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In 1579 Lodewijk Theeuwes (Lodewyke Tyves, Teeus) made a claviorganum' which is preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Although it is in unplayable condition, enough remains of the full-sized harpsichord that stands on the organ for an accurate reconstruction to be made.

Only two harpsichords made in England survive from the period of that great flowering of music in this country; the school of English virginalists ('virginal' referred during the 16th and 17th century to all plucked keyboard instruments); the later one at Knole dated 1622 being made only one year before the death of William Byrd and three before the death of Orlando Gibbons.²

In the later Elizabethan era England came in its applied arts under two main influences: that of

the Flemish north, and of Italy. Such foreign influences have often combined on English soil to form a native style. Although Theeuwes was a Fleming he is noted to have been living in the parish of St. Martin le Grand eleven years before he made the dated claviorganum and it is likely that during this period his style of harpsichord construction underwent some modification to suit the particular requirements of his English patrons.

Apart from the fact that the section of the claviorganum by Theeuwes is the first surviving harpsichord made in England it has a number of interesting characteristics. The case is made of oak — a wood that continued to be used for this purpose in almost all harpsichords made in

England until the end of the 18th century. It is also the first surviving instrument that has the registration of two 8' stops and a 4' — a feature that seems to anticipate the Flemish tradition by a few years.

By a most unusual arrangement Theeuwes was able to extend the effective length of the soundboard to very near the keyboard. The jacks went up and down through mortises cut in the soundboard, which acted as guides, an arrangement that resembles Italian practice in instruments of the type in which both 8' registers are permanently engaged.

He further placed the three rows of wrest pins together at the front of the instrument. This he achieved by drilling holes for the 4' strings to pass through the substantial 8' nut (the bridge at the keyboard end of the strings). Even more peculiar was that he could thus dispense with the barring under either nut or bridge, as in ordinary rectangular virginals. Furthermore, as this four-octave instrument is only one inch narrower than the width required for five octaves the soundboard is remarkably wide for the limited compass.

The musical consequences of these peculiarities are that this harpsichord preserves the sharp, clear attack of Italian instruments, while having the longer sustaining power of Flemish ones. The

three registers (which make seven tones possible) show that the English virginalists must have been aware of the possibilities of tonal variation; while the very existence of the claviorganum shows that it is stylistically appropriate to play the works of these earlier English composers of music for clavier on a full-sized harpsichord.

The harpsichord made by Stephen Wessel under the direction of Michael Thomas is probably the only copy so far to have been constructed of the instrument made in England by Theeuwes exactly four hundred years ago. Michael Thomas realized some time ago the important implications of such a reconstruction for the performance of keyboard music of the English Renaissance.

Brian Morgan

Notes

1. As interest grows -in these curious instruments could we not adopt a natural pronunciation? From Greek we know that *ogavov* has its accent at the beginning. From Latin we know that *organum* has a short *a*. From English we know that the accent lies as far forward as possible — as in "English Harpsichord". Thus "claviorganum" is spurious.
2. At the time of writing this article for distribution to my guests at the party I did not know of the two-manual harpsichord from East Coker of 1623 in the Michael Thomas Collection.

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