
SUMMARY

SQUARE PIANOS AND THEIR MAKERS: FIVE EXAMPLES FROM DALMATIAN MUSEUMS

The paper deals with cultural, historical, and social context of five square pianos from five Dalmatian museums: Zadar City Museum of the National Museum Zadar, Šibenik City Museum, Split City Museum, Island of Brač Museum, and Cultural Historical Museum of Dubrovnik Museums. Two of them were made by the makers who were highly esteemed and well known in their time: an Englishman Thomas Tomkison (whose grand piano was even part of the inventory of the King George IV's Royal Pavilion) and a German-Austrian Mathias Müller. Two pianos were built by Luigi Hoffer and Michael Mariacher – Italian “little masters” of Viennese origin. The fifth instrument was built by an unknown maker. They originate from Venice (Hoffer and Mariacher), Vienna (Müller, probably the square piano by an unknown maker), and London (Tomkison). The oldest is the square piano by Luigi Hoffer, built around 1800. It is followed by Thomas Tomkison's piano built in 1809 or 1810. Square pianos by Michael Mariacher and Mathias Müller were built in 1820 and in 1825. It was the first quarter of the 19th century and was the time of their most frequent use. The square piano by an unknown maker was made around 1840, when European production of this type of piano was gradually underway. Their previous owners include the Count family Lantana from Zadar and a ship-owner family Ohmučević Bizzaro from Dubrovnik. The music was cherished in their summerhouses in Sutomišćica on the island of Ugljan and in Brsečine near Dubrovnik. Especially interesting are hitherto unknown details of Giuseppina Larco, the previous owner of the piano in the Island of Brač Museum, which provide insight into her musical education and repertoire that might have been performed, as well as the journey of the object itself (probably from Italy via Tocopilla in the north of Chile to Sutivan on the island of Brač).

Four square pianos presented here – built by Luigi Hoffer, Thomas Tomkison, Michael Mariacher and Mathias Müller, are at present the only known and preserved items in Croatia. Their importance therefore goes beyond regional frameworks. Given the small number of preserved instruments in Croatia, their significance is even more precious.

Key words: square pianos, Dalmatia, museums, primary sources, cultural history