

Assignment 2**BOOK 1: THE PIANO HANDBOOK**

In this book McCombie explains how Bartolomeo Cristofori changed a Harpsichord into a piano over three hundred years ago. McCombie goes on describing how when Cristofori was angry and frustrated he banged on the keys of the Harpsichord. Cristofori found that they didn't respond with satisfactory crashing chords. By the year 1700 Cristofori changed the Harpsichord so that he could use two strings for each note and a set of leather covered hammers to strike them. He then developed a key mechanism to control the force of the hammers.

McCombie uses a lot of illustrations to describe the mechanisms within a Harpsichord and a piano. In the next chapter talks about buying a piano. He suggests that the majority of music teachers have little or no experience in judging pianos. McCombie says that a tuning technician is the best-equipped person to talk to about buying a piano. He also recommends that buying by name is no longer a good idea as some well known makers have been taken over by other manufacturers.

I think that this is articulately written and is aimed at people that have very little knowledge on the piano. Although this book has no information on playing the piano, I think it would be of great value to someone that wanted to start playing. I think this book is of value to my work because it explains the history of the piano in great detail.

**BOOK 2: HISTORY OF THE PIANO**

In this book Closson talks about the Clavichord which is the earliest form of stringed keyboard instruments. He then goes on to talk about the Dulcimer which is also known as Dolce Melo in Italy, Backbrett in Germany, and Tymporion in France. This instrument has existed since antiquity and is still played from the Near East to the Far East and in most places in Europe. Closson in the following chapter talks about how the piano came from two geniuses; Cristofori and Erard. He explains how they perfected the Clavichord and the Harpsichord into an instrument of greater sonority, one that could be heard in larger rooms. The Clavichord is basically a dulcimer with a keyboard and the Harpsichord came from the psaltery, which is like the Dulcimer, but its strings are plucked by the fingers rather than being struck.

Closson uses a few illustrations to describe the different mechanisms in the Harpsichord, Clavichord and the piano but mostly uses photographs to show each instrument and the way that they have developed throughout the years. I think that this book is aimed at people that have some basic knowledge on the piano. It has got pieces of music for readers to try on the piano, although I did not find quite as useful as Book 1.

**BOOK 3: GREAT PIANIST SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

This book is about thirteen pianists'. The author writes predominantly about their lives and how they first got interested in the piano. The article is written in a journalistic manner. The first pianist that the author interviews is Claudio Arrau. She spends much of the time telling the reader how she was greeted at the door and ushered down a short flight of stairs. She goes into great detail in trying to set the scene in the readers mind describing the tone of his voice as being soft and how he

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“delivers his phrases and ideas in an animated tone punctuated with much laughter and many gestures.” This how the majority of the text is written and I do not think that it is a good source of musical knowledge and more the script of a Hollywood blockbuster! The book also contains a huge number of photographs of the pianists but no technical illustrations or descriptions. This book would be better used if studying the lives of the pianist’s rather than the piano itself.

**BOOK 4: THE PIANO MAKERS**

Wainwright explains how in 1780 William Gardiner, a ten year old boy from Leicester was given a pianoforte. This was not much bigger than two writing desks put together, making it a very small instrument. Having been given the piano Gardiner had to teach himself to play it. William Gardiner then later became an amateur musician. As a young pianist Gardiner toured round the country and was known as the English Mozart. The piano was made by John Pohlman in Germany. In 1780 Pohlman moved to London for twenty years and had been making pianos in London for most of that time.

This text describes how William, Pohlman, Cristofori and many more contributed to the making of the piano. I think that this book is very informative and useful to my work. The text is very well written and is easy to follow and understand. The only thing it lacks is photographs and illustrations.

**BOOK 5: ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE PIANO**

Robert Palmieri edited this encyclopaedia, but each entry is by a different author. The first entry is about the acoustical block and the last is about Zumpe, Johann Christoph who was a German craftsman. This encyclopaedia also includes a lot of information on the transformation of the Harpsichord to the Piano, and also contains quite a substantial amount about Cristofori, who I have become particularly interested in since doing this assignment. I think that the text is very well written and it is fairly easy to comprehend.

It uses a lot of visual imagery in terms of photographs, pictures and graphs. After each entry there is a listed bibliography. I found this text to be extremely helpful towards my research because it has plenty of information on a number of aspects of the Piano including the acoustics of the piano.

**BOOK 6: THE PIANO**

In this book Hollis explains how the piano came about. In Paris in 1708 Cuisine experimented and attempted to make a more expressive keyboard instrument. A treadle operated resined wheel was attached to an instrument whose strings were struck by tangents similar to those of a Clavichord, this left both hands of the performer free to play on the keyboard. This had no influence on the evolution of the piano.

Hollis then goes to describe how Cristofori, the Harpsichord maker replaced Harpsichord jacks with leather topped hammers activated by a remarkable mechanics system. The result of this was an instrument capable of being played loudly or softly. Hollis also used an illustration to help describe this.

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I found that this book was similar to the first one and I also found it a great aid to my work. Hollis also used to photographs to show how the piano has evolved through time.

**BOOK 7: THE BOOK OF THE PIANO**

In the contents page of this book it has a few different pianos i.e. Jazz piano, American piano, Romantic piano, classical piano, etc. I looked up the anatomy of the piano. In this chapter Gill writes about the keyboard and how it came to be applied to stringed instruments the late 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Gill explains how the harpsichord and the psaltery were each provided with a plucking mechanism operated by the key levers. Gill also explains the characteristics of a harpsichord and clavichord. This again is very similar to Ian McCombie's Piano Handbook. Gill uses a lot of photographs to show each type of piano he describes. There are also a lot of paintings of various pianists in this book.

**BOOK 8: PIANO**

The author of this book starts by talking about early string instruments, also mentioned in my other sources. He describes the Clavichord, Harpsichord, Spinets and Virginals. Crombie, the author of this source also mentions Cristofori but in more depth than any of the other sources. In this source I learnt that Cristofori built a number of pianos, but sadly little interest was shown in his invention. Because of this Cristofori started to make other instruments. In this book Crombie also describes and explains other types of pianos like the English Square, Grand piano, the Wall piano and a number of others.

I think that this book is written well and I found it useful for research purposes. I think Crombie managed to include everything one would need to know about the piano except how to play one! As there is a lot of content that is relevant to my work I found this text an essential aid as it contained the majority of details that I was looking for.

**CD 1: PIANO SONATAS K545 & K570**

I listened to this CD and found it to be rather relaxing, it lasted roughly 71 minutes. Although I enjoyed listening to the music a great deal I didn't find it particularly useful to my work. I did learn a little about the different sounds the piano produces. I didn't think it was very informative, as it did not provide much information about the piano as an instrument.

Inside the inlay of the CD the performer of Mozart's pieces briefly explains how difficult it is to perform music by a great composer. Also included in the inlay are some photographs of Mozart's birthplace in Salzburg, Germany courtesy of the Austrian National Tourist Office. The inlay is in English and then it's translated in German.

**CD 2: THE PIANO MUSIC OF JOHN FIELD**

I enjoyed listening the pieces of music in this CD. Some of it reminded me of the climax in a classic black and white film like Loral and Hardy! Unfortunately I

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didn't find this a very useful source for my work because again it didn't have that much relevance to the instrument. I think that this CD is aimed at people with an interest in John Field, and other music from similar composers in this genre.

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