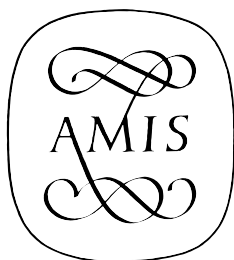


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them that it might be a good idea to use the right name for the musical instrument as well. . . . [This shows] lack of proper scholarship and total disregard for the sound of music in antiquity" (p. 108).

The last sentence above expresses what Jeremy Montagu stands for in this book and in the thrust of his life's work: proper scholarship in the search for "the sound of music in antiquity." In this, he is indeed "the very model of a modern organologist."

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Philip F. Gura. *C. F. Martin and His Guitars, 1796–1873*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 352 pp.: 97 color illus., 88 black-and-white illus., 7 tables, appendices, glossary. ISBN: 0-8078-2801-7. \$45.00 (cloth).

During the past decade there has been a flood of new books about the guitar in all of its different forms. Most of these books either cater to collectors or are picture books aimed at guitar enthusiasts. The research and writing are often poor, and the illustrations vary greatly in quality. Few have genuinely furthered understanding of guitar history. In contrast, Philip Gura's study of the Martin Guitar Company's early years is a substantial achievement.

As one of America's oldest and most notable musical instrument manufacturers, the firm begun in the 1830s by German immigrant Christian Frederick Martin is certainly deserving of in-depth study. The basic story of Martin guitars has already been presented by several writers, but Gura gains a considerable advantage over his predecessors in having unprecedented access to the trove of old business records and correspondence still belonging to the Martin Company. Gura deserves praise for his astute and engaging interpretation of this material, but the management of Martin Guitars should likewise be commended for their wisdom in allowing Gura to temporarily relocate their archive to the University of North Carolina (where he teaches) to allow a thorough examination. Gura's preface recounts the solemn responsibility he felt in transporting the initial batch of this precious cargo by car during the summer of 2000 (pp. xvii–xviii).

The book traces the company's earliest history, up to the death of its founder in 1873. It was sensible for Gura to focus on this rich and fascinating period, rather than trying to continue his narrative through to

Martin's present activities. Gura presents a clear account of the circumstances that led Martin to America, the diverse aspects of his business after he first arrived, and how his relocation from New York City to rural Pennsylvania positioned him to create what quickly became the country's most esteemed guitar manufactory. Interpreting handwritten nineteenth-century records requires a fair amount of detective work, and Gura is up to the task. He fleshes out the entries in Martin's business ledgers with many interesting stories, especially regarding the numerous performers, dealers, vendors, and other instrument makers with whom he worked. Consequently, the reader will find useful information not only about the guitar trade in mid-nineteenth-century America, but also about the music business generally.

Using material from the business ledgers, Gura creates a vivid picture of Martin's activities, which were especially diverse during his years in New York. Repair work is listed for all kinds of instruments, although Martin often farmed this out to others, such as wind instrument makers Charles Christman and William Paulus. Collectors of nineteenth-century guitars should take note of the extensive repair work that Martin logged in his records, including revarnishing, and the replacement of tops, fingerboards, binding, and bridge pins. (An old guitar may look completely "original," but one apparently can never be absolutely certain.) Martin likewise offered for sale or rent all kinds of instruments, including violins, 'cellos, flutes, clarinets, trumpets, bugles, horns, and even such rarities as serpents. Particularly useful to researchers are the prices Martin recorded for his transactions: for example, one evening's flute rental cost 12 1/2 cents.

Gura provides new information about other guitar makers active in nineteenth-century America, such as Charles Stümcke, Heinrich Schatz, and George Maul, all also originally from Germany. But even more fascinating are the accounts of Martin's relationships with various performers and teachers, such as John Coupa (with whom Martin was in partnership for a time), Justin Holland, and a peculiar character named Ossian Dodge. Dodge was an eccentric and self-promoting guitarist who pestered Martin for years about purchasing a fancy instrument Martin had exhibited at New York's Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1853. The number of players, instructors, and other customers mentioned throughout the text makes one realize how popular the guitar was in America during this period. And no story about a long-lived business is complete without a few shady characters. Charles A. Zoebisch tried to skew the market by

making it appear that Martin's guitars were exceptionally hard to procure (p. 169), while Charles Bruno, who had had dealings with Martin for over twenty years, sold some guitars that were obviously direct copies of Martin models, although it is uncertain whether they actually bore fake stamps (p. 174).

Chapter 4, discussing Martin's two main competitors during the 1850s and '60s, is especially interesting. The guitars of James Ashborn and William Tilton have been overlooked in comparison to those of Martin, yet during the 1860s Ashborn, working in a modest shop in Wolcottville, Connecticut, produced considerably more instruments than his Pennsylvania competitor. In 1994 Gura published an award-winning article entitled "Manufacturing Guitars for the American Parlor: James Ashborn's Wolcottville, Connecticut, Factory" (*Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* [104]: 117–55). It is good that much of that material is incorporated here, since readers may not know this study. Tilton was likewise an important figure, his guitar models instantly recognizable for their particular design features, including a metal tailpiece and a decorative disk inside the soundhole. Gura provides what is, to date, surely the fullest published account of Tilton's work.

As exceptional as this book is, it is not without a few shortcomings. Chief among these is the absence of a bibliography. Gura supplies citations for all of his material in the endnotes, but it is frustrating to find an abbreviated reference and to be forced to scan backwards through the notes to find the full bibliographic information. Even more problematic is Gura's rendering of guitar history prior to Martin. He follows a pattern present in many other recent publications, which leaves the reader thinking that instruments made before the 1830s were of little consequence. But the guitar, in fact, has a substantial and colorful history reaching back more than two hundred years before Martin was born. Unfortunately, few English-language works provide more than a small portion of that history. With no time to research this material firsthand, Gura understandably had to rely on a handful of general and very dated books, such as those by Grunfeld (1969), Bellow (1970), and Turnbull (1974). Gura's description of "The Physical Development of the Guitar" (pp. 2–5) is brief, and too vague to provide a real context for Martin's work.

Perhaps Gura's most egregious suggestion that guitars of quality began with Martin is his caption to plate 2-37, which depicts a woman in about 1860 with a guitar that is likely Italian-made and from the early

1800s. The caption states that although this woman “might still play an inferior European instrument, more and more frequently she had the opportunity to purchase a guitar by the nation’s premier maker.” Perhaps Gura meant to suggest that such guitars would have been considered outmoded (i.e., “inferior”) by the 1860s, but his choice of words is unfortunate. Relatively few guitars from before 1830 have been restored to a condition that allows evaluation of their musical capabilities, but those that have suggest that their makers were capable of producing instruments that functioned quite well within their musical milieu.

Although Gura does great service to Tilton, I disagree with part of his explanation for the interior bar that is a primary feature of his guitars (pp. 127–28). This wooden bar fits between the guitar’s lower block and its neck block, and is intended to relieve the strain of string tension from the guitar’s top, allowing it to vibrate more freely. Gura compares this bar’s function to the perch pole of a banjo, but a perch pole is not really designed to serve the same bracing function. It is, instead, simply an extension of the neck, piercing the round body and helping to hold the neck in place. In this sense it is analogous to the spike of spike lutes found in non-European cultures.

A curious early guitar maker named Emilius Scherr is briefly discussed (p. 31), but Gura misrepresents his work somewhat. Scherr was a Danish immigrant active in Philadelphia, and only five surviving examples of his unusual patented harp-guitars are known (rather than “several,” as stated in note 60, p. 207). Gura refers to Scherr’s instrument as a “huge guitar” and says that its patentable feature was its “great size.” Neither notion is truly accurate, and it is more appropriate to call this guitar elongated, as is shown in one of the book’s period illustrations (fig. 1-21). Gura also includes a patent drawing for Scherr’s guitar, showing an instrument with a gigantic body and a ridiculously elongated neck (fig. 1-20), but he does not explain that this purely fanciful image was likely a reconstruction made after the 1834 U.S. Patent Office fire (as suggested by Laurence Libin, *American Musical Instruments* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1985], 132).

One of the book’s great strengths is the profusion of period photographs, some of which are from the author’s own collection. Whereas these older images are generally very clear and handsome, the same cannot be said of all the modern photographs of guitars. Gura understandably relied on the generosity of owners to supply these photographs, and although they usually provide the requisite information, many of them

have poor color values and clarity. At least one image (plate 2-30) is reversed (including a view of a printed label).

Throughout the book there are statements with which one might take issue, though none is particularly damaging to the work's overall credibility. For example, Gura interprets the presence of violin necks among Martin's stock in the 1830s to suggest that he was making violins, whereas they may have been used only for repairing or modernizing older instruments (p. 69). I likewise question the use of the term "detachable neck" to refer to an improvement made by Martin's Viennese teacher, Johann Georg Stauffer (p. 35). Stauffer's neck was primarily designed to be movable rather than removable, i.e., the angle could be adjusted (which Gura eventually explains). A story is recounted of Martin being asked if he knew how to construct a lyre for a customer "in a convent out West" (p. 163). Gura suggests that this individual probably meant a lyre guitar, but there is no good reason why the client could not have been envisioning a replica of an actual ancient Greek lyre.

These few quibbles aside, *C. F. Martin and His Guitars* will likely stand for some time as the definitive work on this important instrument maker and on early American guitar making in general. Gura, who is Distinguished Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, sets a higher standard in his research and writing than is often seen in works by authors whose purported field of study is musical instruments. He excels at providing the larger picture of his subject, including generous information about those with whom Martin had business relationships. The photographic reproductions of a couple of pages from Martin's ledgers and daybooks (plates 2-36 and 3-8) are very tantalizing. We should hope that one day at least some of this material will be microfilmed or scanned so that others can likewise have the opportunity of combing through and interpreting such an immensely valuable archive.

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Susan Orlando, editor. *The Italian Viola da Gamba: Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Italian Viola da Gamba.* Solignac: Edition Ensemble Baroque de Limoges; Turin: Edizione Angolo Manzoni, 2002. 223 pp.: 85 black-and-white illus., 11 tables, 2 musical exx. ISBN: 2-9509342-5-0. €45,00 (paper).