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INTRODUCTION

VOLUME TWO OF *MAKERS OF THE PIANO* presents more than 2,200 pianos and some 2,400 makers. Among the makers are more than 600 who were active in London; of these London builders 245 have been newly discovered and are recognized here for the first time. These men and women were makers or manufacturers of the entire instrument or assemblers of parts made by individual specialists in keys, hammers, other action parts or whole actions, silking and other components of case décor, even legs. Part makers are not entered in either volume of *Makers of the Piano*. In fact, they are even so separated in city directories. As Cyril Ehrlich has shown, specialist part makers worked in the 'manufactories' of major producers and later perhaps from their own business addresses. (Ehrlich/PIANO)

London was indeed the largest and most important piano manufacturing centre in the world during this period. Demands of the clients inspired industrial activity in the City of London and Westminster, and further expansion to the Greater London area to such places as Camden Town and Islington. Makers in individual workshops, partnerships, and companies in other countries followed happily in the wake of British industry. Thus, builders in France, German states, and Scandinavian countries imitated many of the features of the English style. Even patented English designs were copied, with only minor revisions.

Since the late eighteenth century, the United States had been a haven for ambitious craftsmen from Britain and all parts of the Continent. After the turn of the century, scores of English, Scottish, and Welsh makers, and Viennese-trained artisans from the many German-speaking city-states moved to the New World. Thus, piano making in the United States from those early beginnings continued to be influenced by instrumental styles of two principal types: British on the one hand and Austro-German on the other. Geographically, British practices developed in and around Boston and New York, while Austro-German influence predominated in Pennsylvania and that state's major city, Philadelphia. Eventually, fascinating cross currents were brought into play as these men went to work in other localities. Among the better-known of these were the Boston maker Alpheus Babcock in Philadelphia and his compatriot John Osborne in Baltimore. As ever broader waves of immigrant piano builders arrived in New York and Philadelphia, the earlier dichotomy of either British or Continental influence dissipated, and a New World amalgamation took effect.

Growth of a new industry

Piano making began as a cottage industry in the early eighteenth century, its development hastening after the beginning of the early nineteenth. The tradition of master builder assisted by apprentices and journeymen was still the norm. Viennese makers continued to attract apprentices from the outer reaches of the Empire: Bohemia, Moravia, Hungary, and the Tyrol. A few Swiss prospects also found their way to Vienna. Munich makers drew from the towns and villages of Bavaria and Württemberg. Young men from Saxony and Prussia flowed into Dresden or Berlin.

After an apprenticeship and journeyman's years in Paris or London, a young maker could return either to the city of his apprenticeship or the capital of his home province. Thus, Pest and Buda, Zurich, Prague, Bratislava, Brunswick, and Berlin gained considerable importance as centres of piano construction. In any of the larger cities, there always was the independent maker here and there, perhaps too young or too inexperienced to apply for the appropriate licences. These makers worked in their homes, and in many cases family members, including wives and daughters, assumed roles in the building of instruments.

When the master himself died, it was as often as not his widow who succeeded him. This was logical when an elder son was too young to head a firm. However, as wife and silent partner, she may always have handled the business affairs. When she became head of a firm, it appears that her first duty was usually to maintain the stability already achieved. Few of these women were innovators—there were, of course, exceptions, like Nannette Streicher in Vienna. Elizabeth Wright Astor in London and the Mesdames Pfeiffer, Herz, and Thibout in Paris increased the prestige of their respective firms. Indeed, in those cases where a widow married one of her late husband's journeymen or partners, it was often the groom who realized considerable financial and artistic prestige as a result.

As businesses expanded from workshop to factory, working at home was not necessarily abandoned. Makers frequently leased or purchased quarters that were simply larger, thus providing more room for both family and business. A 'manufactory' might also be but a short distance from home.

Eventually, dependence on the apprentice system, so important on the Continent in earlier years, gradually gave way to more permanent reliance on the perpetual journeyman, or semi-independent, worker. This newer develop-

ment is particularly but not exclusively observable in the United States. Piano making as a family activity disappeared as these men—and as far as one can determine, they were always men—became regular employees of a fast-growing firm. That firm was now much more than a small shop; it was a factory.

Some of these new factories were no larger than stables and were often part of a single property along with a maker's house or his sales room. But increasingly—and one can follow this trend with clarity in London—the factory was located some distance from home and warerooms and in a decidedly unfashionable part of a city, such as a mews or Horseferry Road in London.

Burgeoning of the industry is seen by mid-century. Increasing numbers of makers were listed in the directories of major cities: London, New York, Philadelphia, Buda and Pest, and Vienna. Even in Scandinavia the industry grew rapidly as makers established their shops in Stockholm, Christiania (Oslo), and Copenhagen. Capital cities and major ports dominated the piano industry, while provincial cities and smaller towns saw their craftsmen move away to seize the opportunity for fame and a share of the new wealth generated by the industrial revolution.

The lines of worker migration reveal direct routes and bypasses, as well as the phenomenon of the maker with more than one address: the new internationals. The Érard family, Alsatians from Strasbourg, had established their workshop in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century; but because of the Revolution they opened a branch in London and for decades maintained both their Paris and London bases. The Irish and Scots and even some Germans set up shop in London, several of these firms operating flourishing agencies there while keeping their original offices and factories.

In America, Boston retained a certain prestige, largely through the Chickering firm. However, the city gradually lost a significant portion of its former influence to New York, especially after the advent of the Steinway years. Craftsmen from smaller Pennsylvania towns went to Philadelphia for their training. Interestingly, by mid-century, many New York makers began to emigrate westward, and new American centres of piano building opened up in such industrial cities as Cincinnati and Chicago. With the Gold Rush even San Francisco enjoyed a certain influence in building and dealing in pianos on the West Coast. The new piano industry was born in Canada with the establishment of the R. S. Williams Company and others.

In Scandinavia makers and their local marketplaces had been strongly influenced by English pianos imported through Malmö to Stockholm, and thence to provincial Norway through Oslo and probably to Denmark through Copenhagen. However, Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes did develop their own industry, and by the middle of the century, makers like Rosenwall in Stockholm and Malmsjö in Gothenburg, Hornung & Møller in Copenhagen flourished and expanded through early imitation of popular English models. Also toward mid-century, native makers invented their own action refinements and other devices, some of them ingenious, like the screwed wrest pins utilized by Rosenwall.

When European makers took up residence in the United States, they frequently maintained their former contacts. Several of the new Americans among New York makers appear to have belonged to the same families as their British counterparts with the same name. Family ties aided their New World enterprises, as their London piano-making relatives sent pianos over for sale.

Continued connection between makers in German towns and villages and their relatives in America is particularly noticeable in the states of New York and Pennsylvania. New York City and Philadelphia are obvious, but smaller towns in rural areas, such as the Moravian communities of Nazareth and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, may have imported many pianos from German and Moravian communities from as early as the late eighteenth century. Relocation of the fledgling piano-making industry to Philadelphia may not have discouraged Euro-American ventures. New York makers of Scandinavian heritage may well have engaged in similar business dealings. However, this has not been investigated, and one can only wonder. Is it only coincidence that several American makers have names similar to makers in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark? Were they merely independents with no familial or professional contact to their relatives abroad? This is one of many questions still awaiting answers.

Advertising in the new society

Advertising in contemporary journals and newspapers proves that very many makers were active before the *floruit* dates indicated by their patent registrations or exhibition of their instruments in local and international shows. Research for both volumes of *Makers of the Piano* has revealed that establishment of several of these firms is as early as twenty years before dates given in previous publications. Piano manufacturers' notices in such London newspapers as *Musical World*, *Morning Chronicle*, and *Musical Times* shed

light on their activities. One prominent and highly skilled maker to advertise with reasonable consistency was Robert Wornum. But several of the minor makers advertised, too, and it is interesting to read the notices placed by new makers proud of being 'late of Broadwoods'. However, for a Broadwood, as for a Wedgwood, it was never necessary or even desirable to advertise.

Nineteenth-century journals and newspapers seem to suggest that the sociological status of makers was anything but high. Indeed, if these builders had achieved fame and fortune, they would have had no need to proclaim their own expertise. It was, after all, a questionable way to gain one's reputation. The same pages carrying announcements of newly patented pianos also displayed advertising for such ills as 'bilious piles' and 'incontinence'. That this custom enjoyed—if that is the proper verb—a long history is demonstrated by an issue of the *Popular Music Weekly*, dated 1924, where Harper Pianos, touted for their 'combination of high-grade quality and low price', share the same page with Thinzu Tablets, which 'will restore you to your normal slimness in a few weeks'; Mrs. Hudson's 'well-guarded Hindoo religious secret' remedy for superfluous hair; and Phosferine, 'the Greatest of all Tonics for Influenza..., Premature Decay..., Brain Fag..., Malaria..., Nerve Shock...', and other distressing ailments.

Endeavours of most piano makers were not generally considered worthy of extended essays in the dignified musical periodicals. *The Harmonicon* printed a translation of a 'Memoir of Ignatius Pleyel', from *La Revue musicale*, in which only a brief and disparaging mention is made of Ignace's son Camille's work as a maker: '...M. Camille Pleyel has distinguished himself both as a piano-forte player and composer: indeed, the demands which his manufactory of instruments makes upon his time and attention, have alone prevented his attaining a brilliant reputation' (1832: 25–7).

An admirer of Robert Wornum's pianos may observe that no matter how distinguished his achievement, he was limited to a lower social stratum than his son Ralph, a portrait painter. Ralph Wornum, as Keeper of the National Gallery, had J. M. W. Turner's Collection returned there from South Kensington, thereby earning the highest respect. Interestingly, it is Ralph Wornum, not his father or brother, who is the subject of an individual entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Patents and innovation

The scramble for increased sales was probably the most important factor in the rapid increase in the number of patents filed. Many of these innovations can charitably be described only as peculiar. One must doubt if most of them were ever marketed; indeed few were probably placed in any piano. To stamp 'Patent' on one's instruments proclaimed success: a sign of acceptance. The word itself suggested a glory that a piano's maker may never have achieved and an invention never marketed. The more bizarre an inventor's notion the less likely that it would appear in a maker's warerooms. The truly successful patented inventions were those that became a makers' hallmark: Robert Wornum's Albion square, Érard's double escapement action, Thom and Allen's compensation frame in the pianos of William Stodart, or the full cast-iron frame of Alpheus Babcock.

Holding a patent by no means assured a manufacturer's success, nor did an inventor necessarily reap the financial reward that might have been due him. One of the most successful models was the cabinet piano, and its manufacturers were—and indeed are still—legion. All the major piano makers offered cabinet pianos of varying sizes, woods, and decorative detail. The practicality of this model inspired revisions of piano actions, and many were the modifications of the standard jack and prell actions, stringing and soundboard placement, and case decoration. What originated as a more practical size and shape than that of the large grand piano eventually became a replacement of the ubiquitous small square

Players, after all, were not interested in peculiar inventions. They wanted instruments that worked well and were pleasing enough to the eye—the visual effect of many upright pianos was dazzling beyond comprehension: the Apollo piano, the lyre-piano, those special versions encrusted with gilded ormolu mounts. Nevertheless, compact design was important to the prospective owner; after all parlours were small, and pianos had to compete for space with other furniture. Upright pianos and the later square grands with their heavy, deeply carved legs earned their success.

Standardization of models became the rule despite the enormous numbers of patent registrations for an amazing number of curious 'improvements'. The popular models of uprights, grands, and squares continued to be turned out in the manufactories and offered in the warerooms of more successful firms. Measurements, too, approached similarity, largely due to the increasing reliance on purveyors of particular actions and action parts, legs, lyres, keys, and even entire cases. Parts could easily be made to order by one firm and assembled by another, who would attach their name to product. Special janissary and bassoon effects, so adored by the preceding generation in parlour performances, went out of fashion; consequently, the number of pedals was usually reduced to two; and pedals replaced hand and knee levers.

Concert halls

Concert life became popular in the cities, and public concert halls opened at showrooms nearly everywhere. Successful manufacturers sponsored artists in musical performance. Perhaps providing the public with a new concert experience was an attempt to compensate for the private salon. Thus, a maker could offer some sort of social and artistic acceptance to a commercial establishment and at the same time promote his wares.

In London, Robert Wornum advertised his 'noble Music Hall at 16 Store Street' (*MW* 7, 29 Apr. 1836). G. A. Kollmann gave concerts on his own pianos to demonstrate their fine qualities. As the century progressed, so did the number of concert halls. Chickering and Steinway vied with each other in New York: whose hall was the more opulent? whose travelling virtuosi the more prestigious? Chappell competed with Bechstein in London. In Paris the Salle Pleyel and in Vienna the Bösendorfer Hall rivaled those in other countries. Bechstein's venue in London still exists, as Wigmore Hall, the noble Bechstein name now designating rather wistfully the lecture room on the lower level.

Dealers

Commercialism dominated the century. Piano makers were concerned with sales, and, as dealers, they tried new ways to expand their businesses. Manufacturers' salesrooms, or warerooms, saw a further range of activity. Not only did manufacturers show and sell their own instruments, they sold the instruments of other makers or leased space for them to do so directly. London manufacturers like Coventry & Co. and J. Hopkinson also offered previously owned pianos. Interesting, too, is a new type of retailer who dealt exclusively in the sale of second-hand instruments. Consider G. Hales, who proclaimed himself 'from Broadwoods' and announced that he had 'several Cabinet Forte Pianos for sale at 1 Mary Street, Fitzroy Square. N.B. Old instruments taken in exchange, if required' (*MC*, 1820). Hales seems to have been careful not to advertise that he actually sold Broadwood pianos. The reader was left to make that assumption, accurate or not.

Sixteen years later, in 1836, John Browne announced that at his Pianoforte Repository at 27 Soho Square one would find 'an extensive assortment of superior Second Hand Pianofortes, by Broadwood' (*MW* 10, 20 May 1836); on 17 March of the following year Browne touted that he could offer 'the most extensive assortment' of Broadwoods in town (*MW* 53, 6). A prospective buyer was enticed by discounted prices, and John Brinsmead advertised that he sold his instruments 'for less than two thirds the price usually charged by Makers'.

Music publishing

Manufacturers began to sell more than their own pianos, either new or old. They added to their inventories by offering other kinds of peripheral musical items. Most notable were the makers and dealers who became music publishers. British and American cities listed growing numbers of these merchant-publishers. J. Hopkinson has long since disappeared, but Chappell & Co. are still located on Bond Street in London. In Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel began as publishers but extended their enterprise, first by purchasing completed pianos and later by building their own facility for piano manufacture.

Counterfeit instruments

With the growing prestige of a very few of the best makers, corporate crime reared a serpentine head. A disturbing notice describing this unfortunate development was taken from the 'City of London Trade Protection Circular' and circulated in the *Musical Times* of 1 Dec. 1848: Under the title 'Spurious Pianofortes', a short article described a fraud whereby labels and signatures of well-known makers were counterfeited and placed on worthless, but 'showy' instruments whose owners were said 'to have left the country'. Many, if not most, of these pianos were sold in the provinces, where unscrupulous merchants might hope to fool more easily what they hoped would be unwary and presumably unsophisticated clients. In France the Mangeot brothers, agents for Steinway & Sons, were found to have been copying Steinway pianos detail for detail and attaching the Mangeot name to these instruments.

Conclusions

The square has long been banished to history, but the practical upright and the grand piano of 1860 are much the same as the upright and grand of 1990. Monuments of trivial grandiosity, like the Apollo piano, reflected the exaggerated taste of the Victorian era. The advanced machine tools of the new industrial age made any type of decoration possible. Paralleling the century's delight in decorative excess was the players' realistic concern for tonal quality and dynamic control, handsome sturdiness and pitch stability. It was a race between frivolity and pragmatism; pragmatism won.

Although many libraries and museums proved helpful during my visits to them, the principal research for both volumes of *Makers of the Piano* was undertaken at the following institutions. I am deeply grateful to their resourceful and courteous staffs: the University of California Library: especially the heroic and tireless staff of Interlibrary

Loan services at the Riverside campus, for searching out hundreds of books and articles; the Music Library at UCLA; and the Music Library in Berkeley; in Washington, DC: the Library of Congress and Department of Musical History at the National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution); in San Marino, CA: the Huntington Library; in London: the London Metropolitan Archives (formerly Greater London Record Office), the Public Record Office and its new subsidiary, the Family Records Centre, and the British Library; and in Oxford, the Bodleian Library. In addition, I should like to express my particular gratitude to the curators and staffs of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne; Sammlung Neumeyer in Bad Krozingen; the University of Erlangen; the Ringve Museum in Trondheim, Norway; Musikmuseet and the Stiftelsen Musikkulturens främjande in Stockholm; the Musée Instrumental in Brussels; the Finchcocks Collection, Goudhurst, Kent; the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music in London; the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Faculty of Music in Oxford. The following individuals must be mentioned above all: Albert Rice, for sending information about many pianos in private collections and in city and county historical societies in California; Richard and Katrina Burnett and Bill and Marion Dow at Finchcocks; Klaus L. Neumann, Cologne; Stewart Symonds, Sydney, Australia; Göran Grahn, Felix Wolff, John Huber, Birgit Kjellström, Eva Helenius-Öberg, Stockholm; and Peter Andreas Kjellsberg, Trondheim; Stephen Fry at UCLA; and Charles M. Mould and Peter Ward Jones at the Bodleian Library. In addition, I owe large measures of thanks to Benjamin Vogel, Lund; Darcy Kuronen, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Eszter Fontana, Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Leipzig; Maria Eckhardt, Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum and Research Centre, Budapest; Mette Müller, Musikhistorisk Museum og Carl Claudius' Samling, Copenhagen; Edwin M. Good, Washington, DC; and Laurence Libin, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Hundreds of others helped with this book, by sending information for the *Early Pianos* database and by welcoming me to their libraries and museums. There is not, alas, space for listing them all here. Each has received my personal expression of thanks and is mentioned in the individual entry for a piano he or she has told me about or under the name of a museum or musical instrument collection with which he or she is associated.

John Watson, Conservator of Instruments at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Virginia, examined the Glossary with his critical eye. To him I owe special thanks for this courtesy, as well as for his drawings and much information about pianos in the southeastern part of the US. I would like to add my own expression of gratitude to John Watson's to Ken Eschete, Bill Garlick, Margaret Hood, and Tom Wolfe for proofreading the drawings, and to the Schubert Club of St Paul and Richard Sorensen in particular for underwriting Watson's work in St Paul for figures 1, 4, and 6.

Queries were answered and aid was also given by the following individuals:

United States:

California: Robert Welton and Lise M. Loeffler-Welton; Thorpe Loeffler; Alan and Judith Nelson; Carolyn Kunin; Frederick and Barbara Gable; Geraldine Keeling; Bjarne Dahl; John Khouri; Pat Moody, for translating Russian references.

Connecticut: Edith M. DeForest, Deep River Historical Society; Nicholas Renouf; Jeffrey W. Busk.

Georgia: Theodore Davis; George Lucktenberg.

Illinois: Thomas McGeary, Roy F. Kehl.

Iowa: Edward L. Kottick.

Kansas: J. Bunker and Marilyn S. Clark.

Massachusetts: Sam Quigley; Sandra Rosenblum; Elfrieda Hiebert; Marlowe A. Sigal; Robert K. Weis, Essex Institute.

Michigan: Jeanine M. Head, Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village.

Minnesota: Bruce Carlson, Schubert Club.

New York: Stewart Pollens; Henry Z. Steinway.

Tennessee: Belmont Museum, Belmont University; Tennessee State Museum; Kenneth B. Brewer.

Texas: Lyle F. Henage; Robert and Sidge Arnold Peacock; Larry Palmer; James H. Richards.

Virginia: Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

Washington, DC: Cynthia Adams Hoover, Gary Sturm, and Elizabeth McCullough at the National Museum of American History.

Wisconsin: Margaret Hood.

United Kingdom:

England: Colt Clavier Collection, Bethersden, Kent; Sarah Medlam, Bowes Museum, Durham; Pauline Rushton, Liverpool Museum; Hélène La Rue, University of Oxford Musical Instrument Collections; Cyril Ehrlich; Claire Hammett; Jeremy Montagu; Lady Verney; T. K. Dibley; Margaret Cranmer; Christopher Nobbs; Virginia Pleasants; Elizabeth Wells; Keith and Carol Hart; Dr and Mrs H. A. Stradling; John Kilpatrick; Graham Wells, Sotheby's; A. Roy Knowles; G. S. Hall and D. J. Cresswell;

Kenneth and Mary Mobbs; Laurence E. R. Picken; Michael Hurd; David Winston; John Cranmer; William Waterhouse; Clive Dunkley; Terence and Elizabeth Pamplin; Meg Kidd.
Scotland: Arnold Myers, John Barnes; Robert C. Woosnan-Savage, Glasgow Museums & Art Galleries.

Canada: Boyd McDonald; Richard and Carol Hague; John Knight; Richard Troeger.
Austria: Eva Badura-Skoda.
Belgium: Malou Haine; Claude Kelecom; Pascale Vandervellen; Christine Monfort; Xavier Devuyst; Mia Awouters.
Denmark: Mette Müller.
France: Andreas H. and Pauline Roth.
Germany: Martin Elste; Dagmar Droysen-Reber; Alfred Löhr; Helmut Hoyler; Gunter Reinheckel; Ilse Domizlaff; Alexander Pilipczuk; Andreas E. Beurmann; Eszter Fontana; Theo Kunze; Heidrun Eichler; Hubert Henkel; Dieter Krickeberg; Elfrid Gleim; Angelika Emmrich; John Henry van der Meer.
Hungary: Maria Eckhardt.
Italy: Auro Artom.
Portugal: Maria Helena Trindade; Isabel Freire de Andrade.
Slovenia: Darja Koter.
Spain: Cristina Bordas; Beryl Kenyon de Pascual.
Switzerland: Veronika Gutmann; Reinhard Bachofen; Otto Rindlisbacher; Harry Joelson-Strohbach.
Chile: Olivia Concha.
Malaysia: Kate Teoh.
Japan: Kunitachi School of Music, Tokyo.
Australia: W. F. Bradshaw; Rosemary Florrimell; Robert G. Turner; Ralph J. Schureck; Karl Schenscher.

At Oxford University Press Bruce Phillips gave unfailing encouragement during the many years of preparation and research demanded by the two volumes of *Makers of the Piano*. I am exceedingly grateful to him, and also to Helen Foster and Paul Cleal, who helped prepare the present volume.

MARTHA NOVAK CLINKSCALE
London
December 1997