

## Janissary Pedals

The martial music of the Turkish Mehters was centuries old by the time it became popular in Europe in the mid to late 18<sup>th</sup> century, where it was incorporated into music by such luminaries as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. It was a rhythmic and melodic style full of energy and bravura, and German harpsichords were occasionally built incorporating extra pedals that would ring bells, beat a padded drum stick against the underside of the soundboard, or activate a variety of cymbals and snares. Inevitably the late 18<sup>th</sup> C pianos from Vienna featured these “Janissary Music” pedals as well. Particularly in the period of 1810 to 1826, grand and square pianos made in Vienna were frequently built with these popular stops included. The massacre of the Janissary guard in 1826 and subsequent abolition of the Janissary Guard by Sultan Mahmud II in 1826 led to the swift decline in popularity of the Turkish music style and European builders ceased adding these features to pianos shortly afterward. In America, the popularity continued for another 10 years, but by 1840 this style of music had faded there as well. English tastes never warmed to the Turkish music style and pianos from the UK do not feature such extra pedals.

Square pianos made in Vienna between ~1810 and 1828 frequently feature an additional pedal for Janissary effects. Immigrants to America such as Joseph Newman, Joseph Hiskey, and George Huppmann, all of whom settled in Baltimore Maryland, or Andreas Reuss of Cincinnati, Ohio, began producing pianos in America with the extra pedal. These are built on a general style of the wrest plank in the front over the keys, the strings running diagonally from lower left to upper right, and in the upper right corner, the effects of a drum stick and bell are arranged. Depressing the outside rightmost pedal beats the drum, and quickly releasing the pedal rings the bell, giving a –boom-ring- effect with each pedal pump, which can be easily synchronized to the music at the keyboard.



Joseph Newman showing drum stick and bell



Pedal box for Newman



Layout for Andrew Reuss square piano



Bell for Andrew Reuss



Bell and drum stick for Reuss

The bell is usually a nicely turned brass bell with a high clear chime. The drum stick is a hardwood paddle hinged at the instrument case struts with a brass hinge, with a horsehair stuffed leather striker, and comes to rest on a similar horsehair stuffed pad. The striker for the bell is an iron rod perched on a thin spring steel arm which is further attached to a wooden paddle hinged in leather to the case, and the travel against the bell is limited to the spring action allowing the heavier iron rod to strike and rebound from the bell on quickly lowering the pedal. At no time does the rod rest on the bell, and the pictures above are of the action under repair. Variants of this basic scheme are to be found in all squares with Janissary pedals.