

Abstracts of Articles in GSJ Volume LXV (March 2012)

William Frecker: Piano Maker c1761-c1834: MARIE KENT

Abstract. In 1779, a previously unremarked apprentice came, by a route not yet identified, to be working in the Jermyn Street premises of the late Americus Backers (foremost grand piano maker in London, inventor of the 'Original Forte Piano' and architect of the English grand action). Backers's demise, in 1778, with no professional heir put his legacy at risk but the endurance of the English grand action has long been ascribed to Robert Stodart who incorporated it in his own instruments, even during Backers's lifetime. Stodart's distinction as primary legatee of Backers's work is called into question, however, by the discovery that William Frecker occupied Backers's premises and worked among his unfinished instruments, goods and utensils. Surviving instruments and newly discovered documents build the case for Frecker's association with Backers, and for his relationship with Stodart and John Broadwood, and thus permit a realignment of the accepted cast of piano makers working in London between 1779 and 1834.

Jonas Elg: An Eighteenth-Century Lute and Violin Maker in Stockholm, Sweden, and his 15-course Baroque Lute: KENNETH SPARR

Abstract. In storage in The Stockholm Music and Theatre Museum resides an interesting and unusual Swedish 15-course baroque lute with three peg boxes (inventory number M220) which, according to the handwritten maker's label, was made in 1729 by the Swedish lute and violin maker Jonas Elg (c1668–1732). The main focus of the article is a detailed description of this instrument and its provenance, plus a comparative study of other lutes of this type. In addition, new biographical data regarding Jonas Elg and his successors (Olof Arling, Petter Hellstedt and Petter Alexander Hellstedt) is presented, together with information about their surviving instruments and the repairs they made to other instruments. Furthermore, the original maker of two lutes repaired by Jonas Elg during the year he died is identified and the fascinating story of these two instruments (now housed in the music museums of Leipzig and of Stockholm) is described in detail.

Woodwind Makers in the Turners Company of London, 1604-1750: DAVID LASOCKI

Abstract. An examination of surviving records of the Turners Company of London in the period 1604–1750 shows that eight of the ten native-born woodwind makers in England — Joseph Bradbury, Samuel Drumbleby, Thomas Garrett, Caleb Gedney, John Hall, William Smith, Thomas Stanesby Senior, and Thomas Stanesby Junior — formed part of a network of 143 master–apprentice relations in the Company. This network can be traced back to William Shaw Senior, who was already a freeman when the Company was chartered in 1604. Because these eight makers lie on three branches of the network, the five other Turners who preceded them in this network were probably at least partly woodwind makers, too. Shaw's other apprentices and the other freed apprentices of the eight known makers could also have been makers. John Ashbury, who became a freeman by redemption, and Richard Potter lie outside the network. The foreign makers in London during this period worked outside the Company, although they were technically subject to its jurisdiction. The Company apprenticeship and freedom records for the network coupled with records from outside the Company have made it possible to compile some statistical information about the residences of the freemen and the workings of the apprenticeship system.

New Triebert Discoveries: Observations and Comments on Re-reading the Surviving Documents Relating to Woodwind Instrument Production in nineteenth-Century Paris: GEOFFREY BURGESS

Abstract. Despite Frédéric Triebert's (1813–78) reputation as a key figure in nineteenth-century Parisian oboe manufacture, surprisingly little is known of his working methods and the state of his *atelier*, while his achievements in the manufacture of other woodwinds have received little acknowledgement. This is due largely to the loss of a significant body of the company's documentation such as client registers and design notes. Through careful readings of the few surviving documents including catalogues, legal documents relating to his business partnerships and a complete inventory of the workshop from 1878, this article builds on and refines the work of Robert Howe and Tula Giannini to present a revisionist picture of Triebert's innovative and industrious, but financially troubled workshop. Ancillary documents are used to clarify a number of Triebert's inventions, his collaborations with prominent performers and makers including oboists A.M.R. Barret, A. Lavigne, flute maker T. Boehm, and the bassoonists A.G.P. Marzoli and J.F.B. Cokken, and to shed light on the demise of the company at Triebert's death.

The Lamont and Queen Mary Harps: KAREN LOOMIS, DAVID CALDWELL, JIM TATE, TICCA OGILVIE & EDWIN J. R. VAN BEEKE

Abstract. The Lamont and Queen Mary harps of National Museums Scotland are two of the oldest surviving examples of the harp of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. Growing interest in these iconic instruments has led to a need for new research into their materials and construction. With recent advances in imaging and analytical tools, these instruments can now be examined and understood to a much greater degree than previously possible. With this in mind, the authors have undertaken a research project to study the Lamont and Queen Mary harps. Each harp underwent CT-scanning, and a visual and photographic survey, with x-ray fluorescence and scanning electron microscopy – energy dispersive x-ray spectroscopy of selected areas of interest. The CT scanning was conducted at the Clinical Research Imaging Centre of Queen's Medical Research Institute, and the survey and laboratory analysis were conducted at the National Museums Scotland Collection Centre. This paper presents the initial findings of this project. The interior construction of the harps, hidden internal damage and repairs, pattern of the wood grain, and current state of the wood are discussed. Results of the visual and photographic survey and analysis of the composition of pigments and metal parts are also presented and discussed in the context of the findings from the CT scans. Additionally, contour maps of the soundboard thickness generated from the CT scanning data for each harp are presented.

Gut String Makers in Nineteenth-Century London: JENNY NEX

Abstract. Animal gut has been used in a variety of ways through history, including for sausage skins, bow strings, condoms, surgical sutures, and musical instrument strings. Gut strings have been central to the sound produced by stringed musical instruments throughout history, yet we know so little about their makers. Research undertaken using a range of archival sources has demonstrated that there was a domestic industry which ran alongside the import businesses bringing in strings from Europe, particularly Italy. The names of 116 makers have been found working in nineteenth-century London, many of whom were women. Family businesses were at the heart of the trade, and the names of Dodd, Moffatt, Fossey, Weisbart and Link are discussed. A theme which runs through any research into string making is the unpleasant nature of the work and the potential for releasing unpleasant smells into the environment. String making was focussed in areas to the east of central London, and as well as makers born in these locations, we see immigrants from France and Germany. During this period silk strings were becoming popular, as were silver-wound strings; further research is needed to be more certain of the wider industry.

Serpents in Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts and Boston Symphony Orchestra Collections: DOUGLAS YEO

Abstract. Boston, Massachusetts is home to two important collections of musical instruments: the Museum of Fine Arts, which includes 560 instruments formerly owned by Canon Francis W. Galpin; and Symphony Hall (Boston Symphony Orchestra), which contains 145 instruments formerly owned by Henri Casadesus. Each collection has several very important serpents and related instruments (13 in all), including serpents d'église by Baudouin, a Piffault style military serpent, a wooden English bass horn by Thomas Key and an Italian church serpent with a zoomorphic bell by Pellegrino de Azzi. This article traces the history of the instruments through their principal collectors – Galpin and Casadesus – and places them in context among like instruments, with particular emphasis on their playing characteristics.

A Controversial Tenor Recorder: DOUGLAS MACMILLAN

Abstract. This paper discusses a tenor recorder by Goulding & Co, London (c1798–1803). Instead of the customary beaked mouthpiece, the instrument is fitted with a wind-cap which may have functioned as a sponge chamber as on the flageolet, the wind-cap itself being pierced in its upper part by a small hole which was initially covered with a membrane intended to vibrate when the instrument is sounded. The recorder was first exhibited in 1872 and became the subject of terminological controversy over the following twenty years. The recorder (and its various appellations) was little-known to scholars of the period and the paper discusses the contemporary literature on the instrument, in particular the suggestion that the vibrating membrane was either called 'the recorder' or was a regular feature of that instrument. The instrument appears to be a unique experiment in recorder design: unfortunately the wind-cap can no longer be removed, nor can the instrument be played.