exhibition catalogs, particularly those of the 1987 Stradivari Exhibition in Cremona and the Guarneri Exhibition published in 1998, and is virtually identical to that used in the catalog of *The British Violin* exhibition also published in 2000. Yet this is not a catalog, since it does not list the entire holdings of Italian "masterpieces" owned by the Royal Academy. Instruments have been selected for the book because of their fine preservation or remarkable characteristics of the maker that they illustrate. (From the Academy's multi-national collection of about two hundred stringed instruments, forty-one by Italian makers—thirty violins, six violas, and five cellos—were chosen.) Notable omissions include the Academy's "Segelman" Stradivari cello of 1692, and a number of early specimens of the Brescian School.

Neither does the book serve as an overview of the great Italian violin makers. Although the collection includes many important and celebrated instruments, few can be described as definitive examples. The most obvious example of this is in the representation of Antonio Stradivari's work. More than a dozen examples are owned by the Academy (and twelve are featured in the book), but perhaps only the "Archinto" viola of 1696 and the "Habeneck" violin of ca. 1743 can rub shoulders with the likes of "The Messiah" of 1716 and the "Lady Blunt" of 1721.

Even more importantly, the work of numerous important and familiar makers is not represented in the Academy's collection, and so does not find a place within this book: among others, Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù and Domenico Montagnana are conspicuous by their absence.

If we conclude that this volume is lacking as an overview and as a catalog, does this mean relegation to the stacks of works that substitute gloss and expense for scholarship, an affliction of the violin world? The answer is a resounding "No"—for the combination of abundant illustration and well-written narrative makes this a valuable study. Every instrument is represented by at least five photographs—front, back, and scroll, with enlarged full-page reproductions of the back and belly. Occasionally a scroll of particular note is given a full two pages of photographs at actual scale. The photographs are of very fine quality, and have all been taken under the same conditions, thus providing excellent consistency. (The one frustration is that only six instruments are illustrated in profile, although a great deal of useful information can be learned from this angle.) Rattray examines each instrument individually, providing a biographical and technical narrative based on his long experience, including more than twelve years as custodian of the collection. His text guides the reader through the complexities of violin connoisseurship, as he points out the "awkward proportions" of one violin scroll or the "shallow edge fluting" that characterizes another maker. The commentary on each violin is backed up with a biographical and historical background that provides an effortless and lucid narrative. However, the real beauty of *Masterpieces of Italian Violin Making* is found as the author invites cross-referencing between the different instruments, and so describes the influences of one maker on another. When Rattray writes, for example, that a violin by Rugeri of 1705 has little influence from Stradivari, the reader can turn the pages to examine examples of Stradivari's work of the same period. When he adds that the flowing outline is similar to the "Grand Amati" pattern, there is a photograph for comparison. Rattray's deep knowledge of the instruments in his charge provides the sorts of insights into the instruments that are rarely found elsewhere. The serious reader will find it well worthwhile to work through the enormous maze of cross-references between text and photographs, as Rattray compares technical features of one violin against another.

Masterpieces of Italian Violin Making represents an important contribution to violin scholarship, and this second edition, providing outstanding photographic reproductions, is a significant step forward. No other

book provides such technical assistance to readers who wish to learn about the evolution of craftsmanship in the art of violin making during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. Ratray discusses the instruments that he knows best, not to show off the prodigious talents of a group of violin makers, but rather to allow the reader to follow the thoughts of a connoisseur as he examines a group of instruments by makers whose ideas developed over generations. He has provided an invaluable aid to the scholar or dilettante of this field.

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Edwin M. Good. *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand*. Second ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. xxv, 369 pp.: 64 black-and-white illustrations, 21 line drawings. ISBN: 0-8047-3316-3. \$145.00 (cloth).

There has been an explosion of information dealing with early pianos since 1982, when Edwin M. Good first published his book on the history of the technology of the instrument. This second edition brings his work up to date. It is also a nicer-looking volume: the format is a little larger, the paper a better quality, and the type a bit more readable (although, inexplicably, the photos seem muddier). The bibliography has doubled in size, from eight to fifteen pages. References to recordings are now to CDs, rather than LPs. The material on Cristofori-action pianos has been removed from the original chapter two ("The Classic Piano"), expanded, and along with information on other pianos of the early eighteenth century, put in a new chapter two, entitled "The Earliest Pianos." The old chapter two has become chapter three, expanded to include new information on the grands and squares of the classical era; and since the instrument is still changing, the final chapter ("The Modern Piano") has also been augmented. Many emendations, additions, and changes were made in the intervening chapters, but there has been little substantive rewriting. Rather than a criticism, this comment should be taken as a compliment: the earlier version was so well done that most of this nicely-illustrated book needed little other than occasional factual revision.

A detailed re-review of the major portion of its contents would make little sense. Suffice it to say that *Giraffes* is a fascinating account of the