

*Journal of the
American Musical
Instrument Society*

VOLUME XXXVI • 2010



Copyright by the [American Musical Instrument Society](#).
Content may be used in accordance with the principles of fair
use under [Section 107 of the United States Copyright Act](#).
Content may not be reproduced for commercial purposes.

Following the five chapters, there are appendixes with checklists of extant instruments in each category, as well as an exhaustive bibliography and an index of relevant instrument makers. This is without question a new standard reference. One welcomes this latest superb addition to Rice's book list while wondering what the next might be. After all, there are also "high" clarinets as well as several periods in music history that he has not yet dealt with. In any case we await his next book with the greatest enthusiasm.

ERIC HOEPRICH
TOTTERNHOE, UK

Guido Meli, editor. *Il restauro conservativo del contrabbasso "Panormo."* Palermo: Assessorato dei Beni Culturali ed Ambientali e della Pubblica Istruzione, Dipartimento Beni Culturali ed Ambientali e dell' Educazione Permanente, 2008. 176 pp.: 101 color illus., 7 black-and-white illus., 8 tables, CD with digital illus. ISBN: 978-88-6164-040-5. €25.00 (paper).

The *Centro Regionale per la Progettazione e il Restauro e per le Scienze Naturali ed Applicate ai Beni Culturali* is a public organization that carries out systematic research on the influence of climatic, natural, and accidental factors on the deterioration of the Sicilian cultural patrimony. It establishes methodology and technical treatment standards for conservation and restoration. Most importantly, it promotes cultural and scientific publications.

This book represents the efforts of a group of specialists to gather information and documentation on a double bass made in 1754 by Vincenzo Trusiano, better known as Panormo. An Italian text—introduction, three chapters, and an appendix—is followed by an English version. The professional team, covering as many angles as possible, has generated valuable research material. Nonetheless, the final product is weakened by a lack of consistency among the different authors, especially regarding the audience to which each is addressed. Further, there are abundant grammatical mistakes in the English text, as well as discrepancies between the two versions, not only in content (to the point of omitting full paragraphs: pp. 86/158), but also in basic items such as figure numbers (pp. 112/166).

The introduction explains the precarious condition in which this double bass was found, in “a sort of warehouse . . . very humid and unventilated” (p. 137). The instrument had suffered serious damage from xylophagous insects, the detachment of some of its parts, and the buckling of the ribs. All of these problems required immediate intervention and prompted the collaboration of which this book gives testimony.

The first chapter, divided into three sections, traces the historical and biographical background of the Panormo family. The first section presents a clear, interesting, and concise biography of Vincenzo Panormo, and gives detailed information on his work, specifically regarding the 1754 double bass. The second section elucidates the work of the Panormo family in Dublin and London. Included are some interesting facts, previously unpublished. The last section, about Vincenzo Panormo within the social context of eighteenth-century London, functions as a lengthy appendix about London law, mostly irrelevant to the subject.

The second chapter includes a series of scientific analyses suggesting the most suitable treatment for the preservation of the Panormo double bass. Its five sections, characterized by very specialized terminology, are directed to an audience with backgrounds in conservation and science, not necessarily in musical instruments. A large number of photographs illustrate every step of the scientific analysis. These could be very descriptive and helpful, but unfortunately, many are poor in quality, making it difficult to observe what the author is trying to point out.

This chapter offers detailed descriptions of the processes involved in gathering information on the instrument, including entomological study and wood identification. But some of the scientific analyses provide conclusions rather too obvious for anyone with basic notions of the construction and conservation of musical instruments; a good example is the section dedicated to glue identification. Every section includes its own introduction, often repeating the same information—it is clear that the authors were not acquainted with one another’s work.

The third chapter is dedicated to the actual conservation treatment of the double bass. Despite the profusion of photographs, it is the shortest of the book. Considering the title of this publication, this is rather disconcerting. The disparity between the brief text and the extensive bibliography presented at the end is conspicuous. The first section of the chapter describes the different phases involved in the restoration of the double bass (some of them thoroughly illustrated in the previous

chapter). The next section meticulously describes the removal and restoration of the label (p. 167). Addressing a specialized audience, it presents an interesting conservation treatment designed to prevent further degradation of the label. Unfortunately the poor-quality photographs illustrating the “before” and “after” of the treatment (p. 121), do not show an actual improvement, but rather a slight damage to the label in comparison to its previous condition. The chapter concludes with a proposal of the optimal circumstances in which the double bass should be preserved.

That the audience changes from section to section of this book is particularly noticeable in the appendix dedicated to the “technology of materials employed for the construction of bowed musical instruments” (p. 170). The remarkably basic language and content address an audience not only non-specialized, but likely without any understanding of the study of musical instruments.

This collection of separate articles on a common subject, written by specialists with different backgrounds, aims to offer content of significant importance to the authors’ respective specialties. It attempts to set a precedent for the publication of conservation procedures of specific musical instruments, a goal only imperfectly realized.

JONATHAN SANTA MARÍA BOUQUET
NATIONAL MUSIC MUSEUM

Carol A. Gartrell. *A History of the Baryton and Its Music: King of Instruments, Instrument of Kings*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009. xxii, 281 pp.: 29 illus., 7 tables, 18 musical exx., 24 musical transcriptions, bibliography, discography. ISBN: 978-0-8108-6917-2 (0-8108-6917-9). \$150.00 (hardbound).

Carl Ferdinand Pohl, the noted biographer of Haydn, recounted an anecdote concerning Anton Kraft, who joined the *Kapelle* of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy as principal cellist in 1778:

In order to gain the Prince’s favor [Kraft] also learned the baryton and composed several trios for two barytons and cello, in which he always played the second baryton. Once he had achieved what he believed was the necessary skill, he wrote a trio with a solo for the second baryton too. Barely had he begun the solo when the Prince interrupted him, “Give me that part.” Then the prince started to play but got stuck in the middle. Annoyed about it, he