



History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A"

By Bruce Haynes

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History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A" By Bruce Haynes

This is the first complete survey of the historical pitch standards used by musicians during the last four centuries. Written from a practical perspective and addressed to performers it is the first book to attach frequency values to pitch names and describe where, when, and why various historical pitch levels were used. It surveys a period from the 16th century to the present and focuses on Italy, France, Germany, the northern and southern Netherlands, and the Habsburg Lands, following the developments in the design and function of instruments and how they influenced and were influenced by pitch changes.

The History of Performing Pitch explores the relationships between pitches like Chorton, Cammertone, and Consort-Pitch and what pitch frequencies they represented at various times and places. It also examines what effect pitch differences had on musical notation and choice of key, and discusses practical considerations musicians would have had to make when transposing, especially with regards to the range of singers' voices.

What distinguishes this book from previous pitch studies is that it has been written since the rise of the early music revival within the context of the growing understanding of how "early" instruments work. This development has provided a new source of empirical information not previously available, which allows this book to base its conclusions on a much larger and more relevant sample than has ever been possible before. It refers to the original pitches of some 1,382 historical instruments, including cornetts, Renaissance flutes, traversos, recorders, clarinets, organs, pitchpipes, and automatic instruments from all over Europe and compares this information with music and written texts. While this study avoids categorical answers where historical information is not yet sufficient to justify them, it locates a number of historical pitch levels, discovers several that were previously unnoticed, and disproves several common myths about pitch.

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Editorial Review

Review

The book is laid out logically and evidence is offered and discussed in a methodical way. (*Classical Music*)

...an essential companion for performers who wish to consider not just the pitch at which a piece of music might have been performed but how the singers and players of the time might have perceived and adjusted to it....the book is rich in detail as well as having a broad sweep....it is worth every penny and deserves the widest circulation. (*Early Music Review*)

This work is an important and useful contribution to the literature. It will be valuable for practical consultation and also as a stimulus-a point of departure-for future exploration of this complex but essential subject. (vol. 60 *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association*, MARCH 2004)

One of the most important books in the field of musicology and organology to have been released for many years...The book is essential reading for any maker or player who has an interest in learning more about the various pitch standards in use over the past five centuries, and the information it contains will help provide them with insights into how their instruments should play. (*British Clavichord Society Newsletter*)

About the Author

Bruce Haynes was a part-time teacher at the University of Montreal. He published nearly 50 articles, a bibliography of oboe repertoire, and *The Eloquent Oboe* (2001).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Lee:

The experience that you get from History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A" will be the more deep you searching the information that hide in the words the more you get serious about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to know but History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A" giving you buzz feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood through anyone who read this because the author of this book is well-known enough. This book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having that History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A" instantly.

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