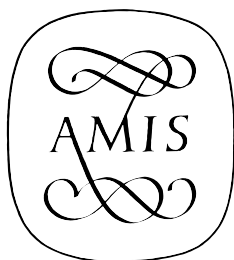


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researcher. His work on American makers, their industry, and their instruments, is important not only for its intrinsic value, but because the early American piano industry is, so far, a relatively neglected topic. Strange is to be commended for assembling 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

certainly can serve as a guide to playing historical pianos, it also shows how knowledge about early instruments can guide more informed performance on their modern counterparts, focusing on the performance of works by composers the author “cares about most deeply and the problems I have found most perplexing.” Helpfully, these are also standard in the teaching and performing canon.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief history of the development of the piano. Breitman points out that performers in earlier times would have utilized many different types of claviers, in contrast with much modern practice. A brief diversion about how the clavichord likely informed the earliest pianists justifies his inclusion of a chapter devoted to that instrument. This is followed by a clear summary of how performing and editing styles changed through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how this influenced not only performance, but printed editions. In tandem, musical training and attitudes changed, diverging fairly recently into what he calls the “traditional” and “historical performance” approaches. Breitman is a proponent of combining these into the Historically Informed Performance (HIP) approach that “reminds us that what’s in the performer’s mind is far more important than what sort of instrument is on stage.”

The second chapter begins by quoting Nikolaus Harnoncourt’s comparison of music prior to 1800 with speech and comprehension, and later music to painting and feelings. Breitman extends this to comparisons of early versus modern pianos: whereas the early instrument is focused, like speech, on details, modern pianos use long melodic lines and dynamic contrast to evoke feelings. Important for the intended audience, he states that “cultivating a ‘speaking’ style can counterbalance habits developed in response to the modern piano and Romantic repertory.”

After a brief overview of eighteenth-century treatises, the author discusses how a historically based approach can impact tempo choice, dynamics, meter and accent, small versus large structure, register, texture and counterpoint, pedaling, touch and articulation. Appropriate examples and even some exercises further clarify the topics. The discussion of overtones on both early and modern instruments is flawed, but the overall concepts regarding the distinct timbres of different registers on the early piano are well presented, as are the substantial differences of pedaling from modern style. Breitman later uses the categories introduced in this chapter to neatly structure discussions of particular composers and examples.

The compositions and pianos of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert,

and Chopin fill the bulk of the book. A chapter on Bach's music and the clavichord explores the implications of clavichord touch and articulation for performance on other instruments. Breitman writes engagingly, illustrating how these composers' styles were influenced by the instruments of their time. Understandably, his detailed analyses are generally limited to the pianos he personally owns and has worked with extensively. I would have liked to see more mention of the varied pianos that, for example, Schubert and Chopin encountered, instead of solely focusing on Breitman's Graf and Pleyel, but for his overall purpose this is not a great loss. Most of the chapters provide a well-known work as a case study, and the copious examples are well chosen to illustrate the issues and concepts. While Breitman briefly addresses four-hand music and balance in chamber ensemble collaborations, there is not even a brief mention of collaborations with vocalists and period vocal styles.

Clearly a thinker, and more of a diplomat than dogmatist, Breitman does reveal some strong positions. He includes a philosophical chapter considering the role of modern performance of past music. He cogently disputes the prevalent idea that Beethoven would have preferred the modern piano. His defense states that we are from a different time and need all possible clues to understand the spirit behind the works. Importantly, he concedes that the modern piano requires a different approach, but insists that performing can nevertheless benefit from all we learn from the earlier instruments.

I do have some quibbles. He includes the common misconception that the piano industry consolidated into uniformity with little change since the late nineteenth century. Actually, such makers as Erard and Bösendorfer consciously retained earlier design characteristics into the twentieth century, resulting in timbral effects and touch differences that distinguished them from the overstrung and bass-heavy American models. The book also contains the myth that the early English piano's touch was heavy compared to the Viennese, when in fact only the touch profile substantially differs. While clearly brilliant, Breitman is not a scientist, like many other well-meaning musicians and even organologists. The appendix, comparing the overtone structures of Steinway and Walter pianos, reveals a particularly flawed experiment with therefore meaningless results. It would have been better left out, at no loss to the book's purpose.

Overall, the presentation is mostly satisfying. While the musical examples are numerous and clearly printed, the illustrations are oddly few. It is

surprising that the author did not take the opportunity to show more than the front of a circa 1825 Jakesch Viennese piano and a diagram of a clavichord action, while two black-and-white photos of buildings seem out of place. On the other hand, the provided glossary will be particularly useful to the uninitiated, as well as to clarify specific usage. The extensive end notes, numbered by chapter, include both citations and additional commentary. An appropriate bibliography points the way to further research. Helpfully, there is an index to the works referenced, supplementing, if redundantly, the list of examples by chapter at the beginning of the book. This is followed by the typical index by name and term.

Breitman's book is an important practical and philosophical contribution, ably fulfilling its stated purpose. It especially deserves a place in the hands of every piano student, piano teacher, and player. For the historic keyboard specialist and organologist, it provides useful examples of how the tonal and other characteristics of the various period pianos relate to different components of performance.

ANNE ACKER

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Jane Ellsworth, ed. *The Clarinet*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2021. Eastman Studies in Music. 297 pp., many black-and-white illus. ISBN-13: 978-1-64825-017-0. \$60.00 (hardback).

In this book, ten chapters by noted performers, scholars, and researchers are presented in a logical, mostly chronological order. The writing styles of the individual authors complement each other, achieving smooth transitions between the chapters. Cross references often refer the reader to more detailed discussion in another chapter, eliminating repetition.

In her introduction, Ellsworth asks "Why, then, another book" about the clarinet? Her answer: "previous writings have been aimed at readers with a rather specialized knowledge. . . . The present book, on the other hand, has a more varied readership in mind . . . its rationale is to appeal