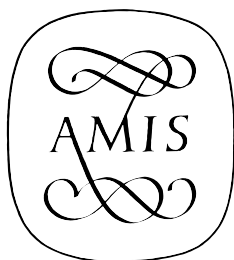


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Douglas MacMillan. *The Flageolet in England 1660–1914*. The Boydell Press, 2020. xxvii + 192 pp., 39 illus., 6 tables, 4 musical examples. ISBN 978-1-78327-548-9. £65 (\$115) hardcover; £19.99 (\$24.99) eBook.

The flageolet, sometimes dismissed as unimportant, is here treated seriously and in great detail by Douglas MacMillan. This has always been an amateur's instrument for which little if any serious music has been written, but the author shows that its popularity makes it worthy of study.

After giving a brief history of the flageolet before 1660, MacMillan describes late seventeenth-century flageolets and the tutors published for the instrument. The seventeenth-century flageolet was small (often less than 120 mm long) and could easily fit in a pocket. This instrument had four fingerholes on the front and holes for both thumbs on the back, in a form now referred to as a French flageolet to distinguish it from the later, English version. The early flageolet was clearly not suitable as an ensemble instrument. MacMillan shows that the flageolet had largely passed out of common use in England by the turn of eighteenth century, when it was superseded by the more versatile recorder, and was little used until its revival in the nineteenth century, at a time when the transverse flute was hugely popular and an easier-to-learn instrument would have had, and indeed did have, considerable appeal.

The English flageolet of the early nineteenth century was presented as the ideal instrument for the complete beginner, removing the need for the player to develop an embouchure for playing the flute. Indeed, two inventors, Townley and Wheatstone, made devices that would clip onto a standard flute, making it possible to play (in a limited way) without learning to blow it with a proper flute embouchure. The English flageolet of the nineteenth century took this a stage further: not only did the player not need to learn how to form an embouchure, but the six or seven fingerholes were numbered and had the note name stamped next to each hole. Often little studs were fitted between the holes to force the fingers into the correct position.

This made the flageolet easy to learn, if only to the point of playing simple tunes, and simple tunes were mostly what it was used for. Tutor books were published, many of them claiming, as MacMillan points out, that it was possible to learn to play “without the aid of a master.” Music published for the flageolet was often presented in pocket-sized books and

designed for the amateur. These largely consisted of melodies written in G major and D major, keys easy to play on the instrument. Some songs with flageolet accompaniment were also published. The popularity of the flageolet and its commercial importance are shown by the number of published tutors and, indeed, by the number of lawsuits between rival manufacturers.

The best-known maker of flageolets, Bainbridge, also produced a standard-sized transverse flute with a flageolet-style embouchure. Double flageolets were also made, occasionally as a double-bored instrument, but usually with two attached bodies, and Bainbridge even produced some triple flageolets. These were instruments of considerable ingenuity, made with great skill. The popularity of the English flageolet declined after the middle of the nineteenth century, although some simple and presumably inexpensive instruments continued to be made into the twentieth century, sometimes with a piccolo head joint to be used in place of the flageolet head joint. MacMillan describes the later nineteenth-century French flageolet, which continued in popularity, and which was played by some concert performers. Some French flageolets were made with keys, and some with a variation of the Boehm system.

MacMillan points out that while the early music and historical performance movement does now concern itself with the nineteenth century, there has been no revival of interest in the flageolet. He provides an effective explanation: much of the music is of the salon variety and can be considered undistinguished, and in any case, it can be played on other instruments, notably the soprano recorder. The flageolet has not been revived, MacMillan suggests, because there is no need for its revival; it has been replaced by the recorder, and its place as an amateur's instrument, especially for playing folk music, has been taken by the hugely popular tin whistle. In its day, the flageolet was an ideal instrument for unskilled amateurs to make music, and it is interesting even for that reason alone.

MacMillan's book includes dozens of detailed photographs of instruments, mostly from his own collection. There are reproductions of fingering charts and excerpts from tutors as well as musical examples. Appendices include a comprehensive description of each instrument illustrated and bibliographical detail on all the tutors mentioned. The book is printed on good-quality paper that displays the photographs well. The smallest possible criticism is that the book might have benefitted from being printed in a larger format, but it is perfectly acceptable as it is.

This is a valuable, well-researched, well-written and interesting addition to the literature.

ROBERT BIGIO

LONDON, ENGLAND

Thomas Strange. *“A Respectable Inhabitant of This City”: John Geib and Sons, Organ Builders & Piano Forte Manufacturers.* Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2019, 199 pp.: 122 color illustrations, 27 black and white illus. ISBN: 978-1-79488-414-4. \$40.00 (paperback).

Thomas Strange, the founder of the Sigal Music Museum in Greenville, South Carolina, has tackled the Herculean task of illuminating the life and times of the Geib family and the piano industry in which they worked. Strange is an internationally recognized lecturer and writer on the subject of early keyboard instruments. His long-standing interest in John Geib led to an article about Geib's London years, “John Geib: Beyond the Footnote,” co-authored with Jenny Nex and published in *Eighteenth-Century Music* in 2010. This book begins with those London years and goes on to cover Geib's life and legacy in America.

John Geib is best known for patenting an escapement action that appeared, in one form or another, in square pianos from 1787 until the late nineteenth century. As Strange notes in the preface, little else has been said about Geib, and much of that has now proven to be incomplete or untrue. To remedy the situation, Strange draws not only on published sources, but on documents that have only recently been digitized such as newspaper notices, contemporary correspondence, insurance documents, and court proceedings. In addition, he turns to surviving instruments to illustrate the evolving design of pianos built by the Geibs and their contemporaries.

Strange's research has revealed much about the Geib family of instrument makers. John Geib Sr. trained as an organ maker in Germany and continued to make the occasional organ throughout a career better known for the production of pianos. All four of his sons were involved in the music industry in one way or another. John Jr. and his brother William were