



personal and professional, for the rest of his life. It is part of a wider and continuing research project that will further encourage revisionist outlooks. Led by Birgit Lodes of the Institut für Musikwissenschaft at the University of Vienna and generously supported by the Austrian Science Fund (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung), the project has already produced a database of the surviving operatic material in Maximilian Franz's library (www.univie.ac.at/operaticlibrary/db) and a complementary set of essays (Elisabeth Reisinger, Juliane Riepe and John D. Wilson, eds, *The Operatic Library of Elector Maximilian Franz: Reconstruction, Catalogue, Contexts* (Bonn: Beethoven-Haus, 2018)). A detailed study of Maximilian Franz's musical life by Elisabeth Reisinger is in preparation, and the ongoing study of the surviving sacred music in the court library will yield a second database together with a further volume of essays. Projects of this magnitude and significance are rare in musicology. As we approach the Beethoven year of 2020, the collective impact of two databases and four complementary volumes is certain to constitute one of the most influential achievements of the anniversary period.

DAVID WYN JONES
jonesdw@cardiff.ac.uk



Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
[doi:10.1017/S1478570618000404](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478570618000404)

STEWART POLLENS

BARTOLOMEO CRISTOFORI AND THE INVENTION OF THE PIANO

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017

pp. xv + 384, ISBN 978 1 107 09657 8

The subject of this book was one of the most successfully innovative and historically significant musical-instrument makers in recorded history. Next to nothing is known about Bartolomeo Cristofori's years in Padua from his birth in 1655 to 1688, when he moved to Florence. There, under the patronage of the Medici family, particularly the music-loving Grand Prince Ferdinando de' Medici (1663–1713), he remained until his death in 1732. In addition to tuning and maintaining the Medici court's keyboard instruments and supervising their transport from venue to venue, he conceived a brilliant series of novelties. These included more or less normal harpsichords with newly engineered internal structures; oval-shaped double-strung *spinette*; a harpsichord with stops at unison, octave and superoctave pitches; an aggrandized spinet intended for the confined space of the opera orchestra but providing the tonal resources of a large harpsichord; a clavichord with organ-like 'rollers' to convey the action of the bass keys to distant tangents; and harpsichords provided with hammers to strike the strings rather than with jacks to pluck them. While most of these inventions, no matter how well they functioned, faded away, the hammered *cimbalo di piano e forte*, eventually reduced to our 'piano', proved to be the keeper.

Stewart Pollens, who first became entranced by the 1720 Cristofori piano at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in the early 1970s, is exceptionally well situated to undertake this study. A trained harpsichord maker who soon made a copy of the 1720 piano, he went on to serve as the Museum's musical-instrument conservator for thirty years, during which time he published a series of important articles on the work of Cristofori and other early piano makers. This research culminated in Pollens's book *The Early Pianoforte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), from which a significant portion of material has inevitably been repeated in the present work.

The twofold promise inherent in the title *Bartolomeo Cristofori and the Invention of the Piano* is better fulfilled in its first part than its second. Purely as a biography incorporating a thorough assemblage of contemporary documents relating to Cristofori together with detailed descriptions of his extant work, the book is unsurpassed. The author, drawing on his extensive parallel experience with Italian stringed



instruments (he has published two impressive books about Antonio Stradivari), decisively debunks claims that Cristofori was apprenticed with Nicolo Amati and dismisses the likelihood that several cellos and basses bearing Cristofori's name were made by him. Against another scholar's speculation that Cristofori made as many as two hundred harpsichords and pianos, Pollens neatly concludes from documents and circumstances that he made only about two dozen. One might, however, quibble with certain other of the author's less securely based views, for example, that Cristofori is likely to have strung his instruments largely with ferrous wire rather than brass throughout the compass, as favoured by most reputable organologists. Against Pollens's argument that the Cristofori piano of 1720, originally with a compass beginning on FF, was *not* reduced to its present length of 2,286 mm during one of its unfortunate rebuildings, one could note that a similarly conceived combined piano-harpsichord made in 1746 by his pupil Giovanni Ferrini with lowest note GG is fully 2,842 mm long, still about 2,720 mm if reduced by the extra length required by its second manual. Nevertheless, Pollens provides most of the raw data from which readers can judge his conclusions or form their own.

The second part of the title, *the Invention of the Piano*, is less adequately realized. 'Invention' encompasses a complex of meanings, including not just the immediate production of something new but also consideration of such further aspects as the various antecedent technological elements which the inventor has modified or combined; the reasons or necessity for the innovation; the social, artistic or intellectual context; the initial and long-term reception; and the diffusion and subsequent modification and development of the invention by others. Pollens touches on most or all of these but leaves many significant avenues unexplored, in several cases apparently because of inattention to the recent literature. Uncited, for example, is Gerhard Doderer and John Henry van der Meer's comprehensive survey *Portuguese String Keyboard Instruments of the 18th Century* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2005), in which a fourth Portuguese piano (by Mathias Bostem, Lisbon, 1777) that imitates Cristofori's work is presented.

That Pollens takes an appropriately broad view of Cristofori's inventiveness is evident in the cover illustration, showing not a piano but an oval *spinetta*. He is rather less than thorough, however, in tracing antecedents for some of Cristofori's ideas. Double-strung virginals by Giovanni Celestini (*fl.* 1587–1610), for example, might have given Cristofori the impetus to design his oval instruments, while precedent for the short separate bridges for the bass strings of his pianos and harpsichords might be found in faint marks evidently left by such a bridge once in the Metropolitan Museum's 'golden harpsichord', made by Michele Todini, Rome, before 1676. Separate bass bridges are also found in several late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century Austrian instruments (described in Alfons Huber, ed., *Das österreichische Cembalo* (Tutzing: Schneider, 2001)). Their relationship to Cristofori, if any, remains unexplored, as does the possibility that the primitive hammer action substituted for the jack action in one of them, perhaps as early as 1726 when it was rebuilt in Prague, might have been based on some report, however vaguely transmitted, about the Florentine pianos.

Several important instances of the early diffusion of pianos by Cristofori or Ferrini, or knowledge of them, are passed over. Charles Jennens, librettist of Handel's *Messiah*, acquired a piano from Florence in 1732, and the composer is known to have played it on at least two occasions (see Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris, 1732–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98–99 and 314). A piano among the possessions acquired before 1733 by Christian Heinrich von Watzdorf might well have been brought back to Saxony in 1726 after his two-year stay in Florence (see Nicola Schneider, 'Christian Heinrich von Watzdorf als Musikmäzen: Neue Erkenntnisse über Albinoni und eine sächsische Notenbibliothek des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Die Musikforschung* 63 (2010), 20–34). Eva Badura-Skoda (in *The Eighteenth-Century Fortepiano Grand and its Patrons* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 141–144) has plausibly suggested that this provided the model for Gottfried Silbermann's pianos, the actions and inverted wrestplanks of which are close copies of Cristofori's. Florentine pianos would also have been known in Amsterdam, where Ludovico Giustini's *Sonate da Cimbalo di piano e forte* (Florence, 1732) were reprinted as early as 1736 (see Daniel E. Freeman, 'Lodovico Giustini and the Emergence of the Keyboard Sonata in Italy', *Anuario Musical* 58 (2003) 111–138).



Throughout the eighteenth century the influence of Cristofori's methods of design and construction extended well beyond the instances presented in the book's final chapter. Pages of material adopted from the author's earlier book, including the treatment of Christian Gottlieb Schröter's claim to have invented the piano and the assessment of two inauthentic upright pianos previously thought to have been made by Christian Ernst Friederici, might better have been occupied by consideration of instruments more directly representing the Cristoforian lineage. If Florentine pianos, with their distinctive double-wall construction, were known in Amsterdam, the similar construction found in harpsichords made not very far away in Antwerp by Johann Daniel Dulcken in the 1740s and 1750s might not be mere coincidence. The piano portion of Johann Andreas Stein's earliest surviving instrument, dated 1777, a combined piano-harpsichord in *vis-à-vis* form, has a Florentine-style inverted wrestplank. This he would have learned from his time as a journeyman working for the Strasbourg branch of the Silbermann family. Although Stein's later pianos have normal wrestplanks and his newly developed 'Viennese' action, several of them have ring-shaped hammer heads, of wood but doubtless inspired by the paper ring-shaped heads in Cristofori's late pianos and those of the Silbermanns. Paper-ring heads are also found in some late eighteenth-century French and Swiss square pianos.

Pollens notes in his conclusion that, after Cristofori and Ferrini, the 'hammer actions and case construction of later Florentine pianos, such as those of Vincenz[i]o Sodi (*fl.* 1780–1790), bear little resemblance to those of Cristofori' (348). It is indeed ironic that the form and action of Sodi's two surviving pianos, made in the 1780s, follow the Stein model. One reason for the rejection of the piano as specifically developed by Cristofori is given in a pamphlet published anonymously in Rome in 1775: 'the unsufferable noise made by the keys, the levers, and the hammers, particularly in those [hammer] harpsichords which are built according to the invention of the immortal Bortolo Fiorentino [in other words, Cristofori], which are otherwise most clever' (translated in Raymond Russell, *The Harpsichord and Clavichord: An Introductory Study* (London: Faber, 1959), 141). Nevertheless, in Sodi's pianos and harpsichords there are some strong echoes of Cristofori in such details as the barring of the soundboards, the bridge mouldings, internal bracing with 'flying buttresses' and the use of saw kerfs to bend the bridges and bentsides.

A chapter on Florence's musical life goes into great detail about opera and oratorio performances, their composers and performing personnel. This is more or less irrelevant to the development of the piano, which, with its soft voice, as described in Scipione Maffei's famous account published in 1711, was 'properly a chamber instrument', that is, for the continuo accompaniment of soloists or small ensembles or for solo performance by itself ('Nuova invenzione d'un Gravecembalo col piano, e forte', *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia* 5 (1711), 146; a transcript of this article is included in Appendix 2 of the volume under review). Precious little is known of the Florentine keyboard repertoire of the period. Pollens offers a few lines about a late seventeenth-century keyboard manuscript associated with the Medici (Florence, Conservatorio Luigi Cherubini, ms D.2358). Although he provides photographs of the binding and an *Aria alla Francese*, he neither discusses the stylistic features of the manuscript's contents in relation to the characteristics of keyboard instruments at the Medici court nor provides the curious reader with a reference to the published facsimile of this source (in volume 10 of Alexander Silbiger, ed., *17th Century Keyboard Music: Sources Central to the Keyboard Art of the Baroque* (New York: Garland, 1987)). Pollens's treatment of Giustini's *Sonate* is likewise cursory, with the erroneous observation that the markings *forte*, *piano*, *più piano* and *più forte* were 'the first such markings to appear in keyboard literature' (238; the first three of these are found in Johann Kuhnau's *Biblische Historien* (Leipzig: Tietzen, 1700)). Surely anyone concerned with the keyboard literature surrounding the invention of the piano should look beyond Florence, for example, to Azzolino Della Ciaia's *Sonate per Cembali* (Rome, 1727?). That this composer, who had connections with the Medici, marked certain block chords *botta forte* ('strong blow') suggests his desire for an effect eminently realizable on a piano.

The publisher of this book has served its author poorly. More rigorous refereeing would surely have drawn attention to some obvious omissions or the occasional factual error outside the author's principal areas of expertise. Judicious copy editing should have eliminated some of the constant repetition of information and observations, sometimes on the same page, and would perhaps have tempered what could be regarded as



gratuitous self-promotion and score-settling. Attentive proofreading should have caught various lapses: for instance, 4', *recte* 8', heading a table column on 105; the reversal of 1711 and 1719 in the text on page 123 describing a pivot pin apparent in Figure 3.18 but absent in 3.19; a reference at 270 to leather guides for the escapement jacks in a Portuguese piano which are not present in the instrument and therefore not to be seen in the photo at 271; the conflation of J. C. and C. P. E. Bach at 346; and the mirror-reversal of the instrument in Figure 3.5, also occurring on the cover. Representative of the inadequate internal referencing are the blithe calls in chapter 5 to 'see Chapter 3', which is 133 pages long. The layout is haphazard, with diagrams and tables sometimes twenty pages or more removed from the relevant text. The discussion of an upright piano by Domenico del Mela is interrupted by a diagram and tables concerning instruments by Cristofori and Ferrini. An annoying feature, common in this publisher's books, are the overly wide outer margins, necessitating a narrow gutter down into which curve the text and illustrations. This book is neither elegant nor user-friendly.

Despite its shortcomings, *Bartolomeo Cristofori and the Invention of the Piano* will provide the diligent specialist reader with a worthwhile summary of Stewart Pollens's lifetime of research. The compilation of original documents, transcribed and well translated, along with the data and illustrations gathered from the instruments of Cristofori and his followers, constitute a solid basis for further investigation.

JOHN KOSTER
John.Koster@usd.edu



EDITIONS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2019
 doi:10.1017/S1478570618000416

CARLO CANOBBIO (1741–1822), VASILIJ PASHKEVICH (1742–1797) AND GIUSEPPE SARTI (1729–1802), ED. BELLA BROVER-LUBOVSKY
NACHAL'NOE UPRAVLENIE OLEGA (THE EARLY REIGN OF OLEG)
 Recent Researches in Music of the Classical Era, volume 109
 Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2018
 pp. xxviii + 453, ISBN 978 0 895 79864 0

The play *Nachal'noye upravleniye Olega* (The Early Reign of Oleg, 1790; unlike the edition, this review uses the *New Grove* transliteration system), by Catherine the Great, is an outstanding monument to Russian music and cultural history. It premiered at the St Petersburg Hermitage Theatre on 22 October 1790, and more performances followed in 1791. In the Introduction to this volume ('Performance History', xv–xvi), editor Bella Brover-Lubovsky highlights the stunning success of the play, which became the first Russian stage work to be published in full score (St Petersburg: Tipografiya Gornago uchilishcha, 1791). Brover-Lubovsky puts the play in the context of the 'exceptional importance' assigned by the empress to 'dramatic performances, both spoken and musical, that extolled her reign and policies in allegorical terms' (xi). However, the appreciation granted to the work by such coeval writers as Gavriilo Derzhavin and the French diplomat Valentin Eszterházy is connected with the peculiarly elevated position of the author, and with the function of the play as a manifesto of the tsarina's politics. There were no known performances after the end of Catherine's reign (1796). The score was published again in 1893 by the publisher Pyotr Ivanovich Yurgenson, in Moscow, as part of a series that included other works by the tsarina (for instance, *Fedul and His Children* in 1895). With the exception of this publication, *Oleg* fell into obscurity during the nineteenth century owing to its close connection with Catherine's rule, and it was almost completely neglected until the end of the Soviet period.

Recently, *Oleg* has received attention by scholars who are investigating the musical life of eighteenth-century Russia on new grounds. Brover-Lubovsky has recently also written an essay on this work: "The "Greek