

JMT 25/1 (1981): 174: A letter to the editor on the article of "The Principle and the Elements: Rameau's Controversy with D'Alembert" (*JMT* 24/1, pp. 37-62) by Jonathan W. Bernard.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor of *JMT*:

May I compliment Mr. Jonathan Bernard on his recent article entitled "The Principle and the Elements: Rameau's Controversy with D'Alembert." It was both insightful and interesting.

There is a statement, however, which should be corrected. In his footnote 27 Mr. Bernard stated: "The first allusion to the sonorous body occurred later, in the *Génération harmonique* of 1737." The fact is, the principle of the *corps sonore* was first employed by Rameau in the *Nouveau Système de musique théorie* of 1726. In the preface of this treatise he revealed his new "experiment:"

There is actually in us a germ of harmony which apparently until now has not been perceived, nevertheless, is easily perceived in a string, a pipe, etc., in which the resonance produces three different sounds at once. . . .

The founding of this principle engaged me in new research which I believe ought to be made public. I have not been able to dispense, however, with borrowing the help of some mathematical operations. . . .

In the first chapter of the treatise, entitled "Observations on the Experiment which Serves as the Principle of this System," Rameau proceeds to explain his experiment and to apply it to his theory of harmony. Although his explanations underwent many changes, the principle of the *corps sonore* remained at the heart of his theory from that point on.

Sincerely,
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