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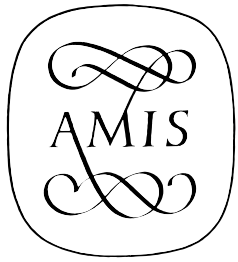

The Bentside Spinets of Stephen Keene and His School*

Peter Mole

The bentside spinet was the common domestic keyboard instrument in England for about a century, from the demise of the rectangular virginal before 1680 until the establishment of the square piano about 1780.[1] Many thousands of such instruments were made, and considerably more than two hundred have survived. Yet the bentside spinet has been largely ignored by scholars as not really worthy of serious study. This article, which examines the most prestigious school of spinet making of late Stuart England, seeks to redress that omission.

The spinet has generally been considered a "poor man's harpsichord." According to Philip Brutton James,

> Those who could not afford or who had not room for a harpsichord would buy a spinet, but although they were being made as late as 1785 they were by that time obsolete. . . . Apart from these considerations of cost and size—to which may be added its undoubted charm as a piece of furniture—the spinet is essentially the inferior instrument, for its tone is often harsh and inevitably monotonous owing to the lack of stops.[2]

This somewhat pejorative characterization has persisted: Raymond Russell comments that "the spinet became a popular instrument in England in the eighteenth century, and was no doubt generally used in circumstances in which the upright piano forte would make its appearance today."[3] The instrument is described in *Grove Music Online* as:

* This article is based on a paper read at the thirty-sixth annual meeting of the American Musical Instrument Society, at Yale University in June 2007. Many people have been involved with the research reported in this article. They include, but are not confined to, Emily Azis, Andrew Garrett, Darryl Martin, Steven Morris, Charles Mould, Jenny Nex, John Watson, Lady Willoughby de Eresby, and Paula Woods. I would like to thank all those involved for their input, help, and support.

1. The first surviving square pianos, by Johannes Zumpe, date from 1766. Zumpe's design rapidly became fashionable, and similar pianos were made by other makers, including Beyer, Pohlmann, Ganer, and, importantly, Broadwood; see Michael Cole, *The Pianoforte in the Classical Era* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

2. Philip Brutton James, *Early Keyboard Instruments, from Their Beginnings to the Year 1820* (1930; repr., London: Tabard Press, 1970, with a new preface by the author), 32.

3. Raymond Russell, *Keyboard Instruments,* vol. 1 of *Catalogue of Musical Instruments: Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: HMSO, 1968), 21.

> More affordable than a harpsichord . . . the spinet is essentially a domestic instrument, which cannot be said to have a repertory of its own distinct from that of the harpsichord. However, much of the music printed in such collections as *Musick's Handmaid* (1663, 1689), *The Harpsichord Miscellany* (2 vols., ca. 1763) and *The Harpsichord Master* (1697–1734) was doubtless intended for use by the amateur performer who had no larger instrument at his disposal.[4]

The implication is clear: the spinet was an inferior instrument that did not compare well with the harpsichord.

This characterization may be fair for the later spinets, built from about 1740 to about 1780, during which period they had to stand comparison with the large multi-choir harpsichords produced by the Shudi and Kirckman firms; but it is much less fitting for the earlier instruments. Spinets built during the late Stuart and early Georgian periods (ca. 1680–1740) were highly prized in their own right by influential and aristocratic owners. It is incorrect to characterize the spinet of this period as a poor substitute for the harpsichord, which was in any case quite an unusual instrument in England at that time.

The extent to which the spinet was valued in Restoration society emerges from surviving documents. It is widely known, for instance, that Samuel Pepys bought a spinet from Charles Haward. Pepys, a senior navy official, was socially well connected, being a nephew of Edward Montagu, 1st Earl of Sandwich. His skill as an administrator and his personal enthusiasm gained him considerable influence in Restoration London, and it is easy to imagine him extolling the virtues of his new "little espinette."[5] Henry Purcell owned two spinets and an organ,[6] but apparently no harpsichord; one of the spinets was probably made by John Player.[7] Evidence of a purchase of a spinet by an aristocrat has survived in the form of a receipt from Stephen Keene, one of the most successful spinet makers of his day, to Lady Catherine Brudenell, Countess of Middleton (fig. 1). The receipt is dated February 4, 1689, and reads: "Recd of the Ladey Middelton the sume of seven ginnies in full for a spinnet of me."[8]

4. *Grove Music Online,* s.v. "Spinet" (by Edwin M. Ripin and Lance Whitehead), http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed January 21, 2008).

5. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys,* ed. Richard Gallienne (New York: Random House, 2003), April 4, 1668.

6. London, National Archives, PROB 11/489.

7. Peter G. Mole, "On the Trail of Purcell's Spinet," *Early Music* 36 (2008), 409–414.

8. The receipt also bears the figures "7-10-6." They are in a round hand consistent with Keene's own handwriting, of which a great deal survives as a consequence of his

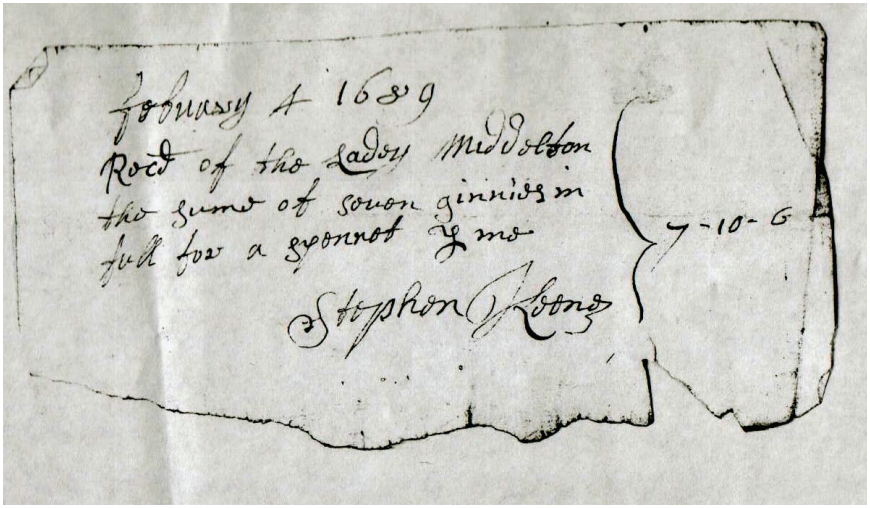

FIGURE 1. Receipt from Stephen Keene to Lady Catherine Brudenell, Countess of Middleton, dated February 4, 1689. British National Library at Exchequer, Private Papers and Exhibits, Supplementary, E/192/15/3.

A portrait in the Holburne Museum of Art, Bath, which has been attributed to Jonathan Richardson the Elder and dated ca. 1707, shows Master Garton Orme (1695–1758) seated at a spinet.[9] The spinet bears strong resemblance to a Keene instrument of the standard design discussed below, though some artistic licence has clearly been taken. The

position as a tax assessor in his parish (see, generally, London Guildhall MS 11316). They may be his, or they may have been written by a member of the Countess's staff, but they apparently refer to the sum of seven pounds, ten shillings, and sixpence. Those familiar with England's duodecimal currency system, which survived until 1971, will know that seven guineas, the amount charged by Keene, amounted to seven pounds and seven shillings, so the Countess clearly paid three shillings and sixpence for something else, probably carriage. I am grateful to Paula Woods, who found this receipt in the Middleton papers in the British National Archive at Exchequer, Private Papers and Exhibits, Supplementary, E/192/15/3.

9. An image of this portrait and some comments of a general nature are available through http://museumnetworkuk.org/portraits/artworks/holburne/img3.html (accessed January 22, 2008). The museum acquired the portrait from Sir Orme Sargent in 1962. The painting was attributed to Jonathan Richardson the Elder in 1988 by Sir Oliver Millar (then Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures); the attribution was confirmed by Malcolm Rogers. The painting was previously attributed to Thomas Hill (from 1963), and before that to Sir Godfrey Kneller (personal communication, Amina Wright, Curator of Fine Art, the Holburne Museum, University of Bath, July 2008).

focus of the portrait is the sitter: Master Orme, a child about nine years old, is dressed in expensive-looking clothing complete with a ceremonial sword, and the obvious conclusion is that the portrait depicts him on some important occasion—a birthday, perhaps. As the website commentary notes, it is difficult to determine whether the portrait reflects family wealth or is more aspirational. But either way, the inclusion of the spinet indicates the desirability of the instrument.

Another aristocrat who has left a record of her spinet is Lady Grisell Baillie of Mellerstain House, Kelso, Scotland. The following passage appears in her household accounts for 1707,[10] recording the routine she had set for "Grisie," one of her two daughters, then aged fourteen:

> To rise by seven a clock and goe about her duty of reading etc etc and be drest and come to breakfast at nine, to play of the spinet till eleven, from eleven till twelve to write and read French, at two a clock to sew her seam till four, at four learn arithmetic, after that dance and play herself until supper and be in bed at nine.

It sounds a strict regime and one unlikely, one would think, to generate much enthusiasm for "playing of the spinet." But it clearly places this activity among the accomplishments of a gentlewoman.[11]

Lastly, it seems highly probable that the Keene spinet owned by Lady Willoughby de Eresby in 2008 was purchased in 1707 by her ancestor the 2nd Duchess of Perth. The spinet has been included in Willoughby de Eresby family inventories since the eighteenth century and was kept until recent times at Lady Willoughby de Eresby's home in Scotland, Drummond Castle, Perthshire, formerly the home of the 2nd Duchess.[12]

10. *The Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie, 1692–1733,* ed. Robert Scott-Moncrieff (Edinburgh: printed at the University Press by T. and A. Constable for the Scottish History Society, 1911). Available online at http://www.archive.org/details/householdbookofl00bailrich.

11. Mellerstain House, the home of the present Lord and Lady Bailie, Earl and Countess of Haddington, contains a spinet by Charles Haward, though it is probably not the one upon which "Grisie" was made to play.

12. Another possible owner of this instrument is the Duchess of Ancaster, who, Lady Willoughby thought, might have bought the spinet after being obliged to leave her English seat, Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincolnshire, in the mid-eighteenth century (personal communication, March 2007). However, a spinet of 1707 would have been very old-fashioned by that time, and I think it unlikely that so wealthy a family would have bought such a relatively low-priced item second-hand. I therefore reject that latter explanation and strongly prefer the alternative.

These examples are sufficient to justify a rejection of the "poor man's harpsichord" characterization of the spinet by James and later commentators. Indeed, they show that the instrument was fully acceptable to persons at the top end of fashionable society in Restoration England and in Scotland, and even suggest that possession of a spinet may have added to a person's status. In addition, personal experience of playing both the early spinet and the English virginal that it replaced has demonstrated to me the advances over the virginal provided by the spinet, in terms of mechanical reliability, tuning stability, and rapidity of repetition in the bass octave. The spinet also has a markedly lighter and more nasal timbre than the virginal, which may have better suited the Restoration fashion for French music. Certainly, the spinet became popular in late Stuart England, but not for the reasons suggested in the literature.

Having placed the early spinet in what I believe to be its proper context, I now turn to establishing the concept of a school of spinet making in late Stuart England led by Stephen Keene. Finally, I provide a preliminary characterization of the instruments from that school.

Stephen Keene

Stephen Keene's exact date of birth is unknown, and it seems unlikely that it willl now come to light, since the registers of the parish in which he is presumed to have been baptized, St. Mary, Sydenham, near Thame in Oxfordshire, go back only to 1662[13]—many parishes lost their records during the Interregnum. However, like all boys (and girls too) in England, Keene was subject to the Statute of Artificers,[14] which mandated that an individual without a private income of forty shillings per year was obliged to be apprenticed in a trade or to go into domestic service. In 1655 Keene was bound apprentice to Gabriel Townsend (ca.

13. http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite (accessed February 19, 2007).

14. The Statute of Artificers (Eliz. I, C4 [1563]) was intended to create a comprehensive system for the regulation of employment in an economy in which there were acute labor shortages. It remained on the English statute books until the nineteenth century, though it was rather more strictly enforced in the early part of its life than in the later period. See, generally, William P. Quigley, *Five Hundred Years of English Poor Laws, 1349–1834: Regulating the Working and Nonworking Poor,* http://www3.uakron.edu/lawrev/quigley1.html (accessed November 18, 2005).

1604–1660),[15] a master[16] of the Joiners Company and a virginal maker. Because apprentices were bound at the age of about sixteen years, we can therefore assume that Keene was born around 1640.

A note about the Joiners Company is perhaps appropriate here. By the time of the restoration of the monarchy in 1661, the medieval trade guilds had matured into organizations empowered by royal charter to enforce a monopoly over the crafts they controlled. Their primary purpose was to inhibit competition. It was forbidden by law to practice a craft without being a member of the appropriate company: to do so was to invite litigation and possible sequestration of assets. Most craftsmen took the prudent course of entering a company, which could be done by apprenticing with a master for seven years, by patrimony (if a man's father had been a member) or by redemption (payment of a significant fee). Having entered the Joiners Company by apprenticeship, Keene would have become a freeman after seven years, and would then have been obliged to serve three years as a paid journeyman to a master craftsman before being allowed to practice on his own account and to take apprentices of his own. Keene was admitted to freedom of the Joiners Company on November 3, 1662, on the recommendation of John Player[17] (this suggests that Townsend had died by this time), and would have remained with Player or some other master as a journeyman until qualified to set up in business on his own. In 1704/5, Keene became Master of the Joiners Company, like Townsend and Player before him.[18]

The earliest surviving instruments by Stephen Keene are two virginals: they bear inscriptions including dates, one of 1668 and one of 1675, showing that Keene's workshop must have been established by 1668 at the latest. An advertisement that appears at the end of the sixth edition of Playford's *Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (1672) would seem to con-

15. Townsend trained not only Stephen Keene but also another prominent spinet maker, John Player. A virginal by Townsend, which was made for Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia and the sister of King Charles I, has survived and is now in the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM), Brussels (accession no. 1591); see Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840,* 3rd ed., edited by Charles Mould (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 660.

16. The term "master" is used here to denote a master craftsman, a freeman who has served his term as journeyman and is therefore entitled to take on apprentices of his own. The term "Master" refers to the most senior officer of the company.

17. London Guildhall MS 8051/1.

18. London Guildhall MS 8051/2. The turn of the year at this date was at Lady Day, March 26. The Julian Calendar was not adopted in England until 1752.

firm these dates: "Mister Stephen Keen, Maker of Harpsicons and Virginals, dwelleth now in Threadneedle Street at the sign of the Virginal, who maketh them exactly good both for sound and substance."[19] The word "now" is interesting, suggesting that Keene had recently moved to new premises in Threadneedle Street, perhaps as a result of the Great Fire of 1666. The fire almost completely devastated the central part of the City of London, from The Temple in the west to the Tower of London in the east, and if, as seems likely, Stephen Keene's original premises lay within this area, then his house and his stock in trade were probably destroyed.[20]

Figure 2 lists the names of Stephen Keene's apprentices and those whom they took on in the course of time once they became master joiners themselves. Keene's influence is undoubtedly visible in the surviving instruments of all these makers, and it is tempting to consider them all as belonging to the School of Keene; however, to do so would be to ignore the fact that some of these makers, in particular the person whom I refer to as "Thomas Hitchcock Free 1701" (to distinguish him from other Thomas Hitchcocks)[21] and Thomas Barton, can be thought of as members of other significant schools as well. Thus, this article focuses on Keene himself and on the two men who came into partnership with him, Edward Blunt and Charles Brackley.

Though we are unlikely to discover the date of Keene's birth, the date of his death is certain, since the probate[22] of a will dated December 16,

19. Boalch, *Makers,* 3rd ed., 102, quoting A. J. Hipkins and William Gibb, *Musical Instruments, Historic, Rare and Unique* (London: A. and C. Black, 1888; repr., 1945), xxii. The notice appears in John Playford, *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, 6th ed., [part 3], *The Art of Descant, or Composing Musick in Parts,* by Thomas Campion (London: W. Godbid for J. Playford, 1672 [part 3, 1671]), 41 (copy in the Houghton Library, Harvard University).

20. John Evelyn noted in his diary on September 4, 1666, that "the burning still rages; I went now on horse back, & it was now gotten as far as the Inner Temple, all Fleetstreete, old baily, Ludgate Hill, Warwick Lane, Paules Chaine, Wattling streete now flaming"; *The Diary of John Evelyn,* ed. Guy de la Bédoyère (Woodbridge, England: Boydell & Brewer, 1995), 154. The fire was preceded by the plague of 1665, during which 100,000 people in London were said to have died, out of a population of 400,000 to 500,000; on the plague, see *The Diary of John Evelyn,* 147. Together, the plague and the fire had a devastating effect on commerce in London.

21. "Thomas Hitchcock Free 1701" is identified in Peter Mole, "The Hitchcock Spinet Makers—A New Analysis," *Galpin Society Journal* 60 (2007): 45–61.

22. In eighteenth-century England, probate of a will was granted very quickly, in most cases within a few days of the testator's death.

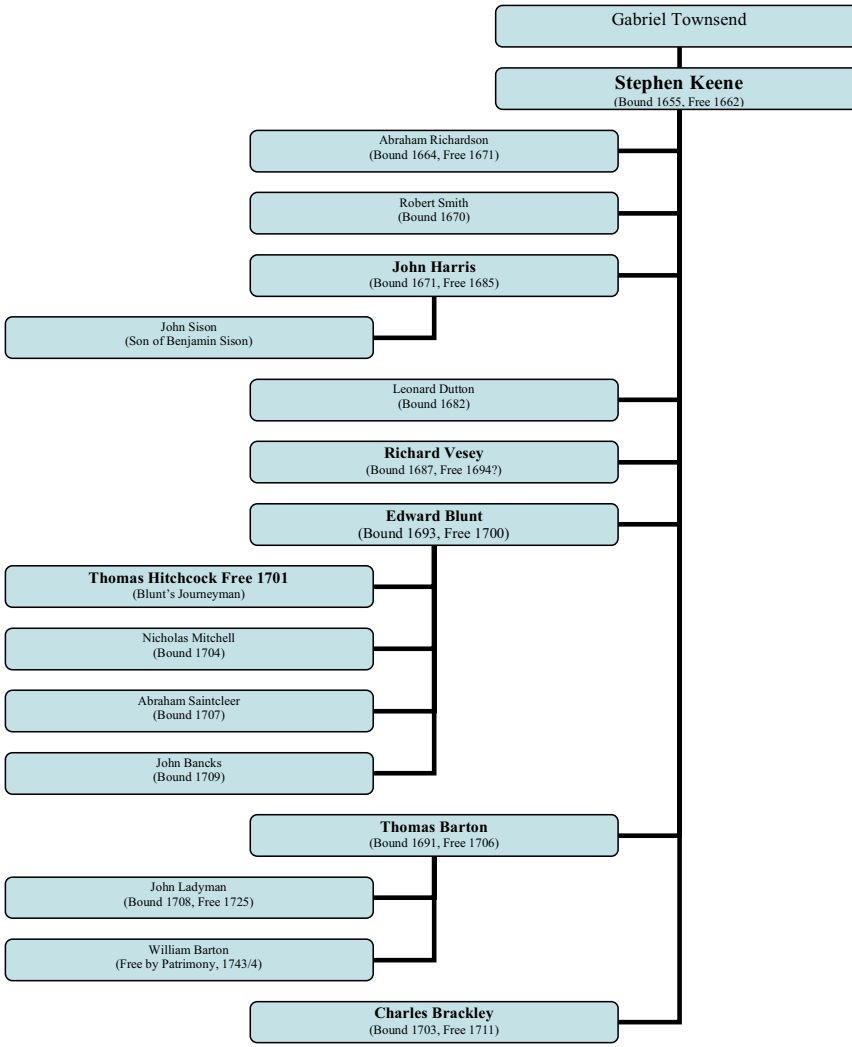

FIGURE 2. Stephen Keene and his apprentices.
Most of this information has been assembled from material in Donald H. Boalch, *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord 1440–1840,* 3rd ed., edited by Charles Mould (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 715–16, supplemented by material from the Binding and Freedom Registers of the Joiners Company at the Guildhall Library, London. The Library's MS numbers of these registers, with details of their subject matter and dates, are listed at http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/join.htm (accessed August 2008).

1712, of Stephen Keene, "Citizen and Joyner" of London, is in the British National Archive.[23] That date is seven years earlier than the one of "after 1719" given by Boalch.[24] The latter date was based on A. J. Hipkins's claim[25] that he owned a nameboard from a Keene spinet dated 1719. In view of the discovery of this will, either Hipkins must have misread the date or a false date had been inscribed on the nameboard in an attempt to mislead.

There is nothing in Keene's will about musical instruments, but two significant facts emerge—that Keene was wealthy, and that he and his wife were childless. Keene had clearly become a person of some substance, since he wills freehold property in what is now Gracechurch Street, in Islington at York Buildings,[26] and in Grub Street (which now lies under the Barbican complex) to his wife Sarah. It seems that this wealth must have been derived from Keene's virginal- and spinet-making business, since such indications as there are lead to a conclusion that his father was relatively poor.[27] And there is other evidence of Keene's wealth: In 1693, what was in effect a wealth tax—the "Four Shilling in the Pound Tax"—was levied in England to fund the wars of William III (William of Orange) against Louis XIV. The tax returns survive[28] and confirm Stephen Keene and his wife Sarah as living in the parish of St. Benet Fink,[29] which included part of Threadneedle Street. Keene was prominent enough to be appointed Assessor of the tax due for that parish, and many of the returns are certified in what appears to be his own hand. Significantly, he declared his own wealth as £600, which was the maximum amount that had to be declared. The name of another spinet maker, John Player, appears in a neighboring parish, but with only £200 declared.

23. London, National Archives, Barnes Quire Numbers 223–262: PROB 11/530.

24. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 102.

25. Hipkins and Gibb, *Musical Instruments*, 52.

26. Samuel Pepys lived in York Buildings, and it is therefore likely that Keene and Pepys knew each other.

27. It has not been possible to determine with absolute certainty the identity of Keene's father. We know from Keene's binding record that his father was named Richard. The wills of the two Richard Keenes who emerge from the genealogical records at the appropriate time describe both of them as yeomen (London, National Archives, PROB 11/229 and PROB 11/193).

28. London Guildhall MS 11316/21.

29. The church, which was demolished in the nineteenth century, was located in Fink Street; it was common for a church to bear the name of a saint, plus a street name or location.

In his will, Keene says specifically that he and his wife Sarah were childless. To anticipate myself, it is worth remembering the tendency of wealthy childless couples to find some worthy beneficiaries for their estate. What could be more appropriate than to leave the business as a going concern to one of the apprentices, perhaps even to one who might have been "family"? Such a transfer of a business to a former apprentice seems to have occurred, in fact, with the spinet-making business of John Player. Player died and was buried at St. Martin Outwich on June 16, 1707.[30] It seems that his business was taken over by Cawton Aston, who by that time had become a freeman and Player's journeyman; Player's last two apprentices, Gabriel Pelly and Thomas Higgins, were bound over to Aston in 1708.[31]

Keene's wife Sarah died in 1720 and the probate of her will is in the records of the Canterbury Prerogative Court.[32] Sarah's will is in many ways more interesting than that of Keene himself, since, looking at the persons named as beneficiaries, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Sarah Keene was related to Edward Blunt. She names in her will her "late nephew" Edward Blunt,[33] which confirms the note in the third edition of Boalch's *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord* that Blunt died "before December 1718."[34] But, significantly, Sarah Keene also left money to Blunt's daughter Mary. Though this is not certain, it is therefore likely that the relationship between Stephen Keene and Edward Blunt was not only one of master and apprentice but also one of family.[35] The two surviving spinets inscribed "Keene & Blunt" are significant in this context. Keene's normal practice was for his name to be applied as a nameboard inscription and for the apprentice or journeyman to initial a

30. London Guildhall MS 6837.

31. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 715–16. This emphasizes the close community that existed among those members of the Joiners Company who made keyboard instruments, a result of the system in which the apprentice lived with the master effectively as part of the master's extended family. Close personal ties (or antipathies!) will inevitably develop under such circumstances.

32. London, National Archives, PROB 11/580.

33. Use of the term "nephew" at this date need not necessarily indicate a blood relationship—it was often used as a term of endearment—but here I believe it does show a family connection.

34. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 19.

35. When Sarah married Stephen Keene her name was given as "Casterman," but that is not necessarily inconsistent with her having been born a Blunt—she might have been married before. Or Blunt's mother may have been a sister of Sarah's.

key or jack. This pattern is found both on earlier and on later Keene spinets; initials appearing on a key or jack include "EB" (Edward Blunt), "TB" (Thomas Barton), and "CB" (Charles Brackley). The joint inscription may therefore be evidence of a close business relationship, probably amounting to *de facto* partnership, and in this instance evidence of a family relationship too.

Edward Blunt

From the archives of the Joiners Company,[36] it is known that Blunt was bound apprentice to Stephen Keene from September 5, 1693, for seven years. Blunt must therefore have been born about 1677. His father, also called Edward, was a freeman of the Weavers Company.[37] Blunt became a freeman of the Joiners Company in December 1700.[38] It seems likely that Blunt worked for or with Keene in Keene's premises "in Threadneedle Street at the sign of the virginals" from 1700 to 1702. Blunt married Anne Beezley on June 13, 1702, at St. James' Westminster, which may indicate that by that time Blunt had moved into his own premises; their daughter Anne was christened at St. Botolph Bishopsgate on April 18, 1703.[39] A spinet dated 1703 and bearing the inscription of Edward Blunt alone has survived, which confirms that by then Blunt had set up his own business. Furthermore, the records of the Joiners Company show the binding to him of an apprentice, Nicholas Mitchell, in 1704.[40] From the Land Tax Assessment records it is clear that by 1706 Blunt was in his own premises in the parish of St. Benet Fink.[41] Abraham Saintcleer was bound as apprentice to Blunt in 1707.[42]

At some time between the Land Tax Assessment dates in 1707 and 1708, Blunt moved into John Player's former premises in the neighboring parish of St. Martin Outwich.[43] Perhaps he felt the need for more

36. London Guildhall MS 6837.
37. London Guildhall MS 8051/2.
38. London Guildhall MS 8051/2.
39. London Guildhall MS 4516/2.
40. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 716. This fits very nicely with the date of Thomas Hitchcock Free 1701 leaving Blunt's employ, which is assumed to have been in 1703 or 1704: see Mole, "The Hitchcock Spinet Makers," 49–50.
41. London Guildhall MS 11316/21.
42. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 716.
43. London Guildhall MS 11316/27.

space, because on March 30, 1708, a second daughter, Mary, was christened at St. Martin Outwich,[44] and in 1709 John Bancks was bound to him as apprentice.[45] St. Martin Outwich and St. Benet Fink stood very close to each other at the Bishopsgate end of Threadneedle Street, and St. Botolph Bishopsgate was not far away, as can be seen from the small portion of John Rocque's map of London (1746) reproduced here (fig. 3).[46] So Blunt apparently continued to live and work in the same small area of London.

Blunt's second daughter Mary died in April 1709. There must therefore have been a further child named Mary, since in Sarah Keene's will, dated 1720, a daughter of Edward Blunt named Mary is described as a juvenile. Since no other children are mentioned in the will, it is possible that none but this Mary survived infancy. The third edition of Boalch's *Makers of the Harpsichord and Clavichord* states, without quoting the evidence, that Edward Blunt was dead by December 1718;[47] but the Land Tax Assessments provide clarification—in 1711 the Blunt (and former Player premises) were empty and in 1712 they were occupied by a James Anselm.[48] So either Blunt had died or he and his family had moved away. Since no further record of Blunt has survived, it seems likely that he died in 1711.

Charles Brackley

From the record of Charles Brackley's binding to Stephen Keene, dated November 2, 1703,[49] it seems likely that Brackley was born about 1687 or 1688, at the vicarage in Wroughton, Wiltshire.[50] He was the son of John Brackley, the Perpetual Vicar of Wroughton.[51] Charles Brackley

44. London Guildhall MS 6837.

45. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 715.

46. The street plan changed very little between the late seventeenth century and 1746, and indeed, all the main thoroughfares are still there today.

47. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 19.

48. London Guildhall MS 11316/33 and 36.

49. London Guildhall MS 8052/3.

50. The house is still standing, but is now called Ivery House. It is said to have Elizabethan origins, although a date of 1727 over the front door is more appropriate to the features now in evidence: *Wroughton History*, vol. 1 (Wroughton: Wroughton History Group, 1982) (personal communication, Nick Orman, July 2007).

51. Theresa M. Story-Maskelyne and F. H. Manley, "Notes on the Ecclesiastical History of Wroughton, its Rectors and Vicars," *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* 41 (June 1922): 451–78, here, 471.

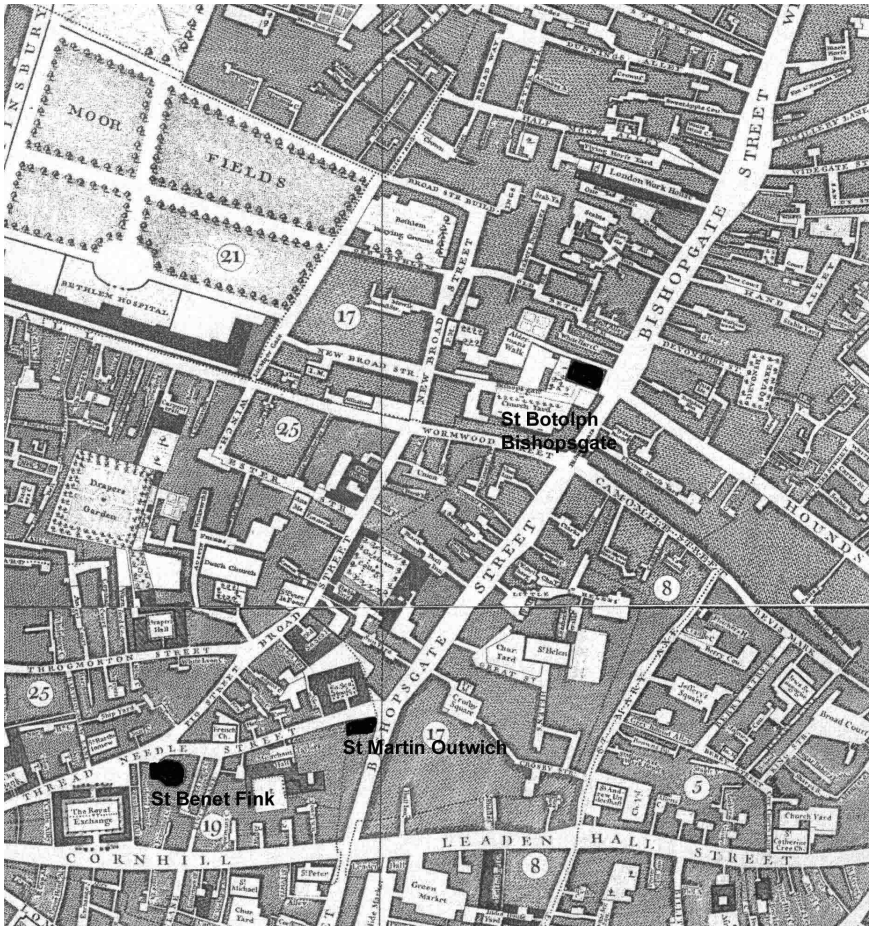

FIGURE 3. John Rocque, *A Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, and Borough of Southwark*, engraved by John Pine (London: John Pine and John Tinney, 1746), reproduced in Ralph Hyde, *The A to Z of Georgian London* (London: Harry Margary, 1981); reproduced with permission of the Guildhall Library, London, copyright holders of the modern reproduction of the map.

became a freeman of the Joiners Company in January 1710.[52] On September 2, 1711, he married Elizabeth Langwill or Longueville at St. Benet Fink. A son, Samuel, was baptized at St. Benet Fink on June 21, 1713, and a daughter, Sarah, on April 12, 1715, but Sarah survived

52. London Guildhall MS 8051/3.

only until July 1718. A further daughter, Elizabeth, was baptized on August 23, 1717, but died later that year.

The parish birth register of St. Benet Fink notes the birth of a fourth child, Charles Brackley, "son of Charles and Elizabeth Brackley," on January 12, 1718, and his baptism the following day. But the death register records the burial of a Charles Brackley on October 2, 1718. As the calendar in use in England in 1718 was the Julian one, in which the year changes at March 26 (the Gregorian calendar was not adopted in England until 1752), the inescapable conclusion is that Charles Brackley the spinet maker died before the birth of his son Charles. No further record of Charles Brackley the spinet maker has been found and it is not known what became of the family.[53]

Brackley came into partnership with Keene almost as soon as he was a freeman. The spinet at Westwood Manor (discussed below) bears the inscription of Keene but has Brackley's initials and the date 1711 on the top key lever. My own instrument is inscribed *Stephanus Keene Carolus Brackley Londini fecerunt*.[54] It is undated, but because of the date of the probate of Keene's will, it cannot be later than 1712. A spinet in private ownership in Philadelphia that bears Brackley's inscription alone is certainly later still, but cannot be later than 1718, as that is when Brackley died; indeed, judging by its keyboard compass, it is likely to have been made somewhat earlier. The relevance of genealogical details to this organological study will now be clear: without the careful analysis of the date of Keene's death and of the dates of birth and burial in the Brackley family, it would not have been possible to determine with such certainty the date range of these spinets built by Charles Brackley.

It is curious that Blunt and Brackley were in partnership with Keene in such quick succession—to judge from the inscriptions on surviving instruments—and this requires some explanation. I surmise that it was Keene's intention to leave his business to Blunt. Perhaps he helped Blunt to set up on his own in premises close by, with the intention of establishing Blunt's reputation before retiring from building instruments himself. That plan was laid waste by Blunt's untimely death in his late 30s in 1711. Thomas Barton, probably seeing no prospect of a partnership

53. All otherwise unreferenced information on Brackley and his family comes from London Guildhall MSS 4097 and 4098.

54. The instrument was formerly in the collection of Sheila Barnes and the late John Barnes.

with Keene, had by that time set up a successful business of his own, and only Brackley was still working in Keene's premises. So, by default, Brackley became Keene's successor, but he died early too, though not before Keene. All of that is hypothetical, but it fits the known facts.

Spinets from the School of Keene

It is difficult to be certain how many Keene spinets have survived. Those of which I am certain are listed in table 1, but there may be several more, and perhaps many more. So far in this research project, I have undertaken detailed inspection of eight Keene spinets and have gathered as much data about the remainder as I can find. In my view they fall clearly into three classes:

1. Early instruments having a virginal-style soundboard register, almost certainly produced while the Keene workshop was also making virginals.
2. The "standard" GG–d‴ Keene spinet of fifty-four notes with a broken octave and split sharps in the bass and a box-guide register.
3. "Transitional instruments" made by Brackley while Keene was still alive, having an extended compass, but not reaching five octaves.

For those who are not keyboard specialists, a note may be appropriate here on the difference between a soundboard register and a box-guide register, since that difference is key to the proposed classification. The register—the structure that guides the movement of the jacks—of North European virginals, including English ones, was in two parts; this type is known as a soundboard register. A lower part consisting of a strip of timber formed with the requisite number of individual jack guide holes was attached to the structure of the instrument or to the key-frame, and a cooperating upper part was formed by cutting oversize guide holes directly into the soundboard. A leather strip, with guide holes cut to the precise size needed for the jacks, was glued to the upper surface of the soundboard. In this way, the jacks touched only the leather, ensuring quiet operation. The individual jacks are guided only at the top and bottom of the register.

The register of Renaissance virginals made in the major instrument-making centers of Italy is known as a box-guide register. The individual

TABLE 1. Surviving spinets from the School of Stephen Keene.
(A) denotes an attributed date.

		Ownership/Location	Date	Accession no.	Notes
By Keene	1	Royal College of Music, London	1682[?]	RCM 179	Inscribed on jack rail
	2	Hall I' Th' Wood, Bolton, Lancashire	1685–90 (A)	BOLMG: 1919.2.19.HITW	
	3	Edgardo Sodero, San Sebastian, Spain	1690–95	K24	
	4	Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	1700	32.252	Top key inscribed EB[?] 1700
	5	Colonial Williamsburg Foundation	1700	1953-876	Top key inscribed EB 1700
	6	Cantos Music Foundation, Calgary, Alberta	1700 (A)	340	
	7	University of Edinburgh	1704	4351	Top key inscribed 1704
	8	Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg	1705/6	2000.534	Top key and jack inscribed CB / 1705/6
	9	Lady Willoughby de Eresby	1707	None	Top key inscribed CB / 1707
	10	Royal College of Music, London	1708	RCM 3	Attributed, top key inscribed 1708
	11	Westwood Manor, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire	1711	Not known	Top key inscribed CB / 1711 / [?]13 / [?]m
	12	Deerfield Memorial Hall, Deerfield, MA		1872.13.02	
	13	Hamamatsu Museum, Japan		Not known	
By Keene & Blunt	14	The Marquess of Bute	1702	Not known	Top key inscribed EB / 1702
	15	Prof D. McCaldin		None	
By Blunt	16	Sold at Sotheby's, November 2004	1703	Not known	Jack and top key inscribed Thomas Hitchcock
By Keene & Brackley	17	Peter Mole	1712 (A)	None	Under restoration
By Brackley	18	Private ownership, Philadelphia	ca. 1712–18	None	

jack guide holes were formed by profiles chiseled into modules of timber glued together, the guide holes lying along the glue line. The complete register was assembled so that it contained the requisite number of jack guide holes; it was then glued directly to the underside of the soundboard. Each individual jack slides in the register in a vertical guide within a solid, but not monolithic, box of timber.

Early makers of English bentside spinets initially adopted English virginal practice and provided their instruments with soundboard registers. By 1700 they had changed to the box-guide register, but with an important improvement: the unique geometry of the spinet allowed the box-guide to be glued to the rear of the wrest plank. In this position, the register is unable to vibrate with the soundboard, thereby eliminating a source of mechanical unreliability in the instrument and freeing the soundboard from the inertia of the weighty register.

Early instruments. Figure 4 shows the serpentine-tail spinet by Stephen Keene at the Royal College of Music, London. This is clearly an early instrument, though whether it is the earliest spinet by Keene to have survived is difficult to say.[55] Its early date is clear from several features. It is Keene's only surviving example of a spinet with a serpentine-tail design, a feature characteristic of instruments by Charles Haward, some of which bear dates in the 1680s—the one at the National Music Museum at the University of South Dakota (accession no. 10773) is dated 1689, for example. The Keene spinet has the maker's inscription on the jack rail, a virginal feature (though frustratingly, the date has been removed), and it has a short octave without split sharps in the bass, which again points to an early date. It has a soundboard register, though this has been repaired in recent times with a wooden capping, and it has a rose, again a virginal feature. But perhaps most conclusively of its date, on the uppermost key lever it carries a craftsman's initials. They are very indistinct, but by using a technique taught to me by John Watson, I have been able to determine that they read "JH".[56] The initials "JH" are those of John

55. An instrument with almost as good a claim to that title is at Hall I' Th' Wood, Bolton, England; see Peter Mole, "Two Spinets in the Collection of Viscount Leverhulme," *Galpin Society Journal* 61 (2008): 252, 325–31.

56. The technique involves opening a digital image of the item in a photographic imaging program such as Adobe Photoshop®™. The general procedure is to adjust the brightness/contrast and hue/saturation parameters until the image presents the optimum contrast for the observer's particular eyesight. A further refinement is to save

FIGURE 4. Spinet by Stephen Keene [1682?]. London, Royal College of Music, RCM 179.

Harris, who was apprenticed to Keene in 1675 (see fig. 2). Harris became a freeman in 1685 and set up in business on his own, so I date the instrument to 1682, based both on the archival evidence and on the belief, not yet proven, that the date also appears on the key lever—using Watson's technique, I believe I can see a "2," and further examination, perhaps including infrared photography, may yet yield a date.

The standard Keene spinet. The second group contains at least six spinets that can be thought of as Keene's "standard product": mitred-tail instruments having a fifty-four note compass of GG to d‴, with a broken octave and a box-guide register glued to the back of the wrest plank. The example shown in figure 5 is the spinet of 1707 belonging to Lady Willoughby de Eresby. The other surviving spinets that can certainly be placed in this group are those at Colonial Williamsburg, at the University of Edinburgh, and at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the instrument owned by Sg. Edgardo Sodero of San Sebastian, Spain (formerly exhib-

several layers and to "flash" each one up onto the monitor in quick succession, and to involve a friend or colleague in the process, preferably one of the opposite sex, since the two sexes notoriously often see colors differently (personal communication, John Watson, 2006). The procedure may take several hours, but in more cases than not, I have been able to decipher names and initials using this technique.

FIGURE 5. Spinet by Stephen Keene (1707). Owned by Lady Willoughby de Eresby.

ited at the Kenneth G. Fiske Museum in Claremont, California), and the instruments at the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, and in Deerfield, Massachusetts (see table 1), although some doubt about this last instrument remained at the time of writing. The Keene and Blunt instruments and those built by Edward Blunt when working for himself were also to Keene's "standard design." Many hundreds of instruments of this sort must have been built, by Keene, by Benjamin Slade, and by others in the William and Mary period, continuing into the earlier part of the reign of Queen Anne—so between about 1690 and 1708. But only about thirty-five are extant.

Transitional instruments. The third group consists of "transitional instruments"—transitional, that is, between spinets with a fifty-four-note compass, from GG to d‴, and those with a full five octaves. The instrument shown in figure 6 is at Westwood Manor, near Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire.[57] This Keene spinet (dated 1711) has a compass of fifty-six notes (from GG to e‴), but without two sharps, GG-sharp and d‴-sharp.

57. This Tudor manor house is well worth a visit, not only because it is an extremely beautiful building, but also because it contains the *Stephanus Mutinensis* ottavino of 1537, the fourth oldest Italian virginal to have survived.

FIGURE 6. Spinet by Stephen Keene (1711). Westwood Manor, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire.

The grain of the soundboard runs parallel with the register rather than parallel with the spine as in Keene's earlier instruments. Why Keene made this change after so many years is not known. It may well be that it was Keene's lack of experience with this arrangement that has resulted in the collapsing of the soundboard of several instruments: those of my own Keene & Brackley spinet (ca. 1712) and of the Brackley instrument in Philadelphia (1712 or shortly thereafter). The latter instrument, made by Charles Brackley after Keene's death, is fully chromatic from GG to e‴, and though no inspection has been carried out to date, it seems from detailed photographs that this compass is original.

From the above it will be clear that Keene did not live to make a five-octave spinet. The literature suggests that the spinet signed jointly by Barton and Aston and dated 1709 is the earliest five-octave instrument,[58]

58. Boalch, *Makers*, 3rd ed., 225.

but this seems extraordinarily early in the context of known instruments by Keene, Player, and possibly Hitchcock from similar dates, which still have a relatively restricted compass. But the earliest five-octave spinet was indeed likely to have been a Barton one, which is very appropriate for an article about the School of Stephen Keene, since of course Thomas Barton was apprenticed to Keene. A five-octave Barton spinet dated 1719 was once at St. Cecilia's Hall, University of Edinburgh, but was removed suddenly by the owners and sold. Is this the earliest five-octave spinet? I can't say, but I have in my files a monochrome photograph from a 1930s advertisement showing what appears to be a five-octave spinet, said to be by Thomas Barton and dated 1714. But frustratingly, the lid is closed!

This is a report of work-in-progress and there is more to be done. I would be grateful for any further information that readers can supply about the spinets from the School of Stephen Keene.