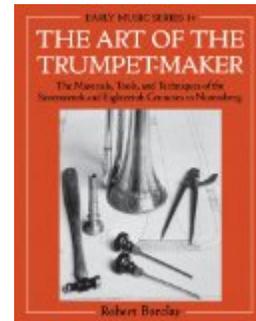


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robert Barclay. *The Art of the Trumpet-Maker: The Materials, Tools, and Techniques of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in Nuremberg*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. xi + 186 pp. \$44.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-816605-4.

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Trumpet-making required highly skilled artisans. The creation of one of the major musical instruments of the early modern era was a very specialized craft which required capability and experience in mixing metals, molding and soldering parts, and controlling a multitude of tools. In this well-illustrated, clearly-written account, Barclay lays out how non-valve trumpets were made in one German city (Nuremberg) for over two centuries. He thoroughly explains the craft processes and describes the materials and tools. However, the human history of those who used the tools and made these instruments is missing. This book is excellent for the art, but historians should know that it does not include the artisans.

Barclay describes and illustrates well. He uses images in the fashion of Agricola, some of whose earlier illustrations are reproduced to show how metals were worked from ores. But the social conditions of the workshop he so carefully lays out, the people who came into and went out of this craft, or why trumpet-making appeared and disappeared in Nuremberg—namely all the types of questions social historians ask—are not considered. The author's intention is as follows: "I want this to be as general a description of all the processes from the raw material to the finished object as possible ..." and "I would like the reader to have a very wide idea of the range of processes, materials, techniques and tools which needed to be focused upon the finished object, and of the huge, anonymous army of labourers which supported all craftsmen. Too often descriptions of artifacts (instruments in particular) miss the human angle ..." (p. v). Yet those laborers remain anonymous and the "human angle" undeveloped.

Even if those who made the instruments lack character traits here, this is an important contribution to un-

derstanding how quality trumpets were made. After a terse history of the instrument in Nuremberg which ties trumpet-making to the local brass industry, the metal itself is described. The solders and fluxes used to combine parts receive a chapter. The main contribution is in the chapters on "The Workshop" and "The Techniques" which comprise nearly half the text and contain the best illustrations. Using illustrations of workshops—one from Germany, one from France—the work space, the tools for cutting, engraving and bending or boring are reviewed. The techniques—among others—for bell shaping, flaring, burnishing and garlanding are clearly set out. These two chapters demonstrate the validity of the author's step-by-step outline of the stages of production. They show his thorough understanding of labor and artisan processes, gained by the passion of actual reconstruction. Many of the photos illustrate tools and techniques from the author's own workshop in which historical instruments are recreated. At the end of "The Workshop" chapter, two pages are devoted to working conditions, but the evidence is drawn from eighteenth century Britain, not Nuremberg.

Barclay's hardcover version (1992) won a prize from the American Musical Instrument Society. It is in that context that this study must be seen: the author, as a recreator of classical trumpets, expounds on a historical craft in great detail, but he provides too little context on its creators or why this art is not even mentioned in studies on nineteenth-century Nuremberg metalworkers.

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