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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

respected and innovative piano makers. Adam had no interest in building pianos, but was a skilled marketer who operated the storefront, published sheet music, and gave music lessons. George was a pianist, composer, and “music professor” who invented a new teaching method based on the use of a silent instrument. He was also considered by some to have been the family’s best salesman.

In the process of writing about the Geibs, Strange sheds light on many other makers, including Zumpe, Culliford, and Longman & Broderip in London, as well as Gilfert, Kearsing & Son, R. & W. Nunns, and Gibson & Davis in New York. Kearsing and Gilfert, in particular, receive concise biographies in the form of extended footnotes. Others are referred to in the narrative and credited in illustrations. Chapter 5 includes biographies of seven other makers working in New York and Philadelphia before 1800.

The piano developed rapidly during the years in which Geib and his sons were active. The public’s desire for greater range, more volume, and a richer tone led to increases in string tension. This required significant changes in the structure and stringing of pianos. Strange delves deeply into these issues. The graphs, schematics, string schedules, tension analyses, and mathematical explanations add an analytical dimension revealing something of the author’s science and engineering background. High-quality illustrations, including detail photos, illustrate the points being discussed.

This book contains a huge amount of information on the lives of the Geibs, the industry in which they worked, and the technological development of the piano. Readers interested in any one of these topics will not be disappointed. Because all three topics are presented concurrently within the chronological framework, however, the focus often shifts abruptly. The reader must work hard to follow a single biographical or technical thread. A more complete index would be helpful in addressing this challenge. The current index consists almost entirely of proper names, yet members of the Geib family are not included. Place names and technical subjects are mostly absent. Many of the page numbers are incorrect and many subjects appear on more pages than are acknowledged in the index. While chapters 1 and 2, which cover the London years, are well written and carefully edited, more careful editing of chapters 3–11 would improve the comprehensibility of the text and increase the reader’s confidence in the authority of the writer.

That said, this is a noteworthy book. Thomas Strange is an avid

researcher. His work on American makers, their industry, and their instruments, is important not only for its intrinsic value, but because the early American piano industry is, so far, a relatively neglected topic. Strange is to be commended for assembling data from a huge variety of sources and for using photographs and graphics to advantage. This book succeeds in giving a sense of the character of John Geib and his four sons while drawing a vivid picture of the piano industry during its early years.

THOMAS WINTER
SAN FRANCISCO

David Breitman. *Piano Playing Revisited: What Modern Players Can Learn from Period Instruments*. Eastman Studies in Music Series. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2021. xxi + 206 pp.: many black-and-white illus. ISBN: 978-1-648-25010-1. \$55 (hardbound); \$24.99 (ebook).

David Breitman has condensed decades of study, teaching, and performing with period and modern pianos into this slim, well-thought-out, practical, and readable volume. It reflects his teaching and masterclass approach, leading the participant into seeing and understanding the why and how of the details in compositions originally played on instruments of the composers' times, while also adapting the gained knowledge to the modern piano.

In explaining the book's genesis, Breitman traces his personal journey starting in the 1970s, when he studied with the Leonhardt-trained harpsichordist Robert Hill. Earning a doctorate at Cornell under famed fortepiano-revival pioneer Malcolm Bilson, he then went to Oberlin where he has remained a scholar, teacher, and performer of both the modern piano and fortepiano.

Importantly, this book is intended to serve the wider world of modern piano performance and teaching, beyond the early-piano enthusiast. Breitman notes that not everybody can own or have access to an early piano or replica, let alone a variety of such instruments. While this book