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The Early Piano-forte.

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material for comparative analysis. Also the discussion of older mathematical sources is marginal. By contrast, Bönker frequently cites twentieth-century mathematical literature; however, most of these references are too short and enigmatic to be of any help. Bruno's alleged anticipations of modern science are either too arbitrary (regarding the unity of method on 68 and 249) or not argued for (e.g. the relation with Leibniz in chap. 8). Surprisingly the author seems unacquainted with P. Rossi's *Clavis universalis* and with S. Ricci's studies on the reception of Bruno in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Finally, the initial claim regarding Bruno's contribution to the development of mathematics — that it consisted of an essential impulse towards the analysis of the scope of mathematical logic through the attempt to assess the premises of mathematical thought and to understand the divine unity with mathematical means — remains unwarranted.

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Stewart Pollens. *The Early Pianoforte*. (Cambridge Musical Texts and Monographs.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 158 pls. + xx + 297 pp. \$ 84.95.

The origins of most musical instruments are obscure. Many are derivations and subspecies whose ancient origins cannot be traced. Equally problematic is the fact that throughout the ages there were constant changes of constructional details, resulting in the eventual reclassification into distinct instruments. Therefore, it is rare in the history of musical instruments that we should have access to the documents which give the approximate

date and circumstance of the invention of an instrument, as well as the surviving instruments that support those documents. Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1731) has been regarded as the inventor of the pianoforte, and his invention of the principle of striking the string marked the beginning of a continuum of developments that led to the modern piano. His contemporary also believed the pianoforte was a "nuova inventione" made in Florence around 1700 by Cristofori, then in the service of Prince Ferdinand de' Medici.

Contrary to the widely accepted theory on the invention of the piano, Stewart Pollens argues that the striking mechanism that distinguishes the pianoforte from other stringed keyboard instruments was known long before Cristofori, and that what Cristofori achieved was the "rediscovery" of the principle of striking the string and the adaptation of the hammer action to his instrument. The earliest written document Pollens examines is a treatise written ca. 1440 by Henri Arnaut of Zwolle, a physician and astrologer to Philip the Good. Arnaut provides technical descriptions and drawings of several instruments, among them *dulce melos*. Pollens believes that Arnaut's description of the *dulce melos* provides ample evidence for the existence of the striking action similar to the one employed on Cristofori's pianofortes and that Arnaut recorded the technique from an earlier source. The exchanges of musical instruments and musicians between the court of Burgundy and the court of Ferrara provide tangible evidence that Arnaut's *dulce melos* or the idea of striking action on a string keyboard instrument was exported to Italy in the fifteenth century. Indeed, the next reference to keyboard instruments with the facility for playing *piano* and

*forte* comes from Ferrara (and Modena) around the end of the sixteenth century. A court instrument maker, Hippolito Cricca, reported to Cesare d'Este in 1598 his building of the "instrumento pian et forte." The nomenclature suggests this instrument's capability of playing notes at widely varying degrees of loudness in response to changes in the force with which the keys are struck. That some instruments from the Ferrarese court later found their way to Florence makes plausible that Cristofori might have heard of, or even seen, Cricca's instrument.

The strength of Pollens's argument concerning the development of the mechanism of the pianoforte is based on his discussions and detailed examination of important primary sources (which are reproduced and translated), and his technological study which is derived from his own examination of many of the surviving early pianofortes. He gives informative discussions of the action, soundboard, case structure, and measurements, in a book that is devoted to detailed examination of the extant pianofortes by Cristofori and his imitators in eighteenth-century Portugal, Spain, Germany, and France; only the first two chapters deal with the documents before 1700. Pollens's *The Early Piano-forte* is the most important book on this subject, in that the continuity in the development of the hammer action before Cristofori has not been treated in great depth in the previous books on the history of the piano. The book is thus highly recommended for the technical specialist, restorer, and organologist.

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Claudio Monteverdi. *The Letters of Claudio Monteverdi*, rev.ed. Trans. and intro. Denis Stevens. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. xviii + 458 pp. \$72.

Letters from Renaissance composers are extraordinarily rare. We are therefore very fortunate to have over 125 extant letters written by the most important composer at the transition from the Renaissance to the baroque, Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). The vast majority of these letters were written to personages at the court of the Gonzaga dukes of Mantua, where Monteverdi worked from the late 1580s until he took up the position of *maestro di cappella* at San Marco in Venice in 1613. The earliest letters were written while either he or his employers were away from Mantua, but the bulk of them document the continuing close ties the composer maintained with his former employers after departing for Venice, at least through the 1620s. In addition, a few letters to other patrons and to his Venetian employers survive.

Monteverdi's correspondence not only reveals a great deal about the personal life of this great composer and his family and friends, but also much about the complex patronage practices of early modern Italy and of the process of planning and composing musico-dramatic works in the early seventeenth century. The letters often deal largely with Monteverdi's continuing attempts to obtain funds owed to him, but they also detail his concerns with the texts he is to set to music and how he can best interpret them, and also with the musicians who will be performing the completed works. The letters relate principally to the musical