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The Gig Economy

Professional orchestral playing
in London 1789 - 1861

Submitted by Simon David Wills
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Research Department

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A study which goes into as much detail about instrumental playing as this one does could not have been written without advice from colleagues and friends. All the observations about brass playing are my own, but others helped me to understand instruments of whose techniques I have no practical knowledge. Davide Vittone, principal bass of the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble in Hamburg made copious technical observations and laid bare Domenico Dragonetti's chicanery over the solos in Beethoven's 9th Symphony. He was occasionally a Virgil guiding me through some of the more recondite usages in Dragonetti's correspondence and it is to him that I owe my confident assertions in chapter 5 about north Italian surnames.¹ Professor Katy Gainham of the University of Trinidad and Tobago and

¹ See below, p.198

Alison Teale, principal oboe of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, were immensely helpful when I considered the differences in breathing between the oboe and other woodwind instruments. Alison's exegesis of the mysteries of reed scraping did not make it into the final cut, an omission that may not have harmed the thesis. The clarinettist Florian Schüle, my colleague at the Cuba-Europe orchestral project, gave insights into the stresses that might have been caused by army band conditions. He also convinced me that 'costermonger' was the most apposite rendering into English of Joachim's 'Marktschreier'. Imogen Barford, Professor of harp at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama reassured me that for all his sociopathic tendencies Nicholas Robert Bochsa was a technically irreproachable composer for the harp. The comparisons that I make between the techniques needed for folk fiddling and orchestral violin playing in chapter 6 were arrived at with the help of Ailsa Hunter of the orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She was abundantly generous with her knowledge of her instrument and of the nineteenth-century violin trade. She suggested places to look for records of some of the odder scrapers of catgut that populate that instrument's history. She also took a good deal of trouble checking the accuracy of my conclusions about the difficulties - or lack of them - that a violinist might encounter in 'minor theatre' works such as *The Dillosk Gatherer*. I regret that we did not have time to test our hypothesis that even one such as I, with two left hands and ten thumbs, could, with careful instruction, in a week be rendered competent to perform the second violin part of that interesting work.

The staff in the Guildhall's research department were a delight to work with. Alex Mermikedes and Biranda Ford gave cheerful and well focused advice when it was needed, and Sarah Bell maintained administrative discipline, something for which I have not the smallest aptitude.

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Finally, there is one person to whom I am grateful but who sadly cannot receive my thanks. The late Cyril Ehrlich supervised me the first time I attempted this project, which in the 1990s I fondly imagined might be a ladder of escape from the London Symphony Orchestra. Whenever I presented him with an ill thought-out idea or irrational conclusion, as often happened, he would challenge me with a quizzical *are we flying a kite here?* The memory of it frequently echoed in my mind during the research and writing up. I hope I cut my own kite strings as ruthlessly as he would have snipped them for me, had he been around to do it.

Declaration

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Abstract

The nineteenth century orchestral musician has usually been portrayed as an anonymous creature scraping together a subsistence from a patchwork of sources. This view is common in such secondary material as exists on the subject, but it is not supported by documentary evidence. This project re-evaluates the orchestral profession not as a low-status musical underclass but as an independent occupational group who were entrepreneurial and often wilfully independent of their employers. It is not a study of high artistic aspiration, but rather an account of a musical working class. Though it is customary to refer to orchestral playing as a profession, the thesis argues that it is better understood as a trade and that from that perspective it can be seen as well-paid artisan labour.

The 'long nineteenth century' would have been too large a period to encompass, particularly since the logical cut-off would have been not 1914 but 1928, when the addition of synchronised sound to cinema resulted in mass redundancies among orchestral players. Instead, a shorter period was chosen, one that was a time of dramatic expansion. Some estimates suggest a fivefold increase in the number of professional musicians in London. The choice of start and end dates was determined by three crises that illuminate this growth. In 1789, the King's Theatre was burned down. Documentary material generated by the ensuing crisis was a clear starting point from where it was possible to trace working practices, fees and names of the relatively small number of orchestral players working in London at that date. In 1829, the orchestra of the King's Theatre refused to sign a new, restrictive contract. The resulting dispute was extremely acrimonious and was widely reported and commented on. In 1861, a row between Covent Garden theatre and the Royal Philharmonic Society led to the latter losing its orchestra, an emergency which, though hurtful to the feelings of some, resulted in a hiatus of only a few days: players were in plentiful enough supply for another orchestra to be rapidly assembled.

London music making was mercantile in structure and the fact that, even in the most elevated circles, there was nothing that corresponded to a full-time orchestral job. The late eighteenth century orchestral player was a general practitioner who often played several instruments. His Victorian counterpart was more likely to be a specialist and was very often trained in the army. The repertoire they played was different, and as opera and orchestral concerts became media of mass entertainment it was natural for playing styles and performance practices to change.

There is little secondary material on this area. Research has been conducted by examination of diaries, newspaper reports and account books.

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Introduction: Anonymous creatures?

...when examined closely our 'knowledge' often proves to be illusory, based on assumptions of what 'must' have happened as opposed to what can be *shown* to have happened...what we can show happened amounts to a great deal less than one would like.¹

(Michael Burden)

If a man could say nothing against a character but what he could prove, history could not be written.²

(Samuel Johnson)

This is a study of the orchestral profession in London between 1789 and 1861. It is not a survey of the concerts, theatres and other entertainments that proliferated during that period, much less a study of artistic aspiration and achievement but rather an intimate history that examines the detail of orchestral life at every level of competence, status and income. It would be stretching a point only a little to call it the making of an English musical working class. The music profession has in other studies been examined as a whole. This approach suits a social and economic survey such as Ehrlich's *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century*,³ but this study treats orchestral players as a discrete group. Such attention as they have received - Ehrlich called them 'anonymous creatures'⁴ - has emphasised the most capable of them. That is understandable: the archives of organisations where the best players worked - particularly the Philharmonic Society and the Musical Union - are large and accessible. But those concerts attracted a tiny section of London's audience and by the

¹ Michael Burden, 'Pots, privies and WCs; crapping at the opera in London before 1830'. *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 23:1/2 (2011), p. 28

² James Boswell *Life of Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1998) p. 727

³ Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985)

⁴ *ibid.* p. 47

mid-century relatively few of the concert-going public would have noticed if they had ceased to operate. Lesser musicians - army bandsmen and civilians who worked at the margins of the profession - were as much a part of the orchestral population - and as worthy of study - as the most distinguished. For many of these men, music was an engine of social mobility, and their presence in it had a bearing on the character of the wider profession.

The period covered is coterminous with what we might, with apologies to Eric Hobsbawm, call the 'long nineteenth half-century'. It was prompted by two emergencies. In 1789, the King's Theatre, the home of the Royal Italian Opera, burned down. Many of the theatre's papers have survived from that time, and provide a definite point of departure. For between twenty and thirty years after the theatre reopened, opera was presented as it always had been, to a wealthy audience on roughly fifty nights of the year. The patent and minor theatres continued much as they had in the eighteenth century. After about 1820, society changed; London grew and a large, mostly unsophisticated audience for music appeared. There was employment for more musicians and the resultant much-expanded profession prompted our end date, which was chosen because of a calamity that failed to materialise. In 1861, the Philharmonic Society lost most of its orchestra because of clashes with the opera. By then, there were so many competent players available that replacements were found within days. That cut-off point is a little artificial, but the orchestral boom did not end until the late 1920s, when synchronised sound appeared in the cinemas and threw between twelve and fifteen thousand musicians out of work.⁵ Within the constraints of a thesis, it would have been impossible to make more than a cursory study of so long a period.

It is important before going any further to say what we mean by 'orchestral player'. Many of the musicians studied here performed in what we would nowadays call an orchestra, but

⁵ *ibid.* p. 210

many did not, and almost none did so full-time. They played in military bands, accompanied dancing or sat around a harmonium in a small theatre pit, often in groups whose makeup was dictated more by what players happened to be available than by any musical design.

Sometimes they were conducted by a man with a white stick, more often they were not.

There is modern terminology for this, but rather than resort to phrases like 'non-standard configuration' or 'directed ensemble performer' we shall use 'orchestra', 'band' and 'orchestral player' to cover all eventualities.

That definition is broadly drawn with good reason. The convention of calling music a profession will be observed here, but it never was one in any organised sense. Hierarchical qualifications that reflect real-world competence were (and are) impossible to devise, and if a man had been too busy putting his skills to lucrative use to bother with them, there would have been little that a professional body could have done about it. The 'profession' conformed more closely to the characteristics of a skilled trade and working patterns - in particular the porous boundaries between different kinds of engagement - were much closer in character to those of tradesmen. Men who had distinguished themselves at the highest levels of art music worked just as readily as light entertainers. Antonio Oury studied with Kreutzer, Baillot and Lafont in Paris, he was in the orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera,⁶ played in the Philharmonic Society⁷ and performed at the Musical Union.⁸ In 1841, he led a band entertaining visitors to the passenger sheds at the opening of the London and Brighton railway.⁹ Henry Hill played viola at the Musical Union from its inception, was principal in Costa's opera orchestra¹⁰ and was soloist when Berlioz conducted the first London performance of *Harold in Italy* in 1848. He also took part in the cooperative promenade

⁶ List of the 1822 King's Theatre orchestra in John Ella's scrapbook GB-Ob EllaC 81 2

⁷ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees GB-Lbl RPS Ms 299

⁸ Christina Bashford, *The Pursuit of High Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007) pp. 364-365

⁹ *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 22 September 1841 p. 3

¹⁰ Programme for 1849 season of the Royal Italian Opera GB-Lbl RB.23.b. a

concerts at the Lyceum from 1839, playing quadrilles and popular overtures six nights a week.¹¹ Such diversity of employment had implications for recruitment and promotion; a man who started out in a small theatre or dance hall band might easily encounter established players and, if he had the necessary ability and a little help from his friends, he could make his way to other regions of the orchestral trade. McVeigh notes:

No evidence has been found for a deputy system in the orchestral sphere such as operated among organists and choristers.¹²

It would be surprising if one were ever to be discovered; such formality would have been alien to the casual nature of the profession. Actors used taverns as 'houses of call' - informal labour exchanges - and the King's Theatre's habit of paying its band at the Marlborough Coffee House¹³ was probably normal practice. A man could engage a deputy on payday or in a house of call as easily as a carpenter might ask an acquaintance to help him fit a roof beam.

The initial research question was simply 'what went on'? Thanks to Ehrlich, we have some idea of how the exceptional players worked but his work emphasises the effect of the market, avoiding the less easily quantifiable aspects of musicians' lives. For a more detailed picture, we must consider other motives that determined players' decisions; age, the congeniality or otherwise of the work and long-term prospects versus short-term gains - to say nothing of personal fancy. It is common for studies of this field to lay emphasis on the question of social status. For some - solo singers and violinists - acceptability among the upper classes contributed to a musician's employability. For orchestral players, excluding the very small number who were engaged to play at private houses, it was a matter of peripheral concern,

¹¹ *Theatrical and Concert Companion 1839-1842* GB-Lbl 7892.tt.12. 2

¹² Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 185

¹³ Bill for the opera band for 1792, which gives the venue for payment. GB-WOBbo fo. 2.F.22

and it is not certain that those musicians who did mix in society achieved anything like equal status. In 1827, Sir George Smart organised and directed some concerts for Harriot (sic) Coutts at the time of her marriage to the 9th Earl of St Albans. He was well rewarded:

... I received for payment to myself only £115.15 and in addition to the £20 as a present to the Misses Cawes. On 26 or 27 July, Mrs Coutts, took her leave of me saying that I should not meet her again as Mrs Coutts - shaking my hand, upon opening it I found a £100 note.¹⁴

Intro.1 Detail from Sir George Smart's journal GB-Lbl Add. Ms 41772 Sir George Smart personal papers p. 89

Mrs. Coutts had in her youth been a strolling player and an actress at the Duke Street Theatre. Her generosity might have been a show of fellow feeling from a former entertainer, but even so she tipped Smart as if he had been a *maitre d'* - and Smart's social status was far higher than that of any of the men he conducted. The preoccupation with status of some commentators - particularly Deborah Rohr - has resulted in a distorted view. Rohr's *The Careers of British Musicians* devotes only fourteen of its 250 pages to orchestral players and in that short space the author makes a problematic assertion:

¹⁴ Sir George Smart personal papers p. 89 GB-Lbl Add MS 41772

The careers of orchestral instrumentalists were patchwork affairs that combined numerous forms of employment in an attempt to provide a subsistence.¹⁵

This is not factually correct and the language is both emotive and inexact. 'Subsistence' is a precise term; skilled wages were reckoned at around double the subsistence rate commonly paid to the unskilled.¹⁶ All sources indicate that musicians earned wages at least as high as those received by skilled workers. A portmanteau career managed skilfully is less a patchwork than a robust business model, and diversity provided security in an untrustworthy market. In 1848, the trombonist John Smithies, who had played for the Philharmonic Society at least since 1819,¹⁷ was abruptly removed from his position, probably because of a change of section principal. The secretary wrote to him:

...they were induced to dispense with your services, knowing that your independence from the profession would render the situation unimportant to you in (sic) a pecuniary point of view.¹⁸

We do not know how Smithies made his money or what prompted his other activities, but the security that he provided for himself cannot be accurately dismissed as attempting to provide a subsistence. To think of it as such is an obstacle to understanding the psychology of these men. A study of musicians' behaviour must examine negotiation, dispute and occasional delinquency; men who are attempting to provide a subsistence will not behave in the same way as men who are assembling a decent living from diverse sources. Even so, Rohr's ideas

¹⁵ Deborah Adams Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians 1750-1850: a profession of artisans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 120

¹⁶ See E. J. Hobsbawm, 'Custom, Wages and Work-Load in Nineteenth-Century Industry' in Asa Briggs (ed) *Essays in Labour History* (London: Macmillan, 1967) pp. 115-116

¹⁷ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees. The records for 1816-18 are missing. GB-Lbl RPS MS 299

¹⁸ Philharmonic Society secretary's letter book 8 February 1848 GB-Lbl RPS MS 329

have been influential and, where they have been accepted uncritically, inexplicable conclusions and careless examination of sources have ensued. Jane Girdham attributes the patchy orchestral records at Drury Lane to the idea that 'their status in the company was so dismal',¹⁹ disregarding the lengths to which the theatre went to accommodate its band's outside work.²⁰ When in 1809 the soprano Angelica Catalani tried to install her brother as first oboe for her performances at Covent Garden William Parke, the regular principal, refused to play again at the theatre unless his pay was increased. Harris, the manager capitulated.²¹ None of this suggests dismal status, but Girdham may not have been aware of the Catalani story. She states that, again because of dismal status, Parke avoided describing his performances as a member of the band at Drury Lane.²² The frontispiece of Parke's memoir states that he was at Covent Garden for forty years - and his memoir is full of references to performances in that theatre. It was his elder brother John who played at Drury Lane; he was one of the foremost players of the day, a fact that may be found on the second page of the memoir.

Rohr' views on musicians' prospects are similarly questionable:

...a long-term view of musicians' earnings makes it clear
that their chances of avoiding destitution were very
slim...²³

She appears to base this conclusion on a few colourful examples of misfortune in the RSM archives. She cites the travails of Charles Jane Ashley and of William Parke in old age but does not consider the possibility that a man in pursuit of a handout might be tempted to

¹⁹ Jane Girdham, *English Opera in Late Eighteenth Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p. 76

²⁰ See below, pp. 54-55

²¹ William Thomas Parke, *Musical memoirs; comprising and account of the general state of music in England*. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830) vol. 2 pp. 112-113

²² Girdham, *English Opera* p.77

²³ Rohr, *Careers of British Musicians* p. 157

exaggerate his difficulties or that a disposition to complain is not the same thing as hardship.

Writing about the society of musicians, Simon McVeigh observes:

It is alarming to discover that one-quarter of its
members made claims at some point in their careers.²⁴

His conclusion is a little surprising. If one-quarter made claims at some point in their careers, then three-quarters did not. It may be that Georgian musicians were more robust than their modern counterparts, or that the Society of Musicians applied strict criteria to limit the number of successful claims. It is possible that members were able to accrue a financial 'hump' to tide them across lean times or, like John Smithies, were financially secure enough not to need the small allowance that the Society paid. The one thing that the one-quarter figure does not prove, indeed tends to contradict, is that the condition of musicians was so precarious as to be alarming. We should bear in mind a question that Joel Mokyr asks about migration:

If the living conditions of the working class in
industrial town centres were as execrable as all that,
how do we explain the continued migration to towns?²⁵

Mokyr answers his own question by positing the idea of a 'lottery' component to migration, risking the disamenities of urban life as an escape from the assured miseries of the countryside. There may have been a similar gambler's instinct in the decision to pursue music, but it is still worth asking why, if musicians attempted to provide subsistence in an unpleasant and occasionally dangerous environment, and faced the near certainty of

²⁴ McVeigh, *Concert Life* p. 201

²⁵ Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: Britain and the Industrial Revolution 1700-1850*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) p. 456

destitution, there was from the 1820s such an influx into the profession that by 1870 that Ehrlich, with justification, calls it 'the flood'?²⁶ There may have been one or two who were willing to beggar themselves and their families for the sake of art, but most men would not have pursued professional orchestral playing unless benefits beyond the satisfaction of making music were likely to accrue from it.

An important idea explored in this study is that, viewed in their proper context, wages were not poor at all. They were at the lower end of the national scale, certainly, but that places musicians among the majority of workers, not necessarily in a state of unusual precariousness or incipient destitution. They are best seen as what were known at the time as 'mechanics' - skilled workmen. Harrison calls these a 'labour aristocracy'²⁷ and points out that their earnings were similar to those paid to workers in non-manual occupations who probably thought of themselves as middle class.²⁸ In 1789, a painter would charge 5s per foot for a double festoon of flowers on a cove, 2ft 6 inches high.²⁹ It seems a fair guess that one or two of these amounted to a day's work. In 1817, Charles Newnham, a carpenter employed on the building of Ranelagh Chapel (now the Royal Court theatre) earned 5s a day 'with beer twice a day'.³⁰ By 1828, festoons of flowers were out of fashion, but 5s would pay for three coats of oil paint applied to 60ft of skirting board - again, probably a day's work.³¹ Carpenters made up to 42s a week³² and in the 1820s compositors on daily newspapers made 48s.³³ Those in more 'middle class' occupations fared only a little better; Charles Rice, an attendant and

²⁶ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* pp. 100-120

²⁷ J. C. Harrison *Early Victorian Britain 1832-51* (London: Fontana, 1979) p. 35

²⁸ Geoffrey Best *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Fontana, 1979) p. 101

²⁹ 'An Experienced Surveyor' *The Builder's Price-Book* (London: J. and J. Taylor, 1789) p. 141

³⁰ John Burnett, (ed.), *Useful Toil. Autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to the 1920s.* (London: Allen Lane, 1974) p. 285

³¹ John Bennett, *The Plumbers, Painters, Glaziers, House Decorators &c Pocket Director.* (London: John Bennett, 1828) p. 122

³² Burnett, *Useful Toil.* p. 265

³³ *ibid.* p. 267

Second Assistant Manager at the British Museum, had a salary of £67 per annum³⁴ and between 1834 and 1841 Anthony Trollope had £90 a year from the General Post Office. He got into debt, though by his own admission more through improvidence than because his salary was too small.³⁵

A modestly successful orchestral player was potentially better off than a man in any of these occupations. In 1790, a festoon painter might have made £78 in a year in the unlikely event of there being enough work to keep him occupied six days a week for fifty-two weeks. An opera player made £52 10s for just fifty nights' work³⁶. In 1818, Samuel Pritchard, the lowest paid player at Covent Garden, was paid 5s a night, the same as the festoon painter or Charles Newnham's daily rate, to play trombone, trumpet and bugle - though his contract makes no mention of beer.³⁷ Six of his colleagues were paid more for the season than than Anthony Trollope made in a year at the Post Office. The critical point is that it took a musician far less time to earn those sums. Henry Broadhurst, a stonemason who in the 1840s worked on the clock tower at the Palace of Westminster, recalled with satisfaction that his union negotiated a reduction from fifty-six and a half to fifty-two and a half hours per week.³⁸ Office clerks were frequently required to work all day until as late as 11pm - and occasionally all night.³⁹ A musician who gave six performances in a week at a patent theatre would have had perhaps twenty-four more free hours in his week than a stonemason. There were unpaid rehearsals to attend, but there is evidence that these were kept to a minimum.⁴⁰ Even a player at Sadler's Wells, who earned a guinea a week for a thirty-seven week season was hardly likely to try to subsist on less than £40 for the year when he had so much free time in which to augment his

³⁴ Laurence Senelick, (ed.), *Tavern Singing in Early Victorian London: the diaries of Charles Rice for 1840 and 1850* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1997) p. xvii

³⁵ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883) p. 97

³⁶ GB-WOBbo fo. 2.F.22

³⁷ Lbl ADD. MS 29,365 fo. 20

³⁸ Burnett, *Useful Toil* p. 320

³⁹ Gregory Anderson, *Victorian Clerks* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1976) p. 15

⁴⁰ See below, pp. 54-55

income, and since it was common for a minor theatre to engage military bandsmen, regimental pay of a little over £27 per annum probably supplemented those earnings (additional pay from the regimental band fund is a complicated subject and will be dealt with in chapter 7). Whatever his circumstances, a Sadler's Wells player still had fifteen weeks free over the summer, in which to play at a pleasure garden or, like John Smithies, to work at something else altogether.

The uses of disloyalty

For a musician's earning potential to be realised, he needed freedom of movement between engagements, and this raises the important issue of a structural flaw in the industry which caused most of the difficulties that beset orchestral management throughout the nineteenth century: excessive pay differentials based not on the nature of the work performed, but on where it was undertaken and for whom. A performance in a patent theatre never paid more than 14s; the average fee was close to half that amount. A benefit concert paid one, two, or occasionally three guineas. Benefits were confirmed close to the date of performance. As the number of concerts multiplied and requests for leave of absence increased, players missed rehearsals, failed to appear for curtain-up and sent deputies in such profusion that on at least one occasion a premiere at the Royal Italian Opera was cancelled because less than half the band had attended rehearsals.⁴¹ Ehrlich speculates that this mercenary behaviour might have sprung from a sense of vulnerability, but a simpler explanation is preferable: given the choice between earning a lot and earning a little, most people will choose the former. It is remarkable that musicians appear not always to have concerned themselves with the consequences of absenteeism. That raises a question that is addressed throughout this study:

⁴¹ See below, pp. 97-101

how strong were the incentives to be disloyal, how was leave of absence obtained and what were the likely reasons for such cavalier attitudes?

Art as commerce

It is common to view London's music industry as an inferior version of the one in Europe, but it is better understood as an island entire of itself. In his analysis of the musical free market in nineteenth century London,⁴² McVeigh identifies the commercial pressures in operation and the differences between London and Europe. He does not pursue the idea that commercial music might have needed musicians who were fundamentally different in approach from their continental counterparts. A London player could be said simply to be manufacturing a product at speed, but as the King's Theatre band complained in 1828:

The Parisian opera possesses many advantages over the ever changing Caravansera (sic) of London. The performer there is employed during nearly the *whole* of the year. If his instrumental skill be good, and his conduct marked by attention, his situation becomes a permanency, until age or length of servitude shall procure him a competent pension.⁴³

A musician at a German court worked to a much gentler routine than his London counterpart. In 1839, Charles Hallé described the excitement created by a month of rehearsals on the *Eroica* at Darmstadt:

...these were most numerous, taking place almost daily, and apparently merely for the pleasure of the practice. They seemed

⁴² Simon McVeigh, 'A Free Trade in Music' *Journal of Modern European History / Zeitschrift für moderne europäische Geschichte / Revue d'histoire européenne contemporaine*, 5:1 (2007) 67-94

⁴³ F. Laporte with others, *An Explanation of the Differences Existing Between the Manager of the Italian Opera and the Non-Conforming Members of the Late Orchestra, written among themselves*. (London: 1829) GB-Lbl T.1273.(6.) p. 34

to be the only occupation of the members of the orchestra...during that month it was the all-absorbing topic of conversation amongst musicians, and the rehearsals, far from being shunned by the members of the orchestra, as is so often the case, were expected with impatience.⁴⁴

Even at the Philharmonic Society in London, such a routine would have been unthinkable. As Ehrlich says, Cherubini's *Anacreon* overture was so frequently performed because it could be done without any rehearsal at all.⁴⁵ London players produced performances that were - in a word often employed at the time - efficient; Mendelssohn and Wagner both remarked on a want of thoughtfulness in the way they played but they never called them incompetent. A player who could assimilate and play decently on minimal preparation required a different set of skills - and very likely a different temperament - from his Darmstadt counterpart, who might have found what Moscheles called the 'daily steeplechase'⁴⁶ of musical life in London intolerable.

That difference went deeper than practicalities. In 1857, Louis Jullien offered Joseph Joachim two hundred and forty pounds for a month of concerts at the Surrey Gardens. Joachim declined, and wrote to Clara Schumann about it:

Welche Verbindungen sollen mir noch im Leben heilig bleiben, wenn ich meine Kunst in thätiger Gemeinschaft mit einem Marktschreier ausbeute?⁴⁷

(What connections will remain sacred in my life, if I exploit my art in active collaboration with a costermonger?)

⁴⁴ Charles Hallé, *Autobiography with correspondence and diaries* (London: Elek, 1972) pp. 43-44

⁴⁵ Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) pp. 45-46

⁴⁶ Quoted in Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 84

⁴⁷ Joseph Joachim and others, *Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim* (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1911) p. 400

Joachim would have known that Jullien's orchestra played to a high standard; many of its members were also in the Philharmonic Society, where he appeared regularly. But a man for whom music was a spiritual and intellectual pursuit could not comfortably lend himself to Jullien's brand of histrionic entertainment, whatever the fee and however well the band behind him played. There is another aspect to this which merits examination: what was meant by 'good' playing? This is explored in detail in chapter 2, but it is worth mentioning here that the overwhelming evidence that by the mid nineteenth century most orchestral playing in London was rough or even raucous; advertisements even boasted that works were rewritten to include more brass and percussion. It is possible that Joachim's refusal was less to do with Jullien's podium antics than a reluctance to perform with an orchestra that sounded like a military band.

Sources

Ehrlich explains the difficulty of study in this field:

Since none of them were diarists or men of letters, though one of them wrote an entertaining memoir, their working lives are not easily documented...⁴⁸

His *History of the Music Profession in Britain* remains an indispensable text, as is his *First Philharmonic* but neither examines the lives of orchestral players in detail. Others are similarly inattentive. John Curnelley's study of Sir George Smart devotes little space to the men he conducted; the same is true of John Goulden's study of Michael Costa. Adam Carse's *Life of Jullien* is an important account of the great showman's life and contains much useful material on the orchestra, but it concentrates on Jullien's star soloists rather than the rank and file. Theatrical literature yields little; even a study as comprehensive as Lee Jackson's

⁴⁸ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 47

Palaces of Pleasure pays scant attention to the band, while Dagmar Kift's superb work on the Victorian music hall⁴⁹ does not mention it at all. Borg and Coke's history of Vauxhall Gardens⁵⁰ emphasises the visual over the aural, though in all other respects it is an excellent overview. Christina Bashford's 2007 study of John Ella, *The Pursuit of High Culture* gives a good account of his work in the King's Theatre. Her evident affection for her subject does not lead her to conceal some regrettable traits of his character, particularly a predilection for disloyalty and disparagement. That cannot have endeared him to colleagues, and he was clearly something of an outsider with a biased view of orchestral life. Simon McVeigh's *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* overlaps only a little with the period of this study, but as an examination of the starting point from which the Victorian profession grew, it is valuable. Peter Bailey's extensive work on popular entertainment and what Ehrlich called the 'cult' of rational recreation only mentions players in passing, but he writes in enough detail for informed guesses to be made about working conditions and the skills required by musicians in the lower theatres. Herbert and Barlow's *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* is the most comprehensive text on the subject, though Henry Farmer's *Work*, which is more than 100 years old, is still of immense use. Marc Baer's *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian England*⁵¹ is cited only infrequently, but it was an influential starting point for researches into the astonishingly turbulent environment of the Georgian theatre.

The many contemporary 'musical recollections' and similarly titled works were largely written from an audience perspective and are often partisan over divisive figures like Costa. John Ebers's account of his seven years as manager of the opera contains a great deal of detail from behind the scenes and at one point paints an amusing cameo of the orchestra's behaviour

⁴⁹ Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: culture, class and conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996)

⁵⁰ Alan Borg and David Coke, *Vauxhall Gardens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)

⁵¹ Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

in rehearsal. The 'entertaining memoir' that Ehrlich mentions is by William Parke. It is gossipy, opinionated and in places rather silly but so far as can be checked, its errors are of misplaced emphasis rather than departure from the facts. Not without cause, some scholars have regarded him as a latter-day John Aubrey figure, more concerned with trees than wood, but in an intimate history his narrow perspective is revealing precisely because it is narrow.

Newspapers are good barometers of major crises such as the court case at Drury Lane in 1820 and the 'opera wars' of the late 1840s. However, it is wise to remember Schopenhauer's view of the newspaper as the second hand in the clock of history, made of baser metal than the others and prone to inaccuracy. Isolated newspaper reports must be viewed with caution; for example, the idea that Balfe was such a poor conductor that he needed to import European players in order to assert control of his orchestra is an entertaining one, but it only appears in a single source and may have been the work of a journalist with a column inches to fill and no great inclination to check his facts. One can be more certain about cancelled *Semiramide* described in chapter 2. It appeared in several newspaper reports and they, combined with letters in the Ayrton papers and a wide range of advertisements, provide a credible explanation of the background to the debacle. Concert programmes are important indicators as to whether, for example a particular festival engaged men from the opera but as Christina Bashford wisely observes, a programme is a statement of what was intended to happen, printed before the event.⁵² Last-minute changes to repertoire and the sending of deputies were so common that an orchestra list in a programme can be no more than a guide. Other ephemera are seductive; it is exciting to find a receipt for a concert signed by the player, but such things often survive in insufficient numbers to form the basis of broader conclusions.

⁵² See Christina Bashford, 'Writing (British) Concert History: The Blessing and Curse of Ephemera', *British Library Association Notes*, Second Series, 64:14 (2008), 458-473

The most reliable manuscript sources are account books and business correspondence, though the almost universal habit of accounting for a group of musical performers as a single item is frustrating. The orchestral contracts held in the Bedford Opera Papers only cover a couple of years, but they are the best and almost the only source we have for pay and conditions in the eighteenth century theatre. The collection of Covent Garden contracts that survive from 1818-20 and the Philharmonic Society's register of players and fees have often been referred to. William Ayrton, Ebers's musical director at the King's Theatre, was a prolific journalist, correspondent and archivist, one of a literary group called 'The Cockneys' that included the Shelleys, Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt.⁵³ He was given to combative correspondence and the Ayrton family papers at the British Library contain a substantial body of band lists, box office receipts and notes to players. This has proved an important source, albeit one whose fragmentary character sometimes makes it difficult to interpret. George Smart's habit of recording in the margins of programmes the minutiae of almost every concert he attended provides detail about rehearsal practices and, occasionally, musicians' behaviour. He was unusual in recording details of concerts where things went smoothly. His programme archive, which is bigger than his better-known personal journal, provided much of the data in chapter 5. The Philharmonic Society's ledger of players and fees is almost complete and has been heavily relied on. The letter books of the Foundling Hospital were vital in assembling an account of the fate of boy bandsmen. They often made for distressing reading.

We have already noted the dangers in taking an individual's colourful complaint as proof of a general trend. Evaluation of sources is further complicated by the fact that players were routinely disingenuous or downright untruthful in their business dealings. Dragonetti told the Philharmonic Society that he would have asked for twice his £10 fee had he known that the

⁵³ For a description of this group see Gillen D'Arcy Wood, 'Cockney Mozart: The Hunt Circle, the King's Theatre, and "Don Giovanni"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 4:3 (2005), 367-397

cadenzas in the last movement of Beethoven's *9th Symphony* were so difficult.⁵⁴ Ehrlich takes this at face value as an indication of the difficulty of those passages, but nearly all Dragonetti's compositions for his own instrument are more technically demanding than anything to be found in Beethoven. Caution must also be exercised in respect of directories. The entries in Doane are self-selecting and players' claims about work were not audited; it is unwise to use them as the base for any firm conclusion about player numbers or indeed any other aspect of the music profession. This is because Doane does not ask two critical questions: 'how often?' and 'how recently'? A musician might have played once in the Antient Concert, as a deputy of last resort: there would have been no obstacle to him listing himself twenty years later as 'playing at the Antient Concert'. John Ella was not given to chicanery of that sort but his disapproval of almost everyone he worked with raises questions about his reliability, as does his self-appointed role as an acolyte of Michael Costa. His diaries are of most use for the detail they provide about the practicalities of working as a musician. It is not only players whose writings benefit from a sceptical eye. In a letter to her sister Fanny, Susannah Burney angrily described an opera rehearsal in which the band were disruptive and played badly on purpose. It is clear from a reading of the whole correspondence that Susannah was in the throes of something very like a crush on Gaspare Pacchierotti, the *castrato* who, even from her own description, was the real source of the trouble.

When serious disputes arose, as at the King's Theatre in 1828, groups of players sometimes published broadsides, of which the longest and most useful is *An Explanation of the Differences Existing Between the Manager of the Italian Opera and the Non-Conforming Members of the Late Orchestra*, written among themselves. A copy survives in Frederick

⁵⁴ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p.48

Laporte's personal papers.⁵⁵ It reproduces the correspondence and reveals in detail the working practices of London musicians in the 1820s, particularly the relationship between a theatrical engagement and casual concerts. In this case, the rebarbative character of Laporte's correspondence was an aid to understanding. He challenged his band's objections point by point. Where he did not do so - as in the case of Thomas Harper's statement of earnings from the theatre - it is reasonable to assume that the players' assertions were truthful.

There is no such thing as a neutral history and what follows has been written from the perspective of one who spent more than 40 years as a full-time orchestral player in London and with many orchestras outside the UK. I say that not to assert authority in matters of interpretation, but to make the point that although this is not practice-based research, it is research informed by practice: the viewpoint is closer to the ground than in other studies. That entails a pragmatic attitude to the relationship between artistry, the craft aspect of orchestral playing which, for a professional, must be paramount and the need to make a living in the face of management priorities that operate against it.

This viewpoint had an important role in fashioning the structure of the thesis and of the research that preceded it. The starting point for information gathering was the 1828 spat between Laporte, Bochsa and the King's Theatre orchestra. It cannot simply have erupted unforeseen and was clearly a final breakdown in relationships that had been poor for a long time - something that often happens in orchestral life. From there it was a matter of working backwards in an attempt to plot the factors that caused these problems, and to examine whether and to what extent these were general throughout the industry. The next step was to work forwards and examine the localised improvements that occurred from the 1830s. As a result of this, the first three chapters are chronological and trace the evolution of a small

⁵⁵ GB-Lbl T.1273.(6.)

Georgian profession through a crisis in the 1820s and rapid expansion after 1830. The frequent disputes that punctuate the narrative indicate the stresses placed on the industry as it grew. Chapter 3 examines the idea of orchestral reform not as an artistic process but as a managerial one. It analyses three management styles, the dictatorial, the mercantile and the cooperative. A professional player's perspective undoubtedly informed the treatment of Michael Costa and Louis Jullien, the two main reformers. Elias Canetti's description of the orchestral conductor as a powerful being who 'decides what the law is and summarily punishes any breach of it'⁵⁶ was never intended as a representation of reality - and is wide of the mark in that respect - but often seems to influence writing on orchestral playing. The more prosaic reality is that a musically attenuated bully like Costa or a lightweight like Jullien with a large budget can bring about improvement simply by reforming management processes. Both have their parallels in modern orchestral life and Chapter 3 argues that the two men's successes were administrative in nature rather than the product of anything more profound. The two chapters that follow consider aspects of musicians' lives that stood outside the mainstream. Touring was the preserve of the best players. Figures for out-of-town earnings give insight into players' budgeting and reveal the arduous physical conditions under which even the best of them operated. The chapter also establishes that, for some, substantial earnings were possible. Pleasure gardens, on the other hand, present a picture of chaos and decline but the manner of their demise illuminates the fact that musical employment was influenced by many factors beyond market forces. The last three chapters are variations on a theme of training and social mobility. It is here that Ehrlich's question: 'where did they all come from?' is addressed in detail. The answers that are commonly given, that player numbers increased because of foreign migration and extensive training in the army, are not incorrect but neither are they necessarily complete. To some extent the last

⁵⁶ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (London: Penguin Books, 1973) pp. 258-260

chapter inhabits the territory of Burden's 'what must have happened' but it would have been perverse to ignore the growth in amateur instrumental music that ran parallel to the expansion in professional playing. The latter created a demand that, in the right circumstances, the former could at least partly supply. The idea that a high level of orchestral skill is only possible if one has received comprehensive training has proved durable among lay commentators, but it is not matched by experience and the last chapter considers the means by which an untrained musician might have pieced together a competence that made him employable.

The value of a pound

If we take the guinea paid to a principal player at the Royal Italian Opera in 1790 and feed it into the comparison engine on the *Measuring Worth* website,⁵⁷ its 2021 purchasing power is given as £133.50. That is less than any fee paid at Covent Garden today, but over so long a stretch of time the comparison is meaningless. As a portion of relative GDP, the 1791 guinea was worth £1,961 in 2021. *Measuring Worth* takes this sum to be a marker of status or economic influence, but again the comparison is unhelpful since the percentage of GDP accounted for by human rather than machine labour has changed so much. It is better to compare musicians' earnings with those in other occupations and to consider their purchasing power as household income. Even so, there are difficulties. Colquhoun's 1806 table of incomes⁵⁸ is often referenced in discussions of musicians' earnings but Rufus Tucker counsels against placing too much reliance on nationally based statistics:

...conditions in different parts of England were so diverse that a sound study of wages and prices must be restricted to one locality.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ <https://www.measuringworth.com/>

⁵⁸ Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Indigence* (London: Hatchard, 1806) p. 23

⁵⁹ Rufus S. Tucker, 'Real Wages of Artisans in London 1729-1935', *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 31 (1936), p. 74

The picture is further complicated by the protean nature of the standard measure of inflation, the notional basket of goods:

Although the cost of a defined 'basket of goods' was much the same in the early twentieth century as it had been in the late eighteenth, it had varied greatly over the years, and the cost of individual constituents of the 'basket' had also changed significantly.⁶⁰

Given the variable earnings of musicians, the effects on them of inflation are difficult to assess, particularly as the relationship between prices and incomes was so complicated:

...after 1793 real wages fell rapidly, as war and fiat money made commodity prices rise. Peace and restoration of the gold standard raised real wages to the level that had prevailed from 1750 to 1780. Food went up much more than clothing during the war...Money wages fell after 1815, but more slowly than the cost of living, with the result that real wages rose. By 1836 the downtrend of money wages was halted, but crop failures in 1839, 1841, and 1846 so raised the cost of living that real wages turned down again until 1847. Then began an uptrend in money wages that continued until 1873... Real wages, though interrupted by the Crimean War, rose rapidly after 1847...⁶¹

⁶⁰ John Burnett, *A History of the Cost of Living* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) p. 196

⁶¹ Tucker *Real Wages* p. 81

Tucker guesses that a working man's rent accounted on average for one sixth of his wages.⁶² The £30 accommodation allowance paid each year to the King's Band⁶³ more or less reflects this, and the £12 annual rent on a house beside Red Lion Passage in Covent Garden⁶⁴ would have been within the reach of many patent theatre players. £17 would have leased a house fronting Great Russell Street, with the ground floor of the property next door, for six months, a manageable sum for the opera players. Between fifty and sixty of London's orchestral players made over £200 a year and lived comfortably. The rest earned less, but they were not poor. London was more expensive than the provinces, but with their earnings at least on a par with those of skilled workers, and often above, it is reasonable to assume a decent if not opulent standard of living for most orchestral players.

Though we commonly refer to music as an industry, it is not one to be compared with, say, textiles. Weavers all performed the same tasks for a similar number of hours; every musician did a slightly different job from his colleagues in an environment where character and elusive qualities such as good ensemble 'radar' bore as much on his employability as raw instrumental competence. At such a long distance of time, it is impossible, except in a very few cases, to understand these relationships but we should not pretend they are not there. There is little about which we can be categorical, though it is safe to say that men earned well if they could stand the long hours. One stable price may have helped with this: from the end of the eighteenth century until the outbreak of the First World War, Whitbread charged 5d for a quart of beer for drinking in the pub, fourpence halfpenny if it was taken out.⁶⁵

⁶² *ibid.* p. 76

⁶³ Vernon Delves Broughton, (ed.), *Court and Private Life in the Time of Queen Charlotte, being the Journals of Mrs. Papendiek* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1887) pp. 125-126

⁶⁴ Bedford Estates rent collectors' books for 1818-19 GB-Llma, City of London E/BER/CG/E6/5/10 fo. 47.

⁶⁵ Burnett, *Cost of Living*. p. 212

1. Playing the market: the industry between 1789 and 1820

This chapter examines the profession before the expansion that took place from the 1820s onwards. It explores the insecurities and disruptions to which musicians' lives were subject, the strategies that they adopted to contend with them, the range of their activities and, so far as is possible, the traits of character that attracted a man to work in an industry that was precarious and an environment that, as often as not, was unpleasant. The work patterns current during this period were effective but unsuited to changing conditions as the music industry expanded. This caused most of the problems described in the rest of the thesis.

Not a trustworthy market

On 17 June 1789, the King's Theatre burned down. The deputy manager, Pietro Carnevale, was suspected of setting the fire but was not prosecuted for it.¹ The building was gutted, along with Hill's instrument shop next door. A Stradivari violin belonging to one of the opera players was destroyed, along with a fine cello by William Forster II, whose owner was so distressed by the loss that he quit the music profession.² The rest of that year's performances were given at Covent Garden theatre,³ and in February 1791, the company opened its season at the Pantheon in Oxford Street. A year later that, too, was consumed by fire. The opera moved again, this time to the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, which did not burn down. Fires were not unusual: Covent Garden theatre burned in 1808 and 1856, Drury Lane in 1809, the Lyceum in 1830. In February 1828, the recently completed New Brunswick theatre collapsed during a rehearsal. Ten people died, including some of the band and the sister of Mr. Fearon, the orchestra's leader.⁴

¹ Curtis Price, 'Italian Opera and Arson in Late Eighteenth-Century London', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 42: 1 (1989), 57

² William Sandys and Simon Forster, *The History of the Violin* (London: William Reeves, 1864) p. 340

³ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 111

⁴ *London Evening Standard* 29 February 1829 p. 1

Managements were not always trustworthy. In 1822, the Olympic Theatre offered its actors a pay cut. We do not know if the band's pay was reduced at the same time, but on the evening of 20 January, no music was played, and the audience became restive. Eventually the performance was cancelled and there was nearly a riot over the return of ticket money.⁵ Ten days later, a change of management and a reopening were announced⁶ but by then the band had lost nine nights' wages. This was not unusual; there were chronic financial problems at the two patent theatres, which were heavily overstaffed, and until the 1830s, the Royal Italian Opera was in more or less permanent financial crisis. John Ebers, who ran it for seven years, observed that 'ruin or immense loss is the fate of the enterprizer'⁷ and one of its longest-serving managers, William Taylor, spent much of his time in the job imprisoned at the King's Bench for debt. Budget problems caused by singers' extravagant fees frequently threatened the orchestra's remuneration. One week, Taylor could not lay his hands on the money to pay the band, and persuaded Ebers to advance him the money by taking out a box subscription. Thereafter, as Ebers ruefully recalled:

His band required payment every fourth or fifth night, and as regularly as these occasions succeeded each other, so sure was I to see the face of the manager.⁸

At least Taylor's musicians were paid. In 1818 a pamphlet called *The Opera*, said the band were 'diminished in number and greatly reduced in their nightly salaries or stipends'. An annotation in William Ayrton's hand on one copy says that the document is 'supposed to be by Taylor.'⁹ If Ayrton was correct then we should approach it with caution, but it was

⁵ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 21 January 1822 p. 2

⁶ *Morning Post* 29 January 1822 p. 3

⁷ John Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre* (London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1828) p. xviii

⁸ *ibid.* p. 15

⁹ Ayrton Papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 fo. 8

accurate in claiming that Taylor's successor, Edmund Waters, was running out of money.¹⁰

In August the *Morning Chronicle* reported the closure of the theatre:

The immediate cause of this interruption is stated to have been the refusal of the orchestra, whose pay had been ten nights in arrear, to play any longer unless the whole was paid to them.¹¹

The band never received their money. Even a solvent theatre did not always pay its musicians regularly. William Parke was appointed principal oboe at Covent Garden at the start of November 1783 but there were no musical performances until Christmas, apart from O'Keef's piece *The Poor Soldier*.¹² A contract issued by the same theatre to Thomas Wallis in 1818 carried the handwritten addendum that he should attend 'every performance in which he may be wanted'.¹³ If he was not wanted, he was not paid. Samuel Arnold, manager of the English Opera House - which, despite its name, frequently presented plays and melodrama - said that 'it would be very convenient to me to be able to play farces without music,' no doubt because of the savings on musicians' wages.¹⁴

Schedules changed at short notice. Sometimes this was unavoidable: on 2 June 1810, Drury Lane had to change the evening's play from *Love à la Mode* to *Fontainebleau* because the actor in the leading role, Mr. Cooke, 'never came to the theatre'.¹⁵ A few nights later he was on the premises but refused to act and the play was changed again;¹⁶ any players contracted under similar terms to those signed up to by Wallis would have been sent home if the incidental music had had no use for them. The Opera had no understudies; sometimes, if a

¹⁰ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre* pp. 32-34

¹¹ *Morning Chronicle* 17 August 1820 p. 3

¹² Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 27

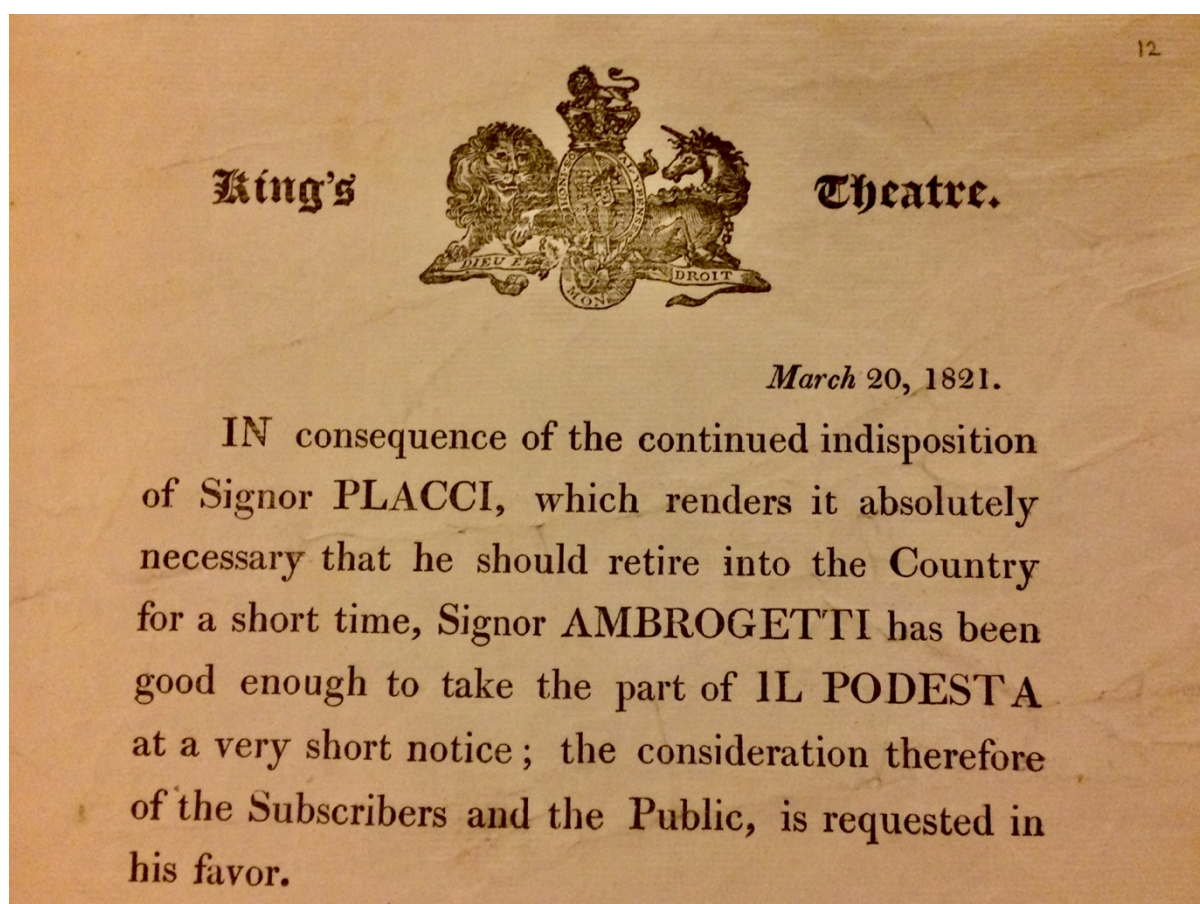
¹³ Covent Garden orchestral contracts 1818-20 GB-Lbl Add MS 29365 fo. 6

¹⁴ United Kingdom, House of Commons *Parliamentary Papers* August 1832 Report from the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature with the minutes of evidence. p. 56

¹⁵ Memoranda of J.P. Kemble 1808-1815 GB-Lbl Add MS 31975 p. 126

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 127

singer was indisposed, another might fill the gap if they happened to know the role and the change was announced in a handbill.



Ill. 1.1 Handbill announcing a change of cast at the King's Theatre
GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 15

If no substitute was available, the opera was changed, and an announcement was put in the papers. One printed on 29 July 1798 was typical: 'The serious opera of Alceste is unavoidably postponed on account of the indisposition of Madame Mara'.¹⁷ Even if the singers remained healthy, the choice of repertoire was often made at the last minute. On 20 May 1817, William Ayrton wrote to a member of the board:

Upon taking up my paper this morning, I find Don Giovanni advertised for Friday next. I had arranged to have Agnese...[I] write to suggest that you will order the advertisement to be

¹⁷ Cutting in the King's Theatre scrapbook (not indexed) GB-Lbl Th.cts 41d

changed... it is politic not to run Mozart's opera until it satiates the town: if it is performed in this incessant manner it will lose all its force, the public will become tired and the subscribers disgusted...'¹⁸

Ayrton didn't get his way. *Don Giovanni* was performed, followed by a ballet called *Zulica, ou Les Peruvians*. Box office receipts were poor: the 23rd saw John Kemble's last-ever appearance as Coriolanus at Covent Garden, and he played to a full house that absorbed most of the potential opera audience. The King's Theatre took only £166 10s. 6d - a dismal sum compared with the £606 3s that the most popular performance of *Don Giovanni* had accrued and less than half the average box office receipt for a Saturday that year.¹⁹ If Ayrton had prevailed, it would have affected some of the players: the trombones would have had to come to the theatre for the start of the evening instead of after the interval, and there would have been changes to the percussion players' plans (*Don Giovanni* uses none apart from timpani). Not every opera needed a full band; with different repertoire, some wind players might have found themselves deprived of an engagement at less than a day's notice.

Tenure and orchestral politics

Robert Elliston, the manager at Drury Lane from 1819, explained his band's contractual situation:

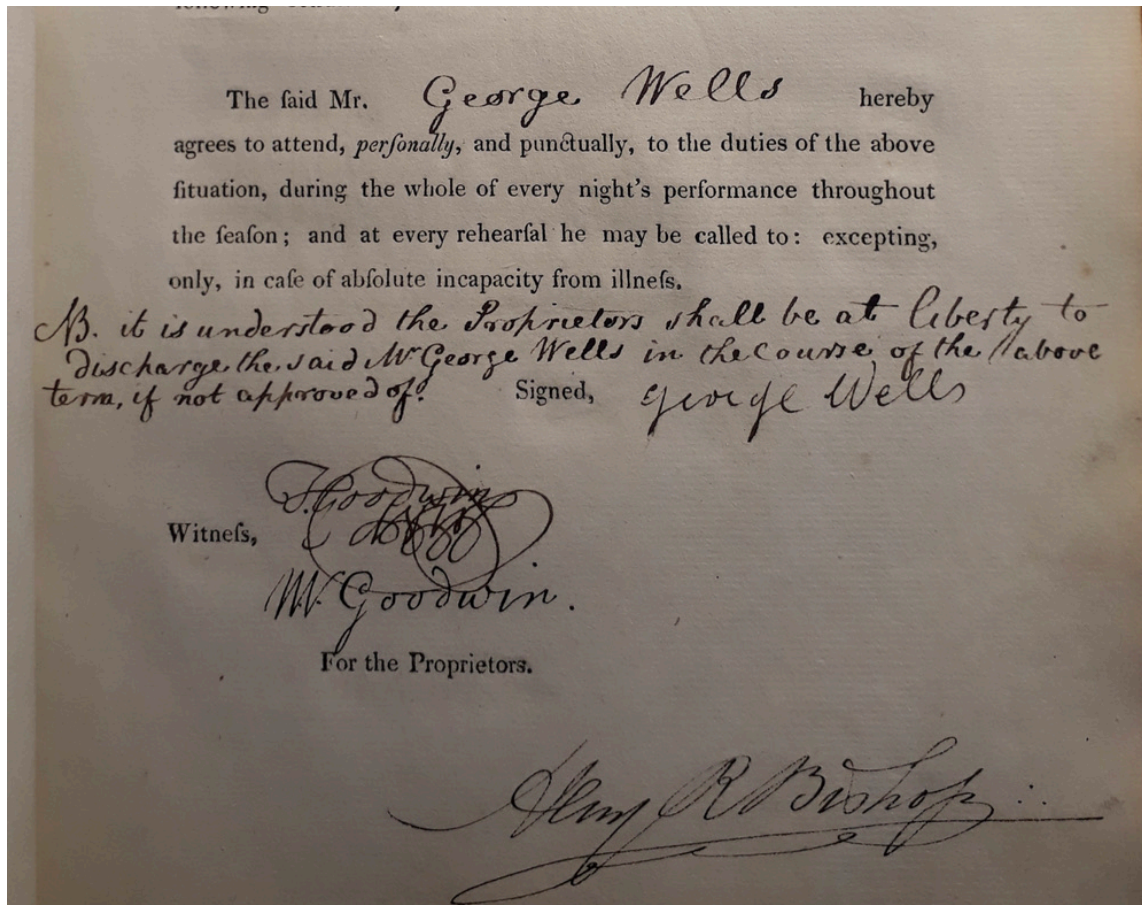
...their engagement was at any rate for the season, and he could not discharge them in the middle of the season, or at any particular part of it, as long as they performed their duty...²⁰

¹⁸ Ayrton Papers: Letter from William Ayrton to an unrecorded addressee GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 147

¹⁹ Ayrton Papers: King's Theatre accounts, GB-Lbl Add MS 523345 fos. 4-5

²⁰ *The Statesman* 10 January 1821 p. 4

Contracts were for a season at a time but a player's relationship with a theatre was usually long-term; only six of the thirty-strong band at Drury Lane left between the 1790-91 and 1794-95 seasons.²¹ At Covent garden, a violinist called J.C.H. Hoffmann was engaged in September 1818²² on a year's trial; there would have been little point in such an arrangement unless re-engagement had been the norm.



Ill. 1.2 Detail of a contract issued by Covent Garden theatre to a player 'on trial'.
Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl ADD Ms 29365 p. 31

Players were often rough in their dealings with colleagues and managements and this affected stability of employment; a man might find himself ousted through the captiousness of others and the petty perils of orchestral politics. At a Directors' meeting of the Philharmonic Society in December 1818, it was decided that a Mr Ireland should be engaged as first flute

²¹ Memoranda of J. P. Kemble GB-Lbl Add MS 31972 fos. 192 and 272

²² Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl Add MS 29365 fo. 31

in place of Mr Ashe, and although William Ayrton and a Mr Atwood attempted to postpone the decision, they were unsuccessful and the secretary was 'desired to write informing Mr. Ashe, of the above arrangement'.²³ It is not clear why Ashe was removed; the Philharmonic Society minutes seldom recorded the details of such discussions but it is unlikely that his case was isolated: John Kemble's note against the name of an actor who was discharged 'only to frighten'²⁴ may well have reflected widespread practice. John Mackintosh's regular complaints about fees at the Philharmonic Society led to his being undermined during a rehearsal. He tackled the matter in a letter to the directors:

I now find that I have not given the satisfaction I had been so foolishly vain to believe. Therefore, I abandon all such intention of asking one farthing more than you were pleased to pay me last Season, and knowing from an application that was made to me yesterday at the Rehearsal that my being employed by you prevented the Septuor from being performed by the persons wished for, and which you out of delicacy to me would not mention to me, I therefore to prevent such an inconvenience recurring again, beg leave to retire from your concert...²⁵

The directors reassured him, and Mackintosh accepted their offer of an engagement for the following season. He was an exceptional player. Others were less secure, and there was little mercy from managements or colleagues if a man's skills deteriorated through illness or age. John Mountain led the orchestra at Covent Garden for many years, but by the early 1820s he had taken a job at the English Opera House. His name appears on the leader's part for *Gretna*

²³ Philharmonic Society directors' minute book GB-Lbl RPS MS.279. p. 58

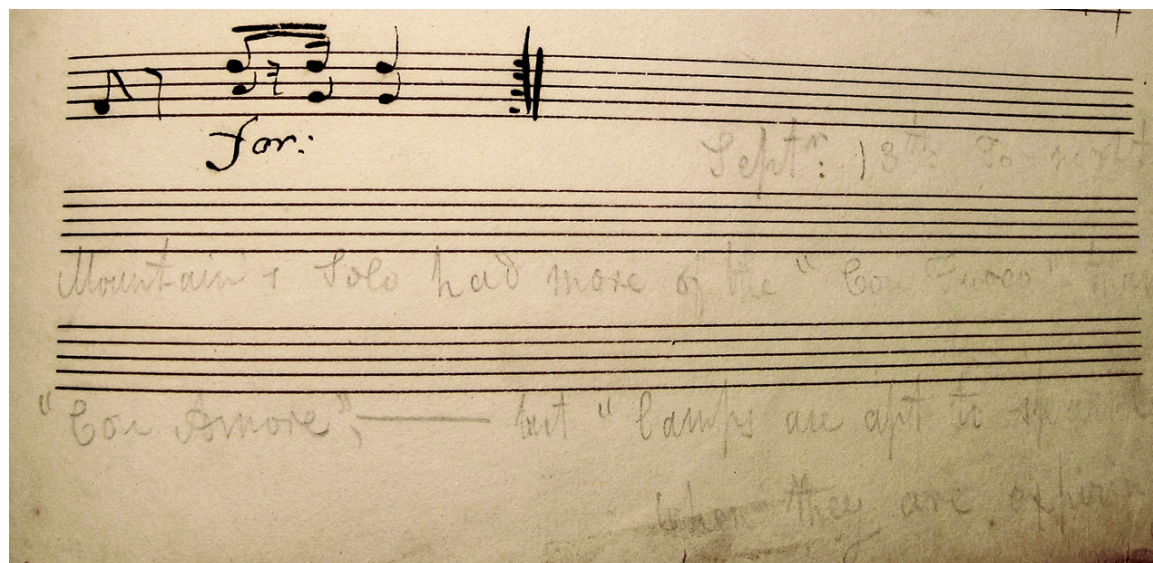
²⁴ Memoranda of J.P. Kemble GB-Lbl Add MS. 31972 fo. 241

²⁵ Letter from John Mackintosh to the directors of the Philharmonic Society, 21 May 1820 GB-Lbl RPS Ms 353 fo. 240

Green, a play with a few songs. The viola parts are covered in graffiti. Most of it consists of incomprehensible 'in' jokes, some of them in faulty Greek, but there is one unkind inscription:

Mountain's solo had more of the 'con fuoco' than the 'con amore' but 'lamps are apt to sputter when they are expiring.'²⁶

Mountain retired wholly from the music profession at the end of the 1822-23 season. A



Ill. 1.3 Detail of viola part for *Gretna Green* with graffiti. GB-Lbl Add MS 33811

newspaper commented that 'wisdom's triumph is well tim'd retreat.'²⁷ In 1797 Wilhelm Cramer was displaced as leader of the opera by Giovanni Battista Viotti, largely because of lobbying by a fashionable singer called Banti.²⁸ Viotti only led for a season before being ordered out of the country under the Alien Act for 'making a Jacobinical declaration in the Orange coffee house.'²⁹ Even Domenico Dragonetti was prone to bouts of insecurity: at the age of seventy-four he published a splenetic rebuttal of a report in *The Musical World* that 'age and illness had made sad havoc with him', in which he advertised his disinclination 'to submit tamely to any unjust attack...by a dastardly coward or *treacherous spy in the*

²⁶ Orchestral parts for *Gretna Green* GB-Lbl Add MS 33811

²⁷ *The Sun* 20 September 1822 p. 3

²⁸ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 pp. 254-256.

²⁹ *Ipswich Journal* 3 March 1798 p. 2

orchestra'.³⁰ Vincent Novello wrote the English text for him, but the vitriol was surely all Dragonetti's.

Decay'd and prosperous musicians

Musicians were not much more vulnerable than other workers except, perhaps, when it came to minor injuries that affected their ability to play: Henry Platt was forced to give up the French horn for dental reasons:

He is a married man and is no longer able to continue his professional duties, having lost, from great and continuous pressure, the whole of his front teeth.³¹

A dentist in Marylebone High Street confirmed that false teeth were impracticable in Platt's case³² and that his career was over.

It is difficult to calculate how many players fell on hard times in old age or whether they fared any worse than other skilled workers in the same income bracket. William Parke, after a distinguished career, was in 1842 imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea prison. How he came to be there is not recorded; his letter to the RSM says more about his gout than his circumstances.³³ It is not possible to say whether Parke and others were the authors of their own misfortunes. Wedeborn wrote about the unhappy fate of some musicians at the end of their lives:

³⁰ *From Signor Dragonetti to the English Musical Public in refutation of statements made respecting his health in the 'Musical World'*. GB-Lbl 1881.a.1.(86.)

³¹ GB-Lsm A340

³² *ibid.*

³³ GB-Lsm A61

... involved in debt and died miserably poor. It is very probable, that an inconsiderate and extravagant manner of living, was the cause which produced this effect.³⁴

He may have been right; improvidence is not wholly unknown among professional musicians. Charles Jane Ashley was incarcerated for debt at the King's Bench for 16 years until September 1834. On his release, he was engaged at the Victoria Theatre, devoting a portion of his salary to discharge his obligations. The theatre's manager decamped, leaving the orchestra with their salaries two months in arrears. Ashley then secured a position at the Adelphi, but 'was taken from my Bed when ill for an old Debt, to the County Prison where I remained three weeks by which I lost my engagement...'³⁵

Others fared better. John Mackintosh lived seventy-seven years without claiming from the RSM. The horn playing Petride brothers laid up some treasure from their long careers and wrote to the Philharmonic Society announcing their retirement:

As we are already in full Gallop to our grave, we hope, the little thing we could save, will be perhaps sufficient to carry us to the last Finale of our distance.³⁶

They had been successful professionally and it is likely that the 'little thing' was enough to keep them when they returned to Germany. John Christian Röst, a player of modest distinction, who made 5s.10d per night at Covent Garden playing violin, bugle horn, trumpet and trombone and delivering the fanfares on the stage,³⁷ managed to leave £600 'in the three percents' and some furniture.³⁸ Some needed assistance from the RSM but a great many

³⁴ Gebhardt Wedeborn, *A View of England towards the close of the eighteenth century* (Dublin: P. Wogan, 1791) vol. 2 p. 174

³⁵ GB-Lsm A148

³⁶ GB-Lbl RPS Ms 359 p. 43

³⁷ GB-Lbl Add. Ms 29365 pp. 19 and 58

³⁸ GB-Lsm A309

members' files contain no information beyond the petition for admission. A player's fortunes depended on his skill in managing his portfolio, his health and a degree of luck. Instrumental skills degrade quickly, especially if the player's working life is too hectic to allow sufficient maintenance practice, and some may have stopped playing to pursue other trades.

Risk management

When the Italian Opera moved from the burned-out Pantheon to the little Haymarket theatre, it discharged nine string players because there was no room for them in the much smaller orchestra pit.³⁹ For those nine, the loss of earnings must have been painful, but it is unlikely that it was catastrophic. For a season of forty performances, the opera paid 1gn a night to principals, 15s to most of the other players and only 10s 6d to five of the band. That made, respectively, £42, £30 or £22 for the year.⁴⁰ These were significant sums, but the Royal Italian Opera's orchestra was only a facet of a working life that, for most orchestral players, was complex. A man working at any trade is a small businessman and a diversified business is a robust one. At the end of the eighteenth century, the amount of orchestral work in London was limited and though it would have been possible to live on what it paid, most players chose not to do so. They organised their working lives so that if one source of income were to disappear, they would not be ruined. Use of the term 'freelance' in connection with professional activity rather than chivalry or politics, started in the late nineteenth century⁴¹ but in Georgian London all but a handful of orchestral players were freelance or at least led working lives that depended on a significant freelance component. Outside the army, the main exceptions to this were the private bands maintained by the Royal Household. The players there were required to behave like courtiers, a skill not possessed by many orchestral musicians. For those who could secure the engagement, the conditions were

³⁹ Judith Milhouse, Gabriella Dideriksen and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in late Eighteenth Century London* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 424-425

⁴⁰ Orchestra contract for the 1790-91 season at the Royal Italian Opera GB-WOBbo 4.A.40

⁴¹ The OED's earliest citation for this usage is from 1882

good. They had an annual stipend of a hundred pounds, a thirty pound accommodation allowance and twenty-five pounds a year for playing at the twelve Concerts of Antient Music:

They also had each four suits of clothes, and everything appertaining to their profession - fine instruments, and able masters to instruct them when required...⁴²

This did not stop them trying to engage in freelance work on their own account. In 1788 a group of them tried to start a subscription series of private music parties. The King forbade them to proceed, saying that they were well enough paid and should rest when he did not want them to perform. This they resented: 'the Griesbachs, in particular, were quite roused'.⁴³

Musicians in less privileged positions used a theatrical engagement to provide a base income, which they supplemented from other sources. Most played either at one of the two patent theatres or one of the 'minors'. The Royal Italian Opera was better paid but its financial vagaries made it a risky proposition; some of its band wrote in 1828 that many of the best players preferred the patent theatres to the opera 'in consequence of the great uncertainty of its continuance'.⁴⁴ A patent theatre paid roughly the same amount as the opera, but in exchange for around two hundred performances rather than forty or fifty. An Irish musician, Walter Claggett, managed to make a living by being a servant of two masters. His 1784 RSM application stated: 'He plays at Covent Garden Theatre in the Winter, where he has a salary of 2.0.0. a week, and at the Theatre in the Hay Market in Sumer (sic) where he has 2.8.0'.⁴⁵ Records for 1784 are patchy, but in 1792, when Claggett was around fifty years old

⁴² Delves Broughton, *Court and Private Life* pp. 125-126

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *An Explanation of the Differences* p. 26

⁴⁵ Matthews, *The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain List of Members 1738-1984* (London: Royal Society of Musicians, 1985) pp. 36-7

and presumably still working (he died in 1798) the Haymarket theatre was open for thirteen weeks and Covent Garden for thirty-nine, giving eighty-three and 194 performances respectively.⁴⁶ Claggett would have amassed £109 4s for the two engagements.

It is difficult to be exact about most individual theatre wages because theatre accounts usually recorded the band as a single item without even the number of players being recorded. A blank pay list for the Lyceum Theatre⁴⁷ is typical: it itemises actors, singers, the sweepers and cleaners, the gas man, the box-keeper, the call-boy and the hairdresser, but accounts for the music as 'Musical Director, Leader and Band.' The 1825 accounts for the Royal Italian Opera state 'Leader, band, Dragonetti' against the £3,000 cost for the season.⁴⁸ There appear to be no reliable records from minor theatres before 1832, but in the 1830s a guinea a week was paid to players at Sadler's Wells.⁴⁹ The Covent Garden contracts for 1818 and 1819⁵⁰ are the only detailed source for that theatre. Apart from a percussionist, William Goodwin, who was paid £1 a week, players agreed a nightly rate which ranged from 5s to f14s. The commonest payments in 1818 were for 5s 10d or 6s 8d. The first oboe, William Parke, received 10s 6d and Joseph Birch, the first flute, 10 shillings. The theatre generally gave two hundred performances a season, giving an annual salary range of £50 - £140

The salary was by itself modest but left a player with 113 working days free. That figure does not include Sundays, but many men had paid church work, which increased the number of days when they might potentially work outside the theatre to 165. Those who had been trained as cathedral choristers and sang well after their voices broke could earn significant sums: in 1827, the Foundling Hospital music committee offered a Mr Goulden £40 per

⁴⁶ Charles Beecher Hogan, (ed.), *The London Stage 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968) pp. 1480-1485

⁴⁷ GB-Lbl Add MS 33819

⁴⁸ Ayrton Papers: King's Theatre accounts for 1825 GB-Lbl Add MS. 52335 fo. 61

⁴⁹ Sadler's Wells Theatre Collection, orchestra paybook for 1837 GB-Lilhc S/SWT/1/1/2 L4.211

⁵⁰ Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl Add MS 29365

annum to attend all services as a countertenor and by 1842, the singers' fees were settled at 40gn for all voices except the countertenor, who was paid £60.⁵¹

There was ample scope for augmenting earnings, but concerts frequently clashed with theatre performances, and this raises the abiding preoccupation of orchestral players and the people they worked for: the very large difference between an ordinary theatrical fee and what was paid for a concert, a distinction magnified by the fact that theatrical rehearsals were unpaid.

In the 1790s, principal players at oratorios and benefits received between £1 15s and two guineas per performance, the rank-and-file between 10s.6d and £1, occasionally £2.⁵² In 1794, the eighteen-year-old George Smart was paid 10s 6d for playing viola at Salomon's Haydn concerts,⁵³ a low fee because of his inexperience. In 1819, the Harmonic Concert in the City paid John Mackintosh £1 11s 6d per rehearsal and £2 12s 6d. for a performance.

Catalani's concerts, which were not rehearsed, paid him 15gn for six.⁵⁴ It is likely that the London-based players engaged for the the Concert of Antient Music were paid more or less the same as the £25 given to the King's Band; some receipts for fees have survived but the earliest of them is from 1820 and though the sums of money are clear, the number of performances for which they were paid was never recorded. That said, most of the receipts are for a number of complete guineas, which seems to tally with the assertion made during a court case in 1820, that a casual concert paid 'one or two guineas'.⁵⁵ A manager's strictness or laxity over time off was a critical factor in a player's livelihood. The disparity in fees and the problem of unpaid rehearsals were never satisfactorily resolved during the nineteenth century and were a source of strife that will be returned to repeatedly.

⁵¹ Minutes of the Foundling Hospital music committee 1826-1864 GB-Llma A/FH/A/3/14/2

⁵² McVeigh, *Concert Life* pp. 191-3

⁵³ Cox, H. Bertram and Cox, C.L.E (ed.), *Leaves from the Journals of Sir George Smart* (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1907) p. 3

⁵⁴ Letter from John Mackintosh to the Directors of the Philharmonic Society, 20 September 1820. GB-Lbl RPS Ms 353 fo. 242

⁵⁵ *The Statesman* 10 January 1820 p. 4

Doubling

Georgian musicians were trained as 'general practitioners'.⁵⁶ Walter Claggett played 'a great variety of instruments;' his RSM application lists eight of them including all four of the string family plus flute, oboe and bassoon. He was exceptionally versatile, but it was common enough for contracts to specify that a man should double. In 1818, thirteen of the thirty musicians at Covent Garden had doubling written into their terms of engagement. Charles Chipp played drums and harp, Samuel Pritchard played trombone, trumpet or bugle, George Hopkins offered violin and clarinett (sic) and Henry Nicholson managed the unusual combination of violin, tabor and pipe.⁵⁷ Charles Chipp made extra money tuning the theatre's pianos⁵⁸ and John Röst could easily have deputised for him; he died in 1836 'while on tour as a tuner'.⁵⁹ The versatile James Sidebetham combined double bass, violin and viola, and an unusual mixture of breathing techniques was mastered by Samuel Underhill, who performed on flute and oboe. Others contracted for a single instrument but changed their speciality between seasons. Charles Wodarch was named principal cello in 1818 but for the following season he was contracted as a violinist.⁶⁰ The following year he was listed as playing in the first violins at the Philharmonic Society and thereafter seems to have specialised.⁶¹

The King's Theatre was unique in employing nearly all its band to play a single instrument. There were a couple of exceptions to this: in 1790 Mortellari and Attwood both doubled on horn and trumpet⁶² but by 1825 the sole doubler was William Card the ottavino player, to

⁵⁶ See below pp. 229-232

⁵⁷ Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl Add MS 29365 fos. 21,17, 20,24

⁵⁸ *ibid.* fo. 38

⁵⁹ GB-LSM A309

⁶⁰ Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl Add MS 29365 fos. 4 and 53

⁶¹ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees. GB-Lbl RPS Ms 299

⁶² GB-WOBbo 4 A.40

whom it was allowed that 'when no part for him, to play the viola.'⁶³ RSM applications indicate that Thomas Harper, the first trumpet, also played horn and piano and Henry Platt doubled on horn and violin. William Wagstaff was a viola player at the opera but worked as a church organist and James Smithies, as well as managing the alto, tenor and bass trombones, was also a double bass player. It is likely that in the case of Claggett, several instruments played competently improved the prospects of a man who might not have been outstanding at any of them. John Röst's Covent Garden contract specified trumpet, horn, trombone, violin and tenor and said that he played on the stage; a likely explanation for the stipulation is that he played onstage fanfares or even acted in a spear carrying role.

Other strings to the bow

Nicholas Mori, a distinguished leader, married into a publishing firm which became Mori and Lavenue. The cellist and bass player Jacob Cervetto composed sonatas for cello and continuo, and is considered a major figure in the development of the cello as a solo instrument.⁶⁴ He was celebrated enough for Zoffany to paint him and for a satirical print of him to be marketed by Matthew Darly.⁶⁵ Charles Nicholson was an early exponent of celebrity endorsement, lending his name to flutes made by the Potter family.⁶⁶ Tebaldo Monzani, the first flute in the Royal Italian Opera had a shop in New Bond Street which supplied woodwind to the military; his company Monzani and Hill published a great many of his arrangements for flute and also a book of instruction. They sold band instruments to militias at high prices; they charged Shropshire Militia £19 for five clarinets and £35 14s. for a pair of French horns.⁶⁷ Others dealt informally, particularly in stringed instruments.

⁶³ Ayrton papers: Handwritten list of the King's Theatre band in 1825 GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 fo. 51

⁶⁴ Michael Talbot, 'Some Notes on the Life of Jacob Cervetto' *Music & Letters* 94:2, (2013), 207–236

⁶⁵ British Museum collection image J,2.70 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/75457001>

⁶⁶ Simon Waters, 'Charles Nicholson and the London Flute Market in the Early Nineteenth Century' *Galpin Society Journal* 64 (2011), pp. 67–78, 184–187

⁶⁷ Earl of Bradford military papers GB-SHRsha 6005/shyks/10/108a fo. 190/77

Robert Lindley is recorded in the records of the Forster family as purchasing four Steiner pattern cellos in 1811, two in 1812 and two more in 1813. He was known to favour another instrument, which he had christened 'Lord Nelson' and the most likely explanation for these acquisitions is that he was buying them for pupils or dealing more generally.⁶⁸ Dealing seems to have been common across the profession, even in its upper reaches. Muzio Clementi had a long association with the firm of Longman and Broderip and imported stringed instruments for sale. He sold a cello known as the Marquis of Cholmondeley for £50, which was thought a very low valuation.⁶⁹ In a few cases, making instruments and playing were combined. William Forster, who came from a family of distinguished luthiers, made several fine instruments and played the cello at the Sans Pareil theatre. He also acted, and in the 1789 Christmas season performed the role of Clown under the name of Signor Paolo, where he was celebrated for his 'new comic dance.'⁷⁰

The men who spent their days ruling the lines on commercial music paper, of whom Doane lists four, seem to have been specialists, or at least to have pursued no other musical activity. However, some instrumentalists worked as copyists and not all of them were at the lower end of the profession. Many of the compositions in Domenico Dragonetti's archive survive only in the hand of Mariotti, who appears in the 1825 band list for the King's Theatre as first trombone.⁷¹ The Philharmonic Society paid him £2 for copying during the 1813 season.⁷² This was reasonably if not generously paid work: Thomas Walker, the copyist at the opera in 1821, was paid 9d a page plus half a crown a night for putting out the music folders.⁷³ Music paper generally sold for between 3s and 3s 6d. for a quire of twenty-four sheets.⁷⁴ Allowing

⁶⁸ Sandys and Forster, *History of the Violin* pp. 336-9

⁶⁹ Ernest N. Doring, *How Many Strads? Our Heritage from the Master* (Chicago: Bein & Fushi, 1999) p.97

⁷⁰ *Morning Advertiser* 16 December 1819 p. 2

⁷¹ Dragonetti bequest GB-Lbl Add MS. 17818-17861 t

⁷² Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees GB-Lbl RPS MS 299

⁷³ Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 fo. 35

⁷⁴ Disbursements for the Royal Military Asylum, Chelsea 1823-4 GB-Lnam 2003-07-186:3

a farthing for ink and nib, a copyist who worked quickly could in a day match a performer's nightly fee at Covent Garden, and might easily combine both functions. Walker was paid £360 in 1821.⁷⁵ That seems an astonishingly high sum, but after deducting his sixty or so half-crowns for putting out the music, that budget would pay for around 9,400 written pages in a season, and if all the orchestral parts and chorus copies for half a dozen operas had to be produced in-house, this expenditure would have been necessary. We must assume that Walker was either a very quick worker or that he sub-contracted to others, who may easily have been orchestral players like Mariotti.

Teaching

The players in the Royal Italian Opera band were being disingenuous when in 1828 they said that '...there are many...whose instruments, unsuited to the private enjoyments of domestic life, seldom or never attract a single pupil'.⁷⁶ At this date, a domestic trombone or double bass would certainly have been unusual, but that does not exclude the possibility that players of those instruments took piano or violin pupils or apprentices. The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* was in no doubt about the importance of teaching to the musical economy:

If we enquire what degree of encouragement is given to English musicians, as players on various instruments, we shall find it small indeed... not only all those engaged in our orchestras employ themselves in teachings...but our leaders and solo performers find it expedient to betake themselves to the same occupation.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 fo. 61

⁷⁶ *Explanation of the Differences* p. 24

⁷⁷ QMMR vol. V p. 437

Gehardt Wedeborn, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, noted that teaching rates had fallen from a guinea or half a guinea to five shillings, perhaps because refugees from France had swollen the number of people looking for pupils.⁷⁸ Like concert fees, teaching income seems to have improved in the nineteenth century. John Ella complained of the cost of lessons in London:

In fact, there are lessons given in London at high prices, by second- and third-rate pianists, who, in Vienna, Milan, Stuttgard, (sic) Berlin, Brussels, Munich, and Paris, would be extremely fortunate to obtain half the lowest amount demanded.⁷⁹

It was rare for newspaper advertisements to mention fees, but in 1809 one unnamed teacher was advertising a rate of 2gn per quarter for piano lessons; harp lessons cost 2gn for twelve.⁸⁰ It is a fair guess that these charges were at the bottom of the scale, but even at these rates, an orchestral player who could attract a dozen pupils would earn just over £50 a year from them. If he was on the lowest pay scale at a patent theatre, earning between £55 and £60 a season, he would have been modestly comfortable. If he sang in a fashionable chapel or played in a pleasure garden as well, he might, without recourse to piano tuning or music copying, have felt himself reasonably prosperous: but he would have been very tired.

Accommodating outside work: the day band

Drury Lane's manager, Robert Elliston, professed 'his readiness in assisting any gentleman in getting an extra guinea'⁸¹ and may well have realised that a theatre which prevented its best players from taking on outside work ran the risk of losing them. Under John Kemble, Drury

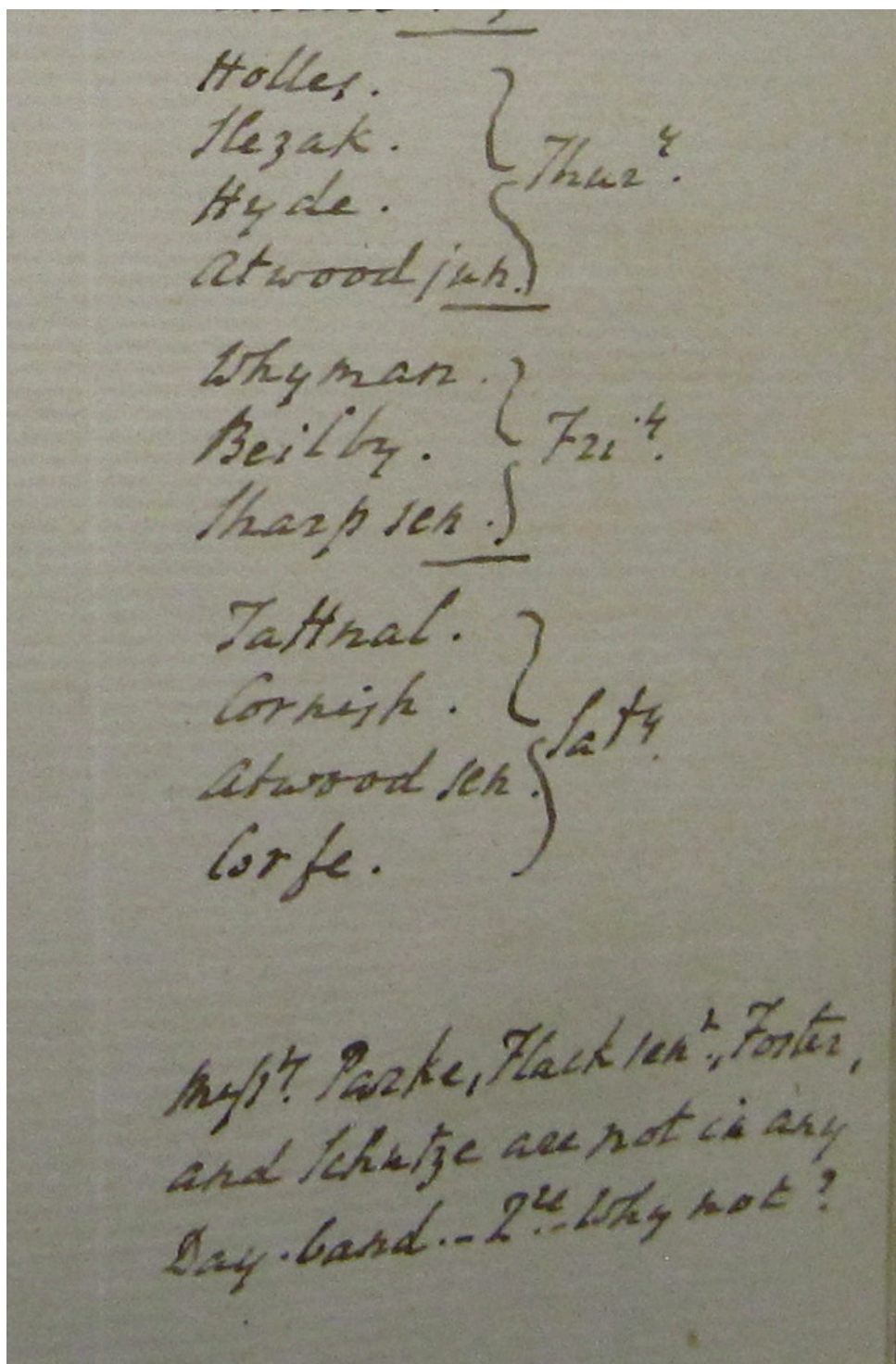
⁷⁸ Wedeborn, *A View of England* vol. 2 p. 174

⁷⁹ John Ella, *Musical Sketches Abroad and at Home* (London: William Reeves, 1878) p. 97

⁸⁰ *London Courier and Evening Gazette* 13 December 1809 p. 1

⁸¹ *The Statesman* 10 January 1820 p. 4

Lane's approach to orchestral management tacitly acknowledged this. The thirty-strong orchestra was divided into two 'half bands' and five 'day bands,' each of which was allocated



Holles.
 Hezak. } Thur.
 Hyde. }
 Atwood jun. }

 Whymar. } Fri.
 Beilby. }
 Sharp sen. }

 Tattal. } Sat.
 Cornish. }
 Atwood sen. }
 Corfe. }

 Miss^{rs} Parke, Black sen.^r, Foster,
 and Schatze are not in any
 Day-band. -- 2nd Why not?

Ill. 1.4 Detail from John Kemble's list of 'Day Bands'.
GB-Lbl Add MS 31972 p. 272

a fixed day from Monday to Saturday.⁸² No man was in more than one 'day' or 'half' band. Kemble made no note of their specific function, but it is most likely that having some players present at every rehearsal created a collective familiarity with the music in repertoire. There is no record of how often a half band was used; probably they prepared more elaborate works. For some players, the concession does not seem to have been enough. Kemble noted that Parke, Foster, Schutze and Flack senior were not in any day band and asked, 'why not?'⁸³ The answer surely lay in their outside activities. Flack's listing in Doane's Directory for 1794 states that he was in the Guards 1st regiment; his son, also called John, played principal violin as well as trombone at Drury Lane and was in the day band for Wednesday. Parke (the elder brother of William) and Foster were both oboe players. Most likely they had agreed extra absence with the leader. A successful player would have been unwilling to be available to the theatre on a Friday, a popular day for concerts, many of which were held in the mornings.

Patent or opera? John Mackintosh's calculation

In the Summer of 1820, John Mackintosh left his position as principal bassoon at Covent Garden where he had, at fourteen shillings a night, been the highest paid member of the band: Henry Kearns, the leader, was on the same nightly fee but to earn it he also worked as a repetiteur.⁸⁴ The move was not, at first sight, to Mackintosh's advantage. His 1819 Covent Garden contract⁸⁵ paid £140 per season. The per-performance rates at the King's Theatre were more generous, but the highest principal fee was only £2, and there were not enough nights in an opera season to replace the Covent Garden salary. Added to this, in August that year the opera season was curtailed because the orchestra had not been paid.

⁸² Memoranda of J.P. Kemble 1788 - 1795 GB-Lbl Add MS 31972 p. 192

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 272

⁸⁴ Covent Garden orchestral contracts GB-Lbl ADD. MS 29365 fo. 1

⁸⁵ *ibid.* fo. 45

Nevertheless, for several reasons Mackintosh was astute in making the change. He may have been finding his workload irksome: Covent Garden constantly changed repertoire. In Mackintosh's last season it put on ninety-four different works.⁸⁶ He was in demand elsewhere; he had played for the Philharmonic Society since 1815 and was established at the Concerts of Antient Music. The opera, unlike the patent theatres, had an agreement not to clash with either of these. In 1819, the Philharmonic Society paid him £28 7s.⁸⁷ There is no record of his Antient Concert fee for that year, but if it was the same as the £37.16s he made in 1831,⁸⁸ those two sources of income, added to the opera, by themselves replaced his Covent Garden salary. Provincial music festivals preferred opera players. None of the musicians whose names appear on contracts at Covent Garden for the seasons 1818-20⁸⁹ performed at the Berkshire festival in September 1819⁹⁰ even though the London Winter theatres were barely open; Covent Garden presented one performance of a comic opera, *Guy Mannering*,⁹¹ on the Friday night but Drury Lane was closed until the 25th.⁹² Despite this, the outside work went to the opera band.

The King's Theatre was physically the closest place of entertainment to St James's Palace and the opera audience included many aristocrats; the left and right sides of the theatre were called the King's Side and the Prince's Side and the list of subscribers included a great many titled heads. In a society that often measured social status by proximity to King and aristocracy, the Opera musicians were, by virtue of their position, more likely to secure well-paid private concerts. Households might occasionally

⁸⁶ GB-Lbl Egerton MS 2291 Covent Garden Theatre account book

⁸⁷ GB-Lbl RPS MS 299 Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees.

⁸⁸ Scrapbook containing 240 receipts for fees, signed by performers at the Antient Concert. The pages are not numbered, and the receipts are not in chronological order. GB-Lbl L.22.a.21

⁸⁹ Covent Garden orchestral contracts GB-Lbl Add.MS. 29365 s

⁹⁰ Sir George Smart collection GB-Lbl C.61.g.3

⁹¹ *The Globe* 18 September 1819 p. 3

⁹² *Morning Chronicle* 13 September 1819 p. 1

engage prominent orchestral players - Lindley, Nicholson and others - as soloists for a musical evening. Others organised whole concert series. William Ayrtton started one of these in March 1799, 'A Social Meeting upon friendly and national principles'⁹³ for which he kept

No. I.		
<i>The Subscribers to the Boxes at the King's Theatre, 1789.</i>		
THE KING'S SIDE,	FIRST ROW.	THE PRINCE'S SIDE.
N. Marchioness of Stafford Lady G. L. Gower Marquis of Stafford Earl Gower Earl Galloway Lord A. Hamilton E. Duchess of Richmond Hon. Mrs. Damer Duke of Richmond Lord Egremont Lord G. Cavendish 1 Lady Chatham Miss Broderick Lord Chatham Lord Apsley Robert Smith, Esq. 2 Lady Cadogan Lord Cadogan Lord Barington Lord Walsingham 3 Lady Aylesbury Lady Mary Coke Lady Mount Edgcumbe General Conway — Jerningham, Esq. 4 Mrs. Boone Mrs. Calvert C. Boone, Esq. G. Tierney, Esq. 5 Lady Fairford Lady R. Bertie Lord Fairford Lord Sandys 6 Lady Sydney Miss Mary Pelham Lord Morton — Townshend, Esq. 7 Mrs. Scrimshire Lady Dudley Lord Dudley — Barham, Esq. 8 Mrs. Barkley Lord Palmerston A. Barklay, Esq. Wm. Knatchbull, Esq. 9 Lady Yonge Lady Buck Sir Geo. Yonge — Isted, Esq. 10, 11 Lady Essex Ditto Lady Coventry Hon. Mr. St. John Lord Malden Sir Fk. Standish — Somerville, Esq. 12 Lady C. Johnson Lady Aug. Clavering Lord Harcourt Lord Rawdon 13 Marchess. of Lansdowne Marquis of Lansdowne Right Hon. Mr. Pitt Miss Vernon	STAGE. ORCHESTRA. PIT. N.B.—The new additional Boxes are marked with Letters, instead of Numbers. 14 15 Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cumberland His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland	I. Duchess of Gordon Lady C. Gordon Duke of Gordon Sir John Macpherson Hon. Col. Phipps Right Hon. Henry Dundas A. Lady Salisbury Lady Talbot Lord Talbot Lord Winchelsea Lord Duncannon 28 Lady Hawkesbury Lady Mary Duncan Miss Cope Lord Hawkesbury Lord Aberdeen 27 Mrs. Weddell Hon. Mrs. Watson Hon. Mr. Watson Sir John Ramsden 26 Lady M. Churchill Lord Buckinghamshire James Bradshaw, Esq. Richard Cox, Esq. George Ellis, Esq. 25 Lady B. Tollemache Ditto Lady L. Manners Duke of Queensberry 24 Hon. Mrs. Hobart Lady Lonsdale — Cooke, Esq. — Sullivan, Esq. 23 Hon. Mrs. Cornwallis Hon. Mrs. Townshend Lady North Lord North 22 Duchess of Hamilton Lady Louvaine Duke of Hamilton — McDowell, Esq. 21 Lady Dinevor Mrs. Pitt M. W. Pitt, Esq. W. Markham, Esq. 20 Duchess of St. Albans Lady Cath. Beauclerc Duke of St. Albans Thomas Brand, Esq. 19 Lady M. Fordyce Marquis of Carmarthen Lord Molesworth — Hamilton, Esq. Lady E. York 18 Mrs. Ellis Mrs. Viner Hon. W. Ellis Lord Petre General Paoli 16, 17 Lady Melbourne Lady Fauconberg Lord Melbourne Lord Fauconberg Lord Mulgrave Sir R. Milbank Hon. Mr. Wyndham

Ill. 1.5 Partial list of subscribers to boxes at the opera.
From John Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre*
(London: William Harrison Ainsworth, 1827) p.379

⁹³ Ayrtton papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52345 fos. ii and 7

elaborate minutes, detailed programmes and rehearsal timetables. Ayrton's were small, primarily vocal affairs but others engaged a modest band.⁹⁴ In April 1831 the poet Stefano Petroni and the composer Giovanni Liverati celebrated the birth of Petroni's daughter by putting on their opera *Psiche* at a private party.⁹⁵ There was a band of nine, from the King's Theatre: Spagnoletti led, Lindley played cello and Willman was the clarinettist. In the wealthiest homes, full-sized orchestral concerts were held for audiences of up to five hundred. Though theoretically private, these were often advertised and reviewed in the press; the account of an event at Devonshire House in May 1804 named a few of the orchestra, including the flautist Monzani and the trombone player Mariotti; they 'acquitted themselves with great credit' and the concert ended at 2am.⁹⁶ At these large affairs a conductor, very often George Smart, engaged performers and decided the programmes.⁹⁷ Smart's usually meticulous record-keeping did not extend to noting how much individual players were paid, but it is reasonable to suppose that the fees were good. The sums expended on such events were prodigious. In 1821 Mrs Coutts, the owner of Coutts's Bank, engaged 'all the vocal talent in London' as well as the ballet company of the Royal Italian Opera, whose performance concluded the amusements before supper. Given all this activity, it is likely that frequent requests for leave of absence from Covent Garden had become a source of tension for John Mackintosh and made the move more attractive.

Recruitment

The musical director in a theatre was usually responsible for engaging the band, though at the Pantheon in the 1780s, Luigi Borghi, the assistant manager fulfilled this function.⁹⁸ Occasionally he and his assistants recruited orchestral players during trips abroad in search of

⁹⁴ *QMMR* vol. VI pp. 224-232

⁹⁵ Privately printed programme GB-Lbl H.2831.c.(47.)

⁹⁶ *Morning Post* 12 May 1804 p. 4

⁹⁷ *QMMR* vol. V p. 252

⁹⁸ Price, 'Italian Opera and Arson in Late Eighteenth-Century London', pp. 62-63

singers and dancers. Paolo Spagnoletti, who from 1815 was leader at the King's Theatre, was brought from Milan to London in 1802 by a tenor called Vagnoni and installed in the second violins there. An influential figure might intercede on a player's behalf; in 1817, Antonio Benelli wrote a slightly petulant letter to William Ayrton on the letterhead of the Théâtre Royal Italien in Paris:

Since you never replied to me, allow me at least to present to you an artist in the person of Monsieur Ranieri Nanni, professor of oboe and other instruments, who is coming to London to give some concerts. If you could be agreeable to him, you would oblige me greatly.

(Comme vous ne m'avez jamais répondu permettez-moi au moins de vous adresser un artiste dans la personne de Monsieur Ranieri Nanni, professeur d'hautbois et autres instruments, qui vient a Londres pour donner des concerts. Si vous pouviez lui être agréable vous m'obligerez beaucoup).⁹⁹

It is not clear whether Benelli was pleading Nanni's cause for a position at the opera or in private concerts, but however *agréable* or otherwise Ayrton was disposed to be, no record of any appearance in London by Nanni appears to have survived. Ayrton's relationship with Benelli had suffered when the Italian tried to secure a performance of one of his operas by giving extravagant gifts of coffee and champagne; this, wrote Ayrton, was 'injurious to his feelings' and he may have been disinclined to help.

The impact of foreign competition seems to have been felt less by orchestral musicians than others. McVeigh ascribes a drop in fees in the 1790s to an influx of refugees from the French

⁹⁹ Letter from Antonio Benelli to William Ayrton, 14 February 1817 GB-Lbl Add. MS 52336 fo. 25

revolution.¹⁰⁰ That was probably so in the case of concerts or private events, but the opera band personnel did not change significantly in those years. In 1790, the band contained twenty-three British players, twelve Italians, three Germans and two Frenchmen.¹⁰¹ In 1791-2 there were few changes: twenty-four were British, eleven were Italian, three were French and two were German.¹⁰² The proportion of foreigners fell over the next thirty years. By 1825 the King's Theatre band had grown to fifty-five and contained fourteen players with foreign names, though the two oboes, Wilton and Sergio were only employed 'till the arrival of the new ones from Paris'. It is questionable whether all those with foreign names could reasonably be described as foreign. The Griesbachs (of whom the band employed two) were from a family that had been resident in London for at least two generations and Dragonetti, who had moved to London in 1794, was hardly an *arriviste* despite his persistent refusal to learn English properly. At the patent theatres, the proportion of foreigners was smaller. In 1794-5, the thirty-strong band at Drury Lane had only six foreign members; Castello, Dressler, Flezak, Schram and Schutze.¹⁰³ Of the 40 musicians contracted by Covent Garden in 1818-20, only John Röst, whose RSM record confirms that he was German, and J.C.H. Hoffmann have foreign names; the others - Underhill, Spencer, Woodcock and so forth - are unambiguously British.

That is surprising. In most areas of the profession, Ehrlich's assertion that foreigners 'were present at every growth point of the new music market' holds true.¹⁰⁴ In the orchestral sphere, illusory overseas competition still caused anxiety; in 1822 Paul Spagnoletti complained about rumours that foreign players had been brought into the Philharmonic

¹⁰⁰ McVeigh, *Concert Life in London* p. 173

¹⁰¹ Royal Italian Opera pay lists GB-WOBbo 2.A.34

¹⁰² Royal Italian Opera pay lists GB-WOBbo 2.A.33

¹⁰³ Memoranda of J.P. Kemble 1788-1795 GB-Lbl Add MS 31972 pp. 270-272

¹⁰⁴ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 17

Society and paid higher rates than those resident in London,¹⁰⁵ and two years later a letter from John Mackintosh, accepting the Society's terms showed that the worry was still present:

I certainly cannot have the least objection, therefore understanding that I am to be paid nightly as much as any Wind Instrument Performer. I engage on those terms, and the plan is more satisfactory to me than paying the English Performer less than the Foreign Performer.¹⁰⁶

The society's accounts for 1821-1824 show that fee differentials were based only on where a player sat in the section,¹⁰⁷ but anxieties suggest that players would exclude foreigners wherever they could. They could do nothing about an aristocrat choosing to engage an overseas soloist for a musical soirée, but when it came to staffing orchestras, their opinions were listened to, and they were sometimes allowed to make judgements about recruitment.

In 1823 the Philharmonic Society directors delegated a decision:

Resolved that Mr. Ling be written to offering him the situation of first oboe...provided he cannot accept it, the secretary write to Mr Willman [the first clarinet] to bring some person on Monday.¹⁰⁸

That level of trust gave Willman the opportunity, were he so inclined, to ensure that a British player obtained the engagement. It is also possible that expatriate players formed alliances.

In May 1821, William Ayrton acceded to a request that he employ Puzzi. It had been made by the Petride brothers, who played third and fourth horns in his orchestra.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Paul Spagnoletti to the directors of the Philharmonic Society Lbl RPS MS 364 fo. 156

¹⁰⁶ Letter from John Mackintosh to the directors of the Philharmonic Society Lbl RPS MS 353 fo. 243

¹⁰⁷ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees Lbl RPS MS 299

¹⁰⁸ Philharmonic Society Directors' minute book GB-Lbl. RPS MS 280 p. 27

¹⁰⁹ Ayrton Papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 115

the opinion of...able musicians is always valuable and must be given due weight with those who have to direct so important a public concern as the King's Theatre.¹¹⁰

Puzzi was at that time already something of a celebrity; '...the matchless Signor Puzzi whose performance on the French-horn created such enthusiastic wonder at the Philharmonics'¹¹¹ but even so, Ayrton was wise to follow the advice of other horn players. An accomplished soloist is not necessarily a good orchestral player, and it can be as dismaying to play alongside a virtuoso with poor ensemble skills as to work with someone who cannot play the instrument properly.

Arrivals from outside London sometimes underwent an informal trial at social events. At the Anacreontic Society at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand 'all the flower of the musical profession assisted as honorary members'.¹¹² McVeigh suggests that the society played a role in the capital's musical life:

The society indeed played a vital role in vetting artistic policy, part of a chain of legitimization by London's taste-leaders and connoisseurs...¹¹³

One wonders how beneficial the drinking-club aspect of the Society was to members' artistic judgement. These gatherings were certainly a way for foreign incomers to present themselves to upper class patrons. For most, the chances of being taken up by the fashionable set were negligible, but it was at such events that contacts and alliances of other kinds were to be formed. Bashford speculates that John Ella's ingress to the London profession may have been managed through an apprenticeship to a certain François Fémy, with whom he shared an

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* fos. 19-20

¹¹¹ *Bell's Weekly Messenger* 11 May 1817 p. 8

¹¹² Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 81

¹¹³ Simon McVeigh, 'Trial by Dining Club' in: Zon, *Bennett Music and Performance Culture in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Farnham: Routledge, 2012) pp.105-138

address. He occasionally deputised for him at the Philharmonic Society and must have been noticed by Spagnoletti. One evening, a violinist at the Royal Italian Opera was taken ill:

Marshall... having suddenly been seized by a fit, Spagnoletti sent for me, to Queen St. Soho No 6, desiring me, at the same time, to come to the orchestra in full dress...¹¹⁴

From 1823, Ella was established in the orchestra at the King's Theatre and remained there for twenty-five years. At lower levels of the profession, recruitment and the organisation of deputies were probably managed in taverns or coffee houses. It is quite likely that musicians' gatherings were like those between actors, described in 1825 by Pierce Egan:

In Passion Week, all the managers who want people, and all the actors who want employment, assemble in London. One evening I sauntered into a room at the O.P. and P.S., their usual rendezvous, where I met with a motley group of at least fifty...¹¹⁵

The trade of music

If an orchestral player died young, the RSM apprenticed his orphans to trades not professions. The trombonist James Smithies succumbed to consumption in his early thirties; his son became a bricklayer in Brighton and his daughter was apprenticed to a Regent Street milliner.¹¹⁶ The orphans of Charles Cobham, a violinist and tenor player at Drury Lane who died in 1819, became a tailor, a piano maker and a jeweller.¹¹⁷ Musicians expressed themselves in the language of trade; concerts or operas were 'speculations' and during a dispute between the Royal Italian Opera orchestra and the King's Theatre, the band wrote:

¹¹⁴ GB-Ob EllaC MS 81 fo. 3

¹¹⁵ Pierce Egan, *The Life of an Actor* (London: C.S. Arnold, 1825) pp. 114-119

¹¹⁶ GB-Lsm 352A

¹¹⁷ GB-Lsm A155

'We deny not Mr. Laporte the freedom of the "market"; nor can he fairly refuse us the privilege of telling our *retail* customers the reasons of our having lost a valuable *wholesale* dealer'.¹¹⁸ The Philharmonic Society's correspondence and committee minutes returned again and again to remuneration; talk of artistic matters was rare except as a means to assert a player's standing and garner a correspondingly higher fee. Puzzi, a more distinguished musician than many of his orchestral colleagues, was businesslike in the correspondence that he conducted, in an eccentric style of French:

I will be flattered to accept an engagement...on the same terms that I engaged at the City Concerts, that is to say Five Guineas per evening including the rehearsal, in case of concertante solos an increase of two guineas likewise for all other rehearsals, to try new pieces...provided these extra rehearsals do not harm my other engagements...I will engage to be at their absolute disposal for Fifty Guineas.

je serez flattè d'accepter un engagement...sous les même termes que je suis engagé au Concerts de la cité, c'ette a dire Cinque Guineas par soirées y compris sa repetition, en cas de solos en partie Concertante une augmentation de deux guineas ainsi que pour tout autre repetitions, pour faire preuve des nouvelles pièce...attendu que ces extrat repetitions peuvent nuire a mes autre engagement...je m'engagerèz a être a leur dispositions absolu...pour Cinquante Guineas¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Explanation of the Differences* p. iv

¹¹⁹ Letter from Giovanni Puzzi to the Philharmonic Society directors GB-Lbl RPS MS 305 fo. 237

Like other skilled workers - for whom beer was commonly part of the wage - they were sometimes paid in kind. When Thomas Harper complained that his earnings as first trumpet at the opera were too low, the management gave him a pair of pit admissions which he sold for £25, probably at the Opera Colonnade shop of Charles Wright who dealt in such things.¹²⁰ This kind of arrangement was common - the players remarked on John Ebers's liberality with admissions - and it extended to star players; Domenico Dragonetti's 1820 salary of £150 was supplemented with free use of '*un ticketto d'intrata*' whose value he calculated at £20. When the management asked the orchestra to give some performances *gratis*, he at first demurred but then agreed to forgo his free ticket - without making any other concessions.¹²¹

It is easy to be misled as to musicians' earnings by their habit of bewailing their lot during negotiations. In 1820, John Mackintosh wrote to the Philharmonic Society, trying to increase his rehearsal fee from the guinea that was usually paid:

...the bassoon is never exempted except in those pieces
expressly for string instruments...generally so exhausted...that I
have a difficulty to walk home.¹²²

The directors ignored the letter. Two years later, he wrote again saying the walk was now so distressing for a bassoonist in middle age that 'I am not inclined to sacrifice my life for such a sum.'¹²³ This letter, too, elicited no written response. Mackintosh's frailty was overstated: he spent the summer of 1828 touring the country on mail coaches, playing for the ten musical festivals that were mounted that year.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ *Morning Post* 17 February 1827 p. 1

¹²¹ Letter from Domenico Dragonetti to William Ayrton GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 114

¹²² Letter from John Mackintosh to the Directors of the Philharmonic Society 20 September 1820
GB-Lbl RPS MS 353 fo. 241

¹²³ *ibid.* fo.242 Letter from John Mackintosh to the Directors of the Philharmonic Society 21 November 1822

¹²⁴ See below, Chapter 5



III. 1.6 Cartoon by George Cruikshank of Mendoza at the Old Prices riots.
British Museum prints, No. 1868,0808.7887
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7887
© The trustees of the British Museum

In 1809, During the Old Prices riots at Covent Garden, John Kemble gave tickets to Daniel Mendoza, Dutch Sam 'and such other of the pugilistic tribe as would attend' and had them attack the audience.¹²⁵ It was an ugly incident and it prompted Robert Cruikshank to draw an ugly cartoon of it called *Killing No Murder*.¹²⁶ On the right of the picture there is a cameo of three orchestral players, watching from behind the spiked pit rail. One looks on in apparent annoyance, another rolls his eyes heavenward while a third, younger and sporting a pair of round spectacles, views the scene with an expression that might as easily be amusement as

¹²⁵ *Bell's Weekly Messenger* 15 October 1809 p. 7

¹²⁶ British Museum prints, No.1868,0808.7887
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0808-7887
 © The trustees of the British Museum

fear. He is suggested by a few lines, a modern-looking image that could be the work of George Herriman or Chic Young. None of them looks surprised: the O.P. riots (as they became known) were remarkable for being so persistent, not for the fact that they happened. Audiences were routinely noisy or violent, as Harriet Arbuthnot recalled after a performance at the Adelphi:

The people were hollowing & talking to each other from the pit to the gallery, & fighting & throwing oranges at each other. The play itself was a representation of all the low scenes in London... but it is impossible to describe the sort of enthusiasm with which it was received.¹²⁷

John Kemble's sister, Mrs Siddons, thought audience noise helped her performances: 'a cold and respectful audience chills and deadens the actress'¹²⁸ but the constant hubbub must have been wearing for the musicians. Sometimes the orchestra pit was perilous: lemons, apples, pennies, horns, sticks, and pieces of pit-benches were shied at the Covent Garden stage in 1809¹²⁹ - and the musicians were in the line of fire. The entertainments themselves could be dangerous; the Sadler's Wells Races on 15 June 1827 started on the stage of the Aquatic Theatre with horses chasing over a bridge across the orchestra pit.¹³⁰ The environment was insalubrious in other ways. Benjamin Wyatt, who designed the new Drury Lane theatre after the 1809 fire, described the 'disgusting indecency' of audience behaviour, and proposed abolishing the 'basket boxes' that were used by prostitutes - though he did suggest creating a suite of rooms in another part of the building where their trade might be carried on.¹³¹ As

¹²⁷ Francis Bamford and the Duke of Wellington (eds.), *The Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot* (London, Macmillan Co. 1950) vol.1 p. 144

¹²⁸ Quoted in p. 172

¹²⁹ *ibid.* p. 33

¹³⁰ Sadler's Wells Theatre Collection GB-Lilhc S/SWT/1/1/21

¹³¹ Benjamin Wyatt, *Observations on the Principles of Design for a Theatre* (London: Lowndes and Hobbs, 1811) pp. 37-39



III. 1.7 Theodore Lane, *Theatrical Pleasures* British Museum print 1594705001 n.d.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1935-0522-7-169
 © The trustees of the British Museum

Michael Burden reveals in his entertaining study of the cloacal aspects of opera, even if the audience was quiet, it did not usually smell good.¹³² Upmarket entertainments were more

¹³² See Burden, *Pots, privies and WCs*.

genteel, but not much. The courtesan Harriette Wilson wrote that 'At the opera I learned to be a complete flirt'¹³³ and she did not study alone.¹³⁴ The 'puppies in pantaloons'¹³⁵ who noisily met and greeted each other in the part of the theatre known as 'fop alley' and who 'were seen taking snuff in the midst of the tempestuous ocean or intruding their plush breeches among Graces and Fawns'¹³⁶ were no more than a distraction, but the audience could become rowdy when displeased and, as will be shown in chapter 2, were not averse to stopping a performance and debating with the performers on stage.¹³⁷

As mechanics in a noisy workplace, Georgian musicians needed to be robust, and there is plenty of evidence that they were. Parke described a certain Parkinson who, he said: '...had studied the bassoon so much he had quite neglected the graces, had a rough exterior and was by no means polished in his manners'.¹³⁸ When in 1833 Sir George Smart tried to engage a bass trombonist called Albrecht for a concert in aid of the Philanthropic Society, he found that his preferred player was in prison.¹³⁹ Alexander Ferlendis 'was a hautboy player at the opera; and when not engaged in his musical labours, he was in the habit of going behind the scenes and causing considerable riot and confusion'. He landed in court after shouting during a performance, then shaking the stage manager by the collar and challenging him to fight.¹⁴⁰ Cervetto, a bass player at Drury Lane in Garrick's time, had a prominent Roman nose which earned him the nickname of 'Nosey' among the regulars in the gallery, who would call out 'play up Nosey' if the play bored them. One evening, 'Nosey' lost his temper:

...one night, during his performance in the orchestra, received a violent blow on the nose with a potatoe, thrown from the upper

¹³³ Harriette Wilson, *Memoirs* (London: W. Dugdale, 1829) p. 18

¹³⁴ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre* Appendix

¹³⁵ GB-Lbl Th.cts.42

¹³⁶ *The Examiner* 9 May 1813 p. 297

¹³⁷ See below, p. 98

¹³⁸ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 142.

¹³⁹ Annotation in accounting sheet for the concert Lbl C.61.h.4.(1.) For illustration see below p. 284

¹⁴⁰ Not catalogued. The year of the cutting is not clearly written but is probably 1814 GB-Lbl Th.cts 41,42,43.

gallery...he ran up into the gallery, and asked who was the scoundrel that had dared thus to assault him; the man being pointed out, Cervetto seized him by the collar, dragged him into the passage, and gave him a hearty drubbing.¹⁴¹

Variations on this story appear in several sources. Whether it is true or not is beside the point: what matters is that it was thought worth telling and likely to be believed.

A forceful mode of expression was common. Even allowing for the combative style of discourse that prevailed in those days, the reaction of the Drury Lane band to a court case over deputies¹⁴² was impressive in its vituperation:

...did not exhibit that *snivelling* thankfulness mentioned in the Report when the Prosecutor and his Informer were FORCED to abandon the charge, as untenable...this disgraceful piece of Managerial Intolerance, who dared to force artists of superior character and Connections to appear at a *Common Police-Office* (the tribunal for thieves and vagabonds,) to answer to a frivolous and nonsensical charge.¹⁴³

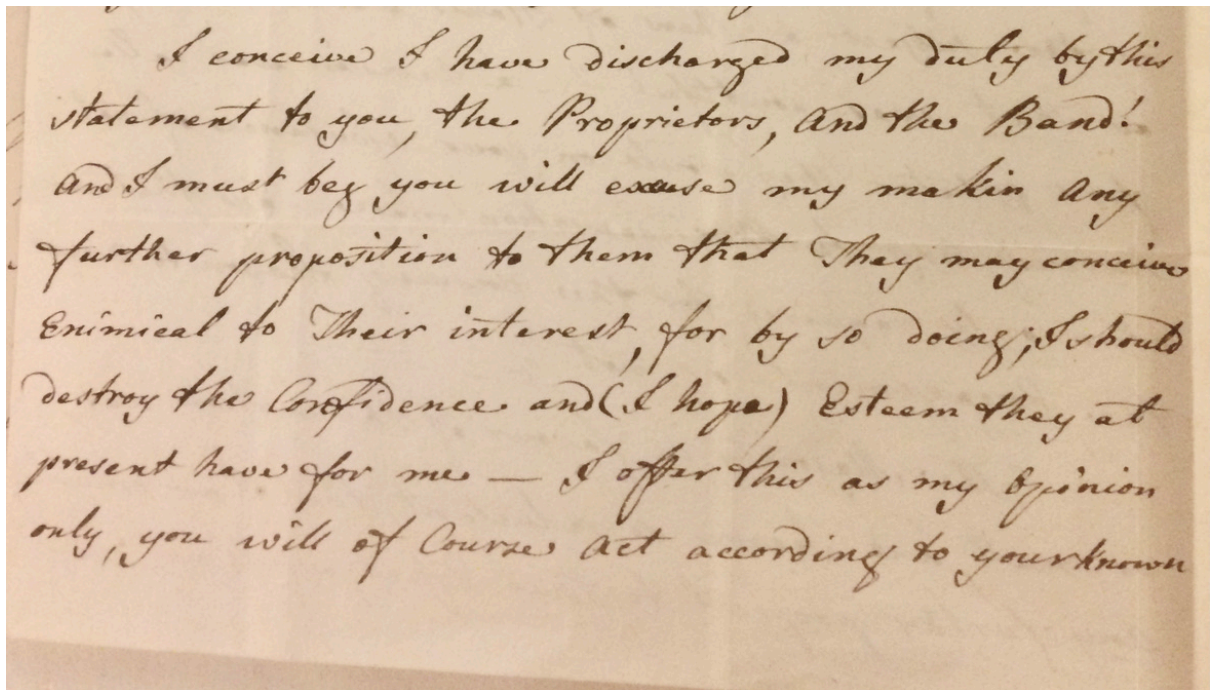
Negotiations over pay were often conducted in a robust manner. When John Ebers took over management of the Opera in 1820, he requested that the band play for three performances in a season without payment. The leader, Paul Spagnoletti, acted as intermediary between the band and the musical director, William Ayrton. Discussions became so acrimonious that Spagnoletti withdrew:

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Michael Talbot, 'Some Notes on the Life of Jacob Cervetto', *Music & Letters*, 94:2, (2013) 222

¹⁴² See below, p. 284

¹⁴³ *British Stage and Literary Cabinet* February 1821 p. 53

I conceive I have discharged my duty by this statement to you, the Proprietors, and the Band and I must beg you will excuse my making any further proposition to them that they may conceive enimical (sic) to their interest, for by so doing I should destroy the confidence and (I hope) esteem they at present have for me¹⁴⁴



Ill.1.8 Detail of a letter from Paul Spagnoletti to William Ayrton 21 January 1821.
GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 21

Players could be insubordinate and disruptive in rehearsal. In 1779, Charles Burney's daughter Susannah described a rehearsal at the King's Theatre:

- The wind instruments were all out of tune & tho' I pitied poor Cramer 'twas impossible not to laugh. After repeatedly desiring the French Horn players to make their Instruments sharper, at last he called out...'Gentlemen you are not in tune at

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Paul Spagnoletti to William Ayrton 21 January 1821. GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 21

all'. 'It's a very sharp morning, Sir' said one of them. 'We shall do better another time'. It was suggested that a different crook be tried. It worked. 'Very well, Sir,...I'll be sure to use it'.¹⁴⁵

Later, the first bassoon started disregarding the key signature when his part changed clef. Burney called the player a 'dolt and a stupid useless wretch,' but such egregious errors were hardly likely to occur accidentally. Burney herself provided details that accounted more plausibly for the trouble. It was November, the theatre was not heated, and the castrato Gasparo Pacchierotti gave 'two or three jumps to warm himself' and then, while singing, indulged in a little clowning with his hat and interjected:

'C'est bien froid' and then, to excuse his exhibition I suppose, 'tres froid enverite'. (sic)¹⁴⁶

A theatre cold enough to encourage callisthenics is explanation enough for poor wind intonation. Things were made worse by Pacchierotti marking his part:

At first we had seated ourselves in a very obscure part of the Pitt (sic) - but when Pacchierotti began his Cavatina, he sung, tho' Divinely, so Piano that we moved nearer the Orchestra.¹⁴⁷

Rehearsal would have been impossible if the soloist was inaudible, and it is most likely that the whole episode was a piece of horseplay by disaffected musicians who found themselves throwing together a *pasticcio* in a cold theatre, trying to accompany a soloist who was fooling around and whom they could not hear.

Motivation

It is a mistake to see musicians' complex portfolio careers simply as a response to economic imperatives. There were certainly financial motives behind musicians' diversity of

¹⁴⁵ Sender's MS copy of letter from Susannah Burney (Phillips) to Fanny Burney (d'Arblay) GB-Lbl Egerton MS 3691 p. 575

¹⁴⁶ *ibid* pp. 575-6

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*. p. 574

occupations; in a freelance diary, nature abhors a vacuum and a fee earned is preferable to a day's unprofitable inactivity. Mokyr makes the important point that non-specialisation was characteristic of English commercial culture:

Rather than a sharply focused owner-manager who spent his entire life on the one business he built, the typical entrepreneur of the age of the Industrial Revolution diversified into non-core ventures.¹⁴⁸

It is not certain that London's orchestral players were aware of northern cotton masters who became directors of insurance companies and canals, or that they cared very much about shipbuilding profits that were channelled into breweries, but they certainly knew 'effective' soldiers who had diversified into clarinet playing, and Forster's antics as Clown at the Sans Pareil must have been widely talked about in band rooms around the West End. They might have traded instruments with John Hart, a luthier who at the end of the 1820s had worked at Lang's Shooting Gallery next to the King's Theatre and later opened a shop selling violins and shotguns. From the 1820s all of them knew that John Ebers, a successful Bond Street bookseller with a postal lending library¹⁴⁹ had suddenly and catastrophically decided to manage an opera house. It is best to see their varied activities as cultural entrepreneurship, with men moving easily between trades, and following interests that sometimes were materially advantageous but prompted by complex considerations. It is not credible that Forster went on the stage because of economic need. He could have enjoyed a tranquil existence making fine violins but had a notoriously 'hasty temper.'¹⁵⁰ Similarly, whatever Röst made from his piano-tuning journeys, it is possible that he simply found it more congenial to be out of London for the Summer. There was, after all, no shortage of pianos for

¹⁴⁸ Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy* p. 386

¹⁴⁹ Catalogues for Ebers's Lending Library 1813-1816 GB-Lbl General Reference Collection 1609/3757

¹⁵⁰ William Sandys and Simon Forster, *The History of the Violin* (London: William Reeves, 1864). p. 363

him to tune in the metropolis.¹⁵¹ It is important not to dismiss these diversifications as entertaining colour. A certain vagrant tendency among freelancers is important to our understanding of what went wrong in the 1820s. A man assembling a living from a diversity of sources was less likely to identify with, or be loyal to, any one employer and in any business market share is important. The temptation to garner as many sources of work would have been strong; but as London grew, and with it the potential audience for music, the amount of work available caused musicians' taste for independence to run out of control.

¹⁵¹ See Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano, a History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990)

2. A culture of absenteeism: orchestral decline in the 1820s

In the 1820s, standards fell, sometimes calamitously. There is no evidence that individual skills deteriorated but the quality of orchestras declined. The root of the problem was the structural flaw in the industry that has already been discussed: concerts were much better paid than theatrical performances and, aside from the Philharmonic society, rehearsals were not paid at all. It irritated players but worked well enough in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because the number of concerts was modest, and the population of instrumentalists was large enough to meet demand. From roughly 1820, concerts became more numerous, and the balance of the profession was disturbed. This chapter examines the general deterioration and several public crises brought about by musicians' absenteeism.

Urban and musical growth

Between the first census of 1801 and the fourth in 1831, London's population grew from 959,310 to 1,655,582.¹ Between 1800 and 1832, eleven new theatres were built.² It is difficult to translate that expansion into player numbers. There were probably around 150 theatre musicians in London at the end of the eighteenth century. For the 1767-8 season, Covent Garden retained twenty-four players,³ the Drury Lane band in 1790-91 and 1794-5 was thirty strong⁴ and at the 1809 reopening of Covent Garden, the band consisted of twenty-eight strings, eight woodwind, five brass, three percussion and a piano. As the record gives the number of instruments, not of players, we cannot be sure how many of this tally were doublings, but by 1818 the number of musicians engaged was certainly thirty.⁵ In 1790, the opera band numbered thirty-six⁶ but by 1825 it had expanded to fifty-five and in composition

¹ Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert (eds.), *The London Encyclopaedia* (London: Macmillan, 1983) p. 614

² Dewey Ganzel, 'Patent Wrongs and Patent Theatres: Drama and the Law in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 76:4 (1961), 384-396

³ MS copy of Covent Garden theatre names and salaries from the Murphy papers. GB-Lbl Th. Cts 38

⁴ Memoranda of J.P. Kemble vol. 1 1788-1795 GB-Lbl Add MS 31972 pp.192 and 272

⁵ Henry Saxe Wyndham, *The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre from 1732 to 1897* (London: Chatto and Windus 1906) vol. 1 p. 336

⁶ GB-WOBbo 4.A.40

corresponded almost exactly to the forces needed to play Beethoven's fifth symphony. There is little information on minor theatres, but from a survey of illustrations of theatre interiors, Michael Pisani concludes that the average size was twelve.⁷ Notes made by George



Ill. 2.1 Detail of a sketch of a theatre interior by George Cruikshank
British Museum prints 1972,U.561
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1972-U-561
© The trustees of the British Museum

⁷ Michael V. Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in London and New York* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014) p. 128

Cruikshank recording the height of stands and the number of drums on a sketch of an unnamed theatre suggest a slightly larger band,⁸ though this may have been for opera.

Not all the entertainment that the new theatres offered used music. At the end of the eighteenth century, the Lyceum was presenting such diversions as 'a public assault' by two fencing masters, an exhibition of 'the imperial sheep' that was agreed to be 'equal in utility with any English sheep'⁹ and in 1802 it held the first British exhibition of Madame Tussaud's waxworks. Early in the nineteenth century, however, it started presenting operetta and farce. In 1815 it was renamed the Theatre Royal English Opera House. By the 1820s, the amount of work it was offering its band was roughly the same as that at the patent theatres. George Bolwell Davidge, the proprietor of the Coburg Theatre, recalled in 1830 that at the turn of the century the usual fare had been 'Pantomime, and excessively loose rhymes to the jingle of a piano-forte' but he thought public taste was now too elevated for such things; he was himself employing an orchestra.¹⁰ The technical distinctions that can be made between plays with music, melo-dramas and burlettas need not concern us here. All of them engaged a band, as did the more loosely defined 'grand spectacles' and demonstrations of trick horse riding presented by Astley's Amphitheatre and other arenas.

The growth in concert giving

Increased employment in theatres would not, by itself, have caused problems beyond difficulty of recruiting enough players. The crisis was precipitated when concerts, which clashed, became more numerous. In 1820, *Sketch of the State of Music in London*¹¹ noted a new series of six concerts at the Argyll Rooms. Their relative brevity, two and a half hours,

⁸ British Museum prints 1972,U.561 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1972-U-561

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⁹ GB-Lbl Th cts 44

¹⁰ London, House of Commons *Report from the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature* p. 76

¹¹ QMMR 1820 vol. 2 pp. 373- 391

was welcomed but the writer hoped they would not harm the Philharmonic Society. Despite uncertainty about potential audiences, single concerts and other entertainments increased throughout the ensuing decade. Weber calculates that by the 1826-7 season there were 125 concerts of all kinds in London,¹² of which benefits were the most numerous. This represented a fourfold increase over the number at the end of the eighteenth century and is unlikely to be a complete picture: other entertainments, such as pleasure garden concerts, also increased though detailed documentation of these is sparse. The *Sketch* concentrated its commentary on the upper end of the market but much, perhaps most, of the new demand came from the lower and middle classes that Raynor calls '...a whole population which for generations grew up divorced from any traditions of culture, general or musical'.¹³ It was around this time that the gap between 'serious' and 'popular' music became apparent; Raynor calls it 'the great schism'. There was another great schism, between the wealthy audiences of polite society and more numerous 'middling folk'. Repertoire did not divide along class lines. As early as the 1780s, Handel was popular with factory workers and by 1824 the cotton spinners at Cresbrook in Debyshire were said to be devoted to 'this delightfully intellectual source of pleasure'.¹⁴ Whether or not the same was true of lower-class Londoners, there was a general increase in the amount of entertainment provided for them and as far as employment for musicians was concerned, that was all that mattered.

Ehrlich and Weber both see the 1830s as a time of transformation in the makeup of audiences, in the entertainments on offer and in the working patterns of musicians but, in the orchestral profession, the pressures that brought about those changes accumulated over the preceding decade, so that the 1820s were a time of conflict between the old working practices

¹² William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class* (London: Croom Helm, 1975) p. 16

¹³ Henry Raynor, *Music and Society Since 1815*. (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976) p. 151

¹⁴ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*. (London: Routledge, 2016) p. 103

and increased demand. That resulted in greater use of deputies and this in turn reduced the ability of orchestras to play well together.

Managements had an ambivalent attitude towards deputising; Covent Garden contracts pointedly italicised their requirement that a musician: '...attend *personally* and punctually to the duties of the above situation during the whole of every night's performance... and to every rehearsal that he may be called to...' ¹⁵ but it was understood, in some quarters at least, that low theatre wages made outside work essential. We do not know if Covent Garden operated a 'day band' system like the one at Drury Lane but at both patent theatres, absence from a performance was usually allowed, 'on sending an efficient Deputy'. ¹⁶ At the opera under Ebers, a principal player could expect to be let off two or three performances in a season. ¹⁷ For a long time, these arrangements worked, but when outside work expanded, chaos broke out as musicians began to treat their principal engagement not as a mainstay but as a basic income in lean times, to be mistreated when other engagements were plentiful.

The practicalities of deputising

It is all but impossible to say whether the musicians who acted as deputies were a floating population of freelancers or members of other orchestras. Their names were not usually written down and there are only a few records of men engaged directly by theatres. In 1793 Drury Lane employed six supernumeraries for its oratorio season, ¹⁸ none of whose names appear in the King's Theatre list for the previous year. ¹⁹ One of them, a bassoonist called Holmes, had been working at Sadler's Wells nine years earlier and a trombonist called Zwingmann was a member of the Drury Lane orchestra by 1798, when he joined the RSM.

¹⁵ Covent Garden orchestral contracts GB-Lbl Add MS 29365

¹⁶ *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* vol. V No.L February 1821 p. 52

¹⁷ *Explanation of the differences* p. 28

¹⁸ Charles Beecher Hogan (ed.), *The London Stage 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968) pp.1480-1485

¹⁹ GB-WOBbo 2.A.34-44

They may have been recruited from Covent Garden or, conceivably a minor theatre. In 1798, Drury Lane paid £18.15s to the trombone player Mariotti for twenty-five performances of *The Pirates*, a rate of fifteen shillings per performance.²⁰ This was the same as was paid to most rank-and-file strings and second woodwind players at the King's Theatre.²¹ Mariotti was then a player on his way up: at some point between 1792 and 1823 - there are no orchestra lists extant between those years - he became a regular member of the opera band. It is likely that his reputation stood high enough even in 1798 for him to insist on the opera rate. In asking for an enhanced fee, Mariotti might have been following a common practice for members of the opera band. A player negotiating for release with a reluctant musical director stood a better chance of success if his proposed deputy was well-known. If his outside engagement was well enough paid, the loss would have been worth taking.

How good was good?

To gain some idea of how standards deteriorated, it is necessary to form an idea of what was meant by good playing. The word 'efficient' recurs often in contemporary discussion of deputies. Bearing in mind that, for most of the time, an orchestral player was assembling a product at speed, that is a sensible choice of vocabulary. Patent theatre players were up to performing opera; while most of the Royal Italian Opera orchestra were in Edinburgh for the 1824 festival, Drury Lane presented *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Covent Garden performed *Der Freischutz*²² and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket found a band to accompany another *Figaro* though it 'played the music most sleepily.'²³ Works composed for specific theatre bands give some idea of prevailing standards. Henry Bishop's 1818 opera *Zuma or, The Tree*

²⁰ Drury Lane paybook cited in Jane Girdham, *Jane English Opera in Late Eighteenth Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) p. 75. The original books are in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington DC.

²¹ List of the band at the King's Theatre and Pantheon in 1792, with salaries per night. GB-WOBbo 2.A.33.

²² *Morning Post Tuesday* 26 October 1824 p. 3

²³ *Morning Advertiser* 2 November 1824 p. 2

of Health,²⁴ was presented at Covent Garden in competition with the first London performances of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the King's Theatre. Bishop's piece is conventionally orchestrated, with very little unusual instrumentation. Solo writing is confined to woodwind principals and a rather heavily used piccolo; the scoring implies a competent but not virtuosic orchestra. *December and May*, an operatic farce performed May 16th the same year, is similar.²⁵ The cautious scoring may reflect Bishop's limitations as a composer - reviews called *Zuma*'s music 'gaudy, unmeaning trickeries'²⁶ - but it is equally possible that he was influenced by the need to accommodate limitations or gaps in his orchestra. His decision to add a trombone part to *Zuma* after the score was completed may have been because of this. The trombone was probably only used to compensate for the lightness of the single double bass engaged by the theatre that season, and the writing avoids doubling anything rapid, perhaps because the player was not a specialist. In *Aladdin*,²⁷ written for Drury Lane in 1826 to compete with Weber's *Oberon* at Covent Garden, Bishop uses the trombones as an unsupported trio in an aria for a character called Mourad; the chorale writing is reminiscent of *Don Giovanni*, though it is harmonically more cautious. The exposed nature of this passage suggests that brass playing standards had advanced over the intervening eight years, but in general the scores of *Zuma* and *Aladdin* would have been straightforward to play and easy to deputise in, requiring neither the transparency of texture nor the virtuosity of a *Barbiere* or a *Figaro*.

If we apply the idea of composers writing down to a prevailing standard to less ambitious scores in minor theatres, a picture emerges of musicians who were high functioning within

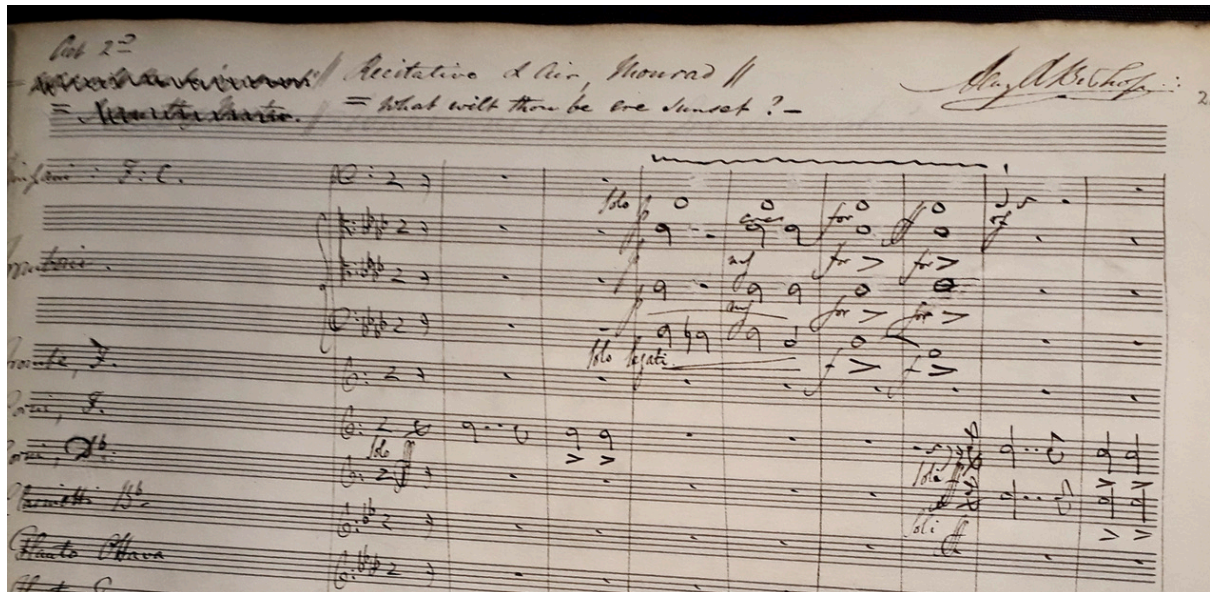
²⁴ Score of Henry Bishop, *Zuma or, The Tree of Health* GB-Lbl Add MS 36948

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *Morning Advertiser* 23 February 1818 p. 2

²⁷ Score of *Aladdin* by Henry Bishop GB-Lbl Add MS 36958 p. 24

very narrow technical and musical boundaries. They might have sounded sleepy in a Mozart opera but could play convincingly in something less demanding. The music written for melo-



Ex. 2.1 Detail of the score of *Aladdin* by Henry Bishop. Aria for Mourad.
GB-Lbl Add MS 36958 p.24

dramas (the term was always hyphenated), supports this idea. In later years, 'melodramatic' became a loose term for excessively histrionic or improbable drama, but in the early nineteenth century it was a distinct theatrical form, with a repertory of stylised acting gestures and featuring musical scores that fitted the drama closely, sometimes move for move. The genre became popular after the success of *A Tale of Mystery*, by Holcroft and Busby, which opened at Covent Garden in 1802. Its stage directions are detailed to the point of prescribing what actors' faces should do: the phrase 'expression of shock and horror' recurs frequently. It is equally exact in its musical demands. In the first scene 'music to express chattering contention' is called for;²⁸ a few pages later it must indicate 'pain and disorder.' The precision with which musical interventions extend from chords punctuating individual gestures on stage to dynamics - 'half piano' is called for in a couple of places - and at one point even the harmony is prescribed:

²⁸ Thomas Holcroft, *A Tale of Mystery* (London: Richard Phillips, 1802) p. 3

Enter SELINA, who gently pulls the sleeve of Francisco: he starts; but, seeing her, his countenance expands with pleasure.

(Music pauses on a half close)²⁹

Bonamo hands a Chair to Francisco with an air of friendship and conciliation. H

Grazioso P Dolce

Bonamo being about to examine Francisco, commands him to adhere to the truth.

Maestoso

Francisco with dignity points to Heaven & his Heart. Bonamo, to Francisco, "your Family?"

Francisco in forrow gives signs of "forbear," and writes "I must not be known."

Tail of Mystery

Ex. 2.2 Page of the piano arrangement of *A Tale of Mystery* by Holcroft and Busby

Busby published a piano arrangement of the music, with stage directions interpolated. On one page alone there are four musical cues for stage directions; 'Bonamo hands a chair to Francisco with an air of friendship and reconciliation' and dialogue; 'Bonamo being about to

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 19

Examine Francisco, commands him to adhere to the truth.' Sometimes an individual gesture receives music; the instruction 'they both start' is accompanied a couple of abrupt chords. The music is simple, but its close relationship to the script requires quick responses, suggesting that in its orchestral form, it was played by men who were limited in technique but were acute when it came to playing on cue.

Busby's orchestral parts are lost, but material from other works bears this idea out. *The Dillosk Gatherer*, presented by the English Opera Company at the Adelphi theatre in 1832, was '...melo-drama of the right sort - bold, bustling and full of incident'.³⁰ It is full of incident for the band as well. The music has fewer elaborate changes of mood than *A Tale of Mystery*, but the same quickness of reaction to lines of dialogue or single words is required. The musical interpolations are very short and often respond to exclamations onstage: a cry of 'Help! Murder' is followed by a five-bar *tremolando* passage, 'yes father, yes' is followed by three bars of Adagio then six of allegro: and the line 'Oh! Infamy!' naturally enough, elicits a mournful interlude at a slow tempo.³¹ Again, the technical ability required is very limited; this is particularly so in the second violin and viola parts, which for much of the time play long notes or simple passages in the first or second position. A comparable level of skill would have been needed to play *The Skeleton Lover*, mounted by the same company in 1830.³² In this case it is worth noting that while the string parts are mostly simple, those for wind and brass are not. The trombone part in the first number, which is in A major, a key that can entail uncomfortably long slide movements, avoids the high register but requires some fleetness of technique on the part of the player.

³⁰ *The Globe*, 3 August 1832 p. 4

³¹ Orchestral parts for *The Dillosk Gatherer* 1832 GB-Lbl Add MS 33819

³² Orchestral parts for *The Skeleton Lover* 1830 GB-Lbl Add MS 33814

10 *Keep the Murderer's Colours* *Leader* 49

help! Murder! (Collier)

Alto *no 2*

two beat Mrs Kelly on
untill the Eagle out of
sight

the Eagle out of sight
& the Mrs Kelly on
End of Act 1B

III.2.2 A page of the leader's copy of *The Dillok Gatherer* GB-Lbl Add MS 33819

These scores suggest a partial answer to Ehrlich's question: how can we account for the huge and unprecedented expansion in the number of musicians during the nineteenth century?³³

The simple answer would be that many had picked up an instrument quickly, perhaps with skimpy tuition, and were not 'good players.' However, that expression does not necessarily imply the lack of energy that in modern times we associate with a mediocre instrumentalist. They were most likely a different kind of 'poor' player: incisive, capable ensemble musicians operating within circumscribed technical and musical boundaries. They may have lacked the refinement necessary to move to a patent theatre, much less the opera, but that does not alter the fact that the challenges of playing together in a melodrama and those encountered in opera were in many respects the same. This may also explain how deputies were so readily able to move between productions; there were no stringent technical demands and provided a man was musically alert, he could function well on no rehearsal.

Keeping things together

Over-use of deputies drove the fall in standards. We will better understand how this happened if we examine the way orchestras were kept together. How a player was directed and where he sat in relation to the other members of the band determined to a large extent how effective he was able to be. He worked like a modern chamber musician; the Georgian conductor sat at a keyboard and decided tempo and shape, attending more to singers than band while bar-to-bar ensemble and the practical matters of error correction and discipline were the job of the leader. He adopted a central role, visually and musically. It could be an uneasy relationship: Parke described it with a quote from *The Tempest*: 'You shall be king, and I'll be viceroy over you'.³⁴ Koury's survey of eighteenth century seating plans³⁵

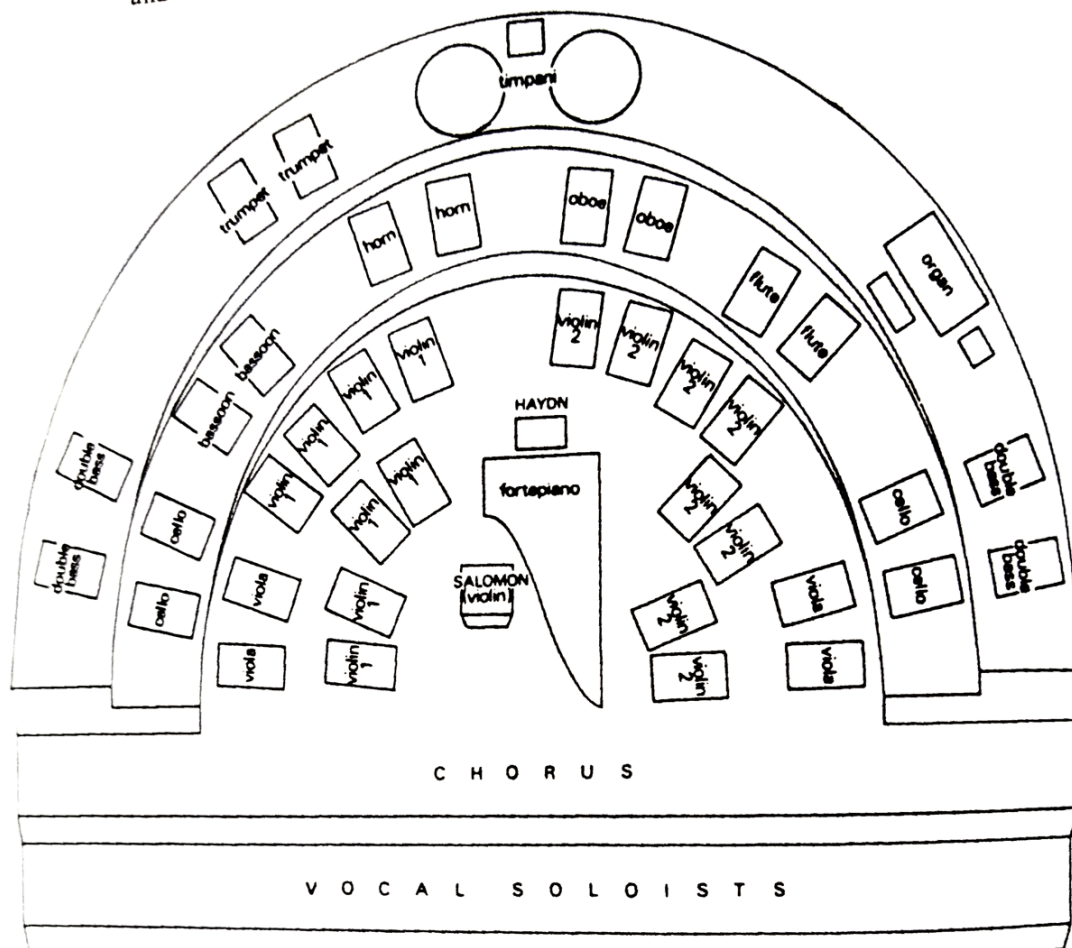
³³ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 76

³⁴ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 p. 151

³⁵ Daniel J. Koury, *Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1986) pp. 29-50

concentrates on European layouts but establishes that in London there was no established configuration beyond the placement of the keyboard where it could be seen by every player.

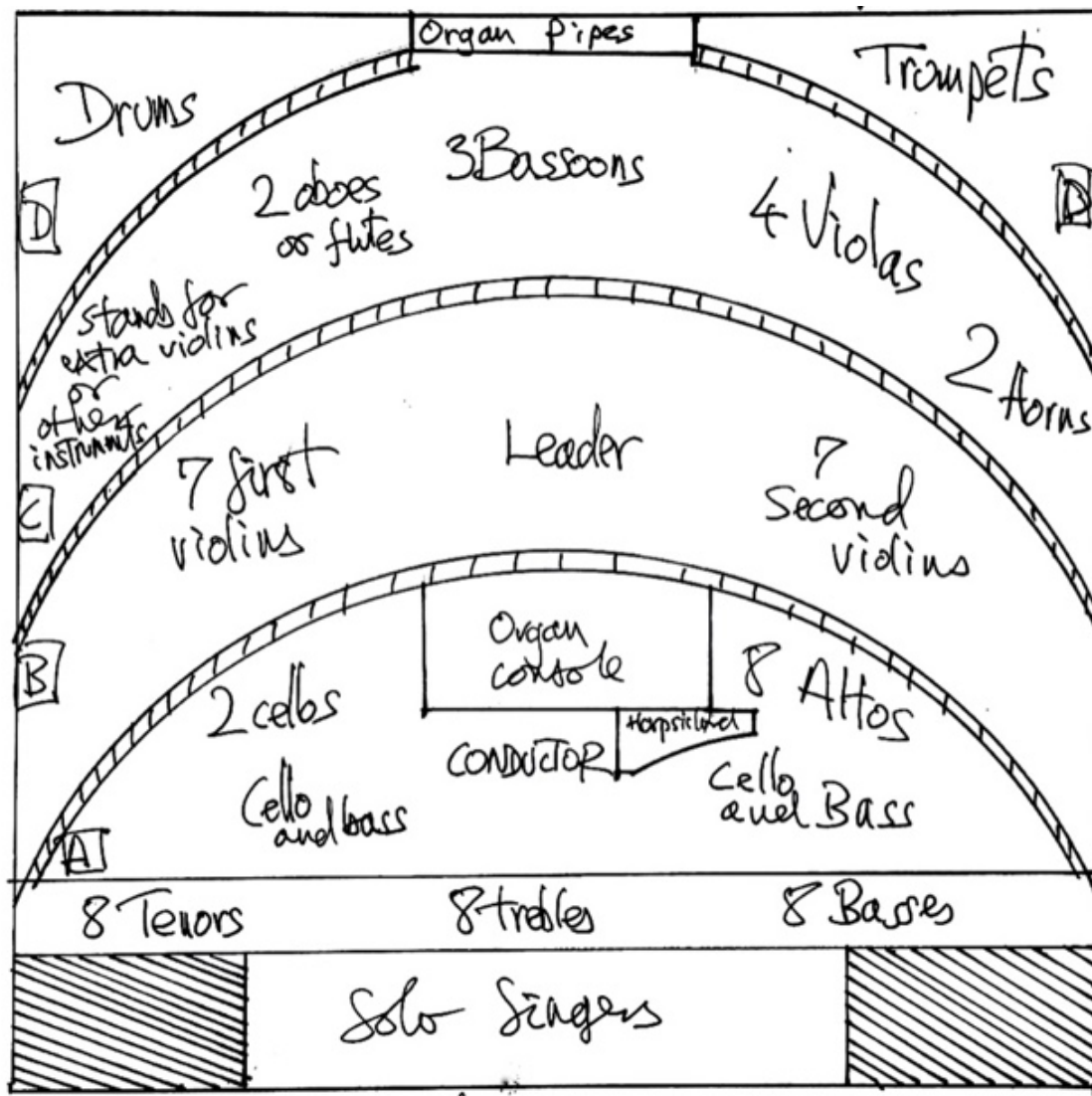
Neal Zaslaw's reconstruction from various sources of



Ill. 2.3 Reconstruction by Neal Zaslaw of the layout of Salomon's Haydn concerts
From Koury, Daniel J. *Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1981) p.46

Salomon's layout for the 1791-93 Haydn concerts places violas, cellos and basses on both sides of the platform, with first and second violins separate from each other in the middle. The woodwind and brass are arranged in a semicircle behind them. This differs from the description in Doane's directory of the Concerts of Antient Music at Freemasons' Hall in

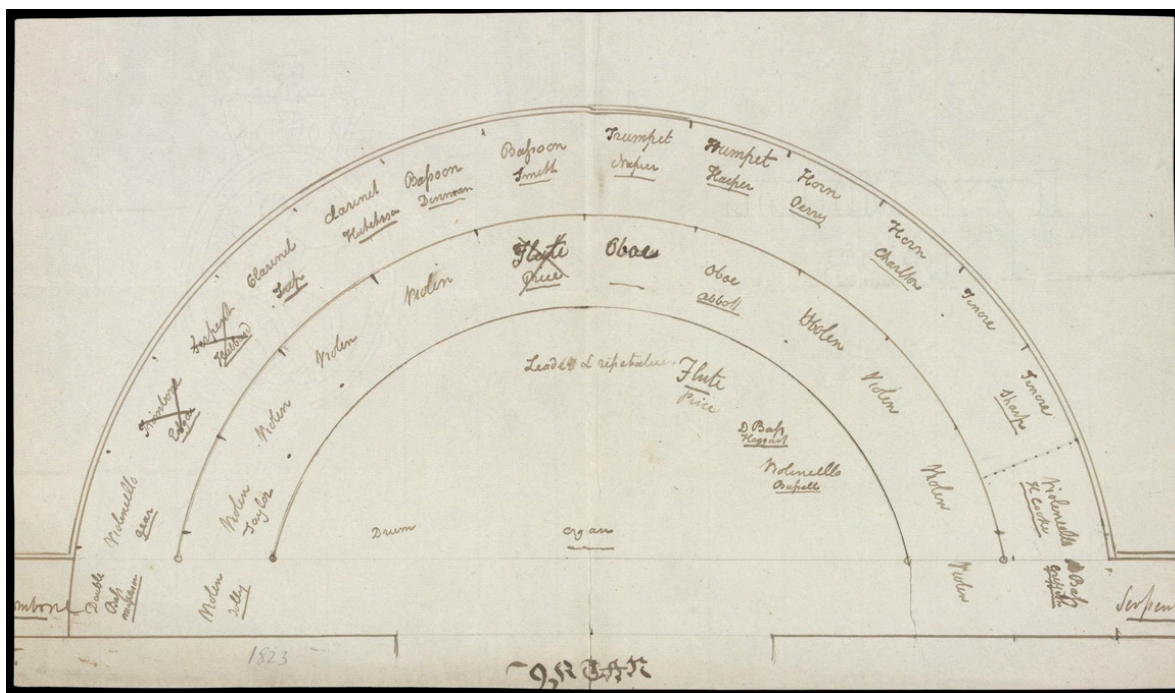
1792³⁶ but both plans indicate that the celli and basses were dispersed so that all the singers could hear them. Since (presumably) the singers faced the audience, being able to hear and perhaps feel the basses' rhythm would, in the absence of a visible beat have held them



III.2.4 Reconstruction by SW of the layout of the Concerts of Antient Music at Freemason's Hall, from the description in Doane, J. *A Musical Directory for the year 1794* (London: R. Westley, 1794)

together. This subsidiary 'conducting' role for the basses may go a little way towards explaining the inflated fees that Dragonetti was able to negotiate. Cipriani Potter was in no doubt of Dragonetti's influence in regulating the orchestra:

³⁶ J. Doane, J. *A Musical Directory for the year 1794* (London: R. Westley, 1794) pp. 80-84



III.2.5 Sketch by James Winston of the layout for the 1823 Drury Lane oratorios.
 Victoria and Albert Museum S.70-1984 Winston Collection
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1171040/winston-collection-architectural-drawing-winston-james/>

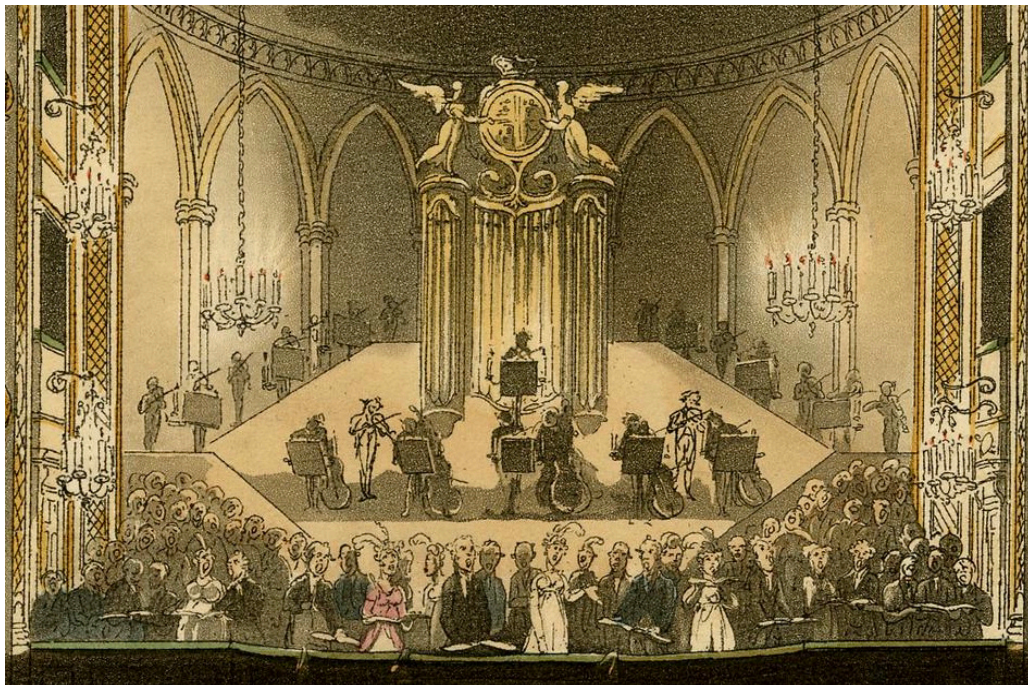
Although he has been accused of leading the orchestra, or in the estimation of some leaders, of *mis-leading* (for no man in that situation approves of public correction), it must be acknowledged that he has on various occasions, by his promptitude and decision, brought back a whole band who, 'like sheep, had gone astray'.³⁷

A sketch by James Winston of the layout for the Drury Lane oratorios of 1823³⁸ shows the bass instruments in four groups. The bassoons sat together at the back of the orchestra, but the double basses were not put together; Haggard (presumably the principal) was in the centre with the cellist Bushell. Another bass player, Mapleson, was on the extreme left of the

³⁷ *Musical World* 12 May 1837 p. 131

³⁸ Victoria and Albert Museum S.70-1984 Winston Collection

orchestra next to a cellist, Gear. A trombonist, Edgar, sat with them. On the right-hand edge of the band the cellist H. Cooke and the bass player Griffith were reinforced by Hubbard on the serpent. Wind and other brass sat together but the first flute was placed slightly apart, next to the leader. Winston's diagram gives no indication of elevation. An illustration by John Bluck after Augustus Pugin of an 1809 oratorio performance at Covent Garden³⁹ shows a similar layout, but with some of the orchestra raised and clearly visible. It is a stylised picture, but it shows that as well as making ensemble easier, the elevation and disposition of the orchestra also presented a visual spectacle.



Ill. 2.6 Covent Garden Oratorios in 1809. By Bluck after Pugin.
British Museum print 1860,0623.96
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1860-0623-96
© The trustees of the British Museum

We do not have schematic diagrams of theatre orchestra layouts. Orchestra pits were shallow compared to those in modern theatres, putting musicians' heads roughly at stage level, with a clear view of the stage. William Hogarth's 1735 etching *The Laughing Audience*⁴⁰ shows

³⁹ British Museum 1860,0623.96 British Museum print 1860,0623.96
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1860-0623-96

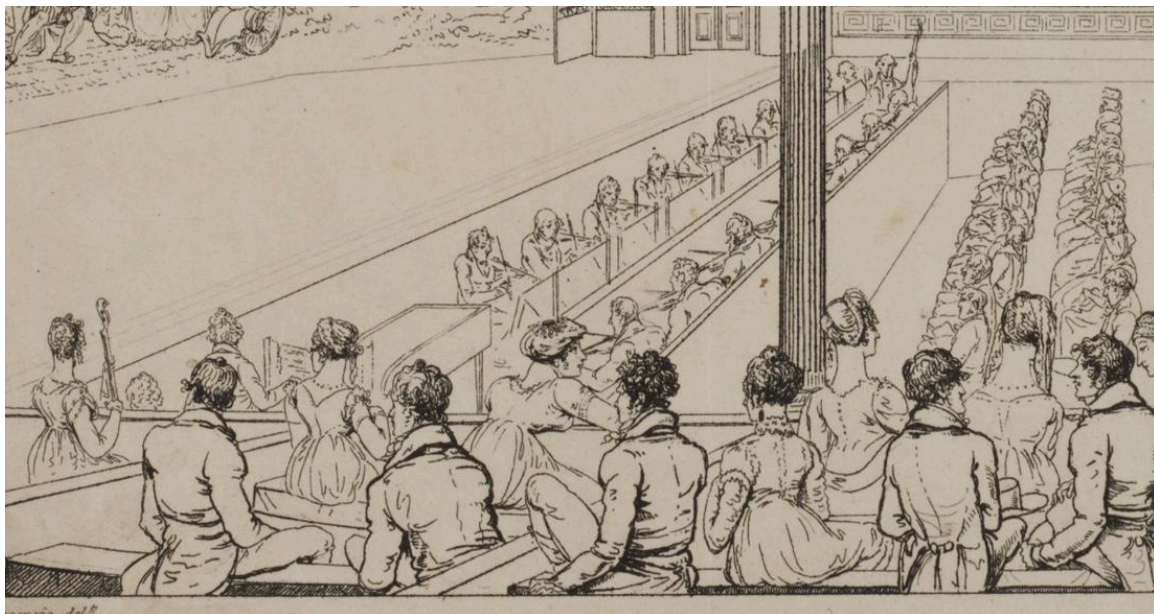
⁴⁰ Victoria and Albert Museum S.55-2008

three of the band with their backs to the main body of the auditorium. Other illustrations confirm that, within the limits imposed by the shape of an orchestra pit, players were seated in an elongated 'in the round' configuration, that was calculated to allow



III. 2.7 William Hogarth *The Laughing Audience*. Detail. Victoria and Albert Museum S.55-2008
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O158353/the-laughing-audience-print-hogarth-william/>

maximum contact between them and the stage. Heideldorf's *Minute and Correct View of the inside of the New Theatre Covent Garden*⁴¹ shows the musicians facing each other in pairs.



III. 2.8 Heideldorf *A Minute and Correct View of the Inside of the New Theatre, Covent Garden*. Detail. Victoria and Albert Museum S.480-1997.
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1138947/a-minute-and-correct-view-print-heideldorf/>

⁴¹ Victoria and Albert Museum S.480-1997. The picture is not dated but is probably from 1809, the year of the theatre's reopening. Audience clothes are characteristic of the early Regency.

A similar arrangement is visible in Richard Pugh's 1804 engraving of the old theatre, *The Royal Family at Covent Garden Theatre*.⁴²



Ill.2.9 Richard Pugh. *The Royal Family at Covent Garden Theatre*. Detail.
Victoria and Albert Museum S.6192-2009 Harry Beard Collection
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O211667/h-beard-print-collection-print-phillips-richard/>

The French practice of *batteur de mesure* was introduced in some places. Parke described a performance at the New Musical Fund in which Dr Hayes 'with a large roll of parchment beat time most unmercifully'.⁴³ It seems not to have been popular. Wilhelm Cramer would not allow it during the Handel celebrations:

When the time of performance had arrived, and Mr Cramer, the leader, had just tapt his bow (the signal for being ready) and looked round to catch the eyes of the performers, he saw, to his astonishment, that a tall, gigantic figure, with an immense powdered toupee, full dressed, with a bag and sword, and a huge roll of parchment in his hand... 'Who is that gentleman?' said Mr Cramer. - 'Dr. Hayes' was the reply. 'What is he going to do?' - 'To beat time'.- 'Be so kind, said Mr Cramer, to tell the gentleman that when he has sat down I will begin'.

⁴² Victoria and Albert Museum S.6192-2009 Harry Beard Collection

⁴³ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 98

The doctor, who never anticipated such a *set down* as this, took his seat, and Mr Cramer did begin and His Majesty and all present bore witness to his masterly style of leading the band.⁴⁴

The opera band in 1828 were not as gentle as Cramer. When their musical director, Nicholas Bochsa, introduced the practice they called it "'honest Iago" on the stage, *breaking* the time with a long mop-stick'.⁴⁵

Dual direction was effective most of the time. Operas as complex as Rossini's *la Donna del Lago* were given at the King's Theatre despite the complex interplay between singers, orchestra and stage bands that is found in both that work's finales. This mode of direction was, however, vulnerable to disruption. There is no reason to suppose that an eighteenth-century theatre musician was, within the technical limits of the repertoire he played, any less effective than his 21st century counterpart, who will sometimes lay down a film soundtrack with no rehearsal at all, and one or two deputies in a band could have been carried along by the momentum of the ensemble. If there were too many of them, or they were poor enough players to be disruptive, the whole orchestra would be compromised. The sleepy *Figaro* at the Haymarket suggests that if it was necessary to recruit from minor theatres, native musical cunning was not sufficient if the repertoire was demanding. Collective familiarity with repertoire was the great advantage of Kemble's 'day bands', but collective unfamiliarity could easily undermine an orchestra's integrity. It is arguable that with a well-rehearsed orchestra, ensemble would be better in the absence of a stick beat of variable accuracy. But a well-rehearsed orchestra was a rarity, and in the absence of anyone able to assume a bandmaster's role in an emergency, chaos was likely to ensue. It did so with increasing frequency.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* pp. 39-40

⁴⁵ *Explanation of the Differences* p. 32

Things fall apart

In 1824 a journalist complained: 'Those of the London theatres, though a few good performers may be found in them, are a discredit to the metropolis' and went on to say that the band at the little theatre in the Haymarket 'would disgrace a country barn'.⁴⁶ Five years earlier, the same publication had praised the Antient and Opera bands as 'unequalled in the annals of music in England' but had added 'nor do these lists by any means comprise the whole. There is yet a vast floating mass of musicians of real talent, among those who pass almost "unnoticed and unknown."⁴⁷ It is unlikely that the entire floating mass of talent had died, retired or emigrated over those five years. It is more probable that the circumstances under which they were now working made good performances impossible. Attendance at rehearsals had become haphazard. A letter to the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* in 1823, under the heading *On the Present State of the English Musician* blamed the fact that nearly all rehearsals were unpaid. At the opera, he said, a composer was lucky if his work was rehearsed five or six times 'with the band scarcely complete on any one occasion'. The writer was unimpressed by the musicians' behaviour in rehearsals of new works:

What haste! What inaccuracy! What a scrambling to get to the end! Then what a shutting up of fiddle cases; what a pocketing of flutes and clarionets, and a running off in all directions!⁴⁸

The number of decent players seems not to have kept up with increased demand; in an article about benefit concerts, the *Sketch* noted that 'the band, however scanty, must also have their customary recompense, and they insist upon it the more strongly, because their services are in demand from the frequency of such calls'.⁴⁹ In this boom, benefit concerts were suffering as

⁴⁶ QMMR vol. VI p. 289

⁴⁷ QMMR vol. III p. 401

⁴⁸ QMMR vol. V p. 429

⁴⁹ QMMR vol. X p. 89

much as the theatres, deteriorating into 'scrambling performances, where the absence of principals, the changes of the pieces, and the want of any trial of the parts together... disgraceful to the entrepreneur, destructive of the art, and disgusting to the real amateur...'⁵⁰

Casual absenteeism occasionally occurred even at the Philharmonic Society, which did pay for rehearsals and, like the Concert of Antient Music, maintained a mostly stable personnel. In June 1821 the directors 'Resolved that Mr Ware be sent to, to prevent his attendance at the concert, not having been at the rehearsal'⁵¹ and in February 1823 they 'resolved that Messrs F. Ware and R. Ashley be written to respecting their absenting themselves from the Trial'.⁵² Some, like Ware and Ashley, simply failed to turn up; others sent a deputy, though this did not meet with wholehearted approval: 'Resolved that [Mr Betts] be written to acquainting him that the Directors are agreeable to pay him in full, deducting the amount paid to Mr. Abbott, at the same time reserving to themselves the right of appointing the Deputies on all occasions'.⁵³

A rebellion quelled

One evening in January 1821, the Drury Lane orchestra refused to go into the pit and play for the pantomime. The incident was described by James Winston:

Before the pantomime, the band rebelled, viz., Bullock and Barker being fined two and six pence each and Smalley and Daley a week's salary for absence without leave. We waited above twenty minutes, no band.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 90

⁵¹ GB-Lbl RPS.Ms.279. p. 170

⁵² GB-Lbl. RPS.MS.280 p. 12

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 14

⁵⁴ Alfred E. Nelson and Gilbert B. Cross (eds.), *Drury Lane Journal: Selections from James Winston's Diaries*. (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1974) p. 24.

The prompter rang his bell for the overture, but nobody moved. The audience became noisily discontented. Winston, no doubt remembering the 'Old Prices' riots and fearing that the audience might turn into a mob, instructed Mr Dunn the treasurer to promise payment so that the performance could begin.

The reaction of Robert Elliston, who had been manager of Drury Lane since 1819, was to have several of the players summoned to Bow Street Magistrates' Court and charged under the Combination Acts, statutes which forbade union organisation and collective bargaining. Counsel expressed the opinion that a prosecution was unlikely to succeed, and Elliston did not pursue the matter. His intention seems to have been to chasten an unruly group of players by threatening the cost and anxiety of a long court action, but they were not altogether cowed. Their reaction, published in a theatrical journal and, according to Winston, pinned up around the theatre, reveals an unhappy regime:

Since this concern has been under the present Management, all power and control over the Musical Department has been entirely taken away from the Leader. The consequence is, that many unnecessary Rehearsals take place; and vexatious fines are imposed, and rigidly exacted. A singular and unheard-of system of espionage is likewise adopted in the Orchestra, by having *Two Forfeit-Masters* placed there, constantly on the watch, to record the little sinnings or peccadilloes of the Musicians; and who are forced, under severe penalties, to furnish, *separately*, weekly lists of the Defaulters, *not excepting even the Leader!!*⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *British Stage and Literary Cabinet* vol. V No.L February 1821 p. 52

The dispute had begun when two players, Daley and Smalley, were fined their entire week's salary for 'unavoidable absence for One Evening out of the Six.'⁵⁶ The reasoning behind Elliston's harsh regime is not clear. He may have felt that governance of the orchestra had broken down; the leader, John Smart (brother of Sir George) had not exercised much control during the 1820 season, with chaotic consequences. Absenteeism may have been given impetus by the theatre's recent history. In 1818, it had been insolvent⁵⁷ and the management had tried to reduce performers' fees. Creditors had sought an injunction to prevent it from opening until its debts - including salaries - were discharged. The Lord Chancellor refused the injunction with reservations:

[he was] was ready to confess he felt serious apprehensions of the evils which would arise...from its going on under existing circumstances; but he also felt that the evils arising from closing it would be of equal magnitude.⁵⁸

We do not know if the arrears of band salaries were eventually paid, but even if they were, after such an upset musicians would naturally have been inclined to buffer themselves by taking on work away from a theatre that they could not wholly trust. Despite the ill-feeling created by the episode, Elliston managed to maintain control of absences throughout his tenure; when he was ousted by the directors in June 1824, his last act as manager was to give leave of absence to a player called Price 'that he might play for Mrs. Bland at Argyle Rooms if it did not interfere with [the] business of the theatre.'⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *The Globe* 5 June 1819 p. 3

⁵⁸ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 17 August 1818 p. 3

⁵⁹ *Drury Lane Journal* p. 125

'Seven rehearsals but not one perfect one:' the delayed Semiramide premiere

In 1825, orchestral non-attendance contributed to a public row over the first London production of *Semiramide* at the King's Theatre. Rehearsals proceeded irregularly 'partly owing to unavoidable difficulties and partly to causes over which the director had no control'⁶⁰ and at the end of the rehearsal period the opera was in such a poor state of preparation that William Ayrton took the unusual step of calling the company for 10.30 on 17 May, the day of the premiere. Madame Vestris, who was singing the breeches role of Arsace, wrote to Ayrton the night before saying that she was unwilling to attend. In the event, she did appear, arriving an hour late and refusing to sing then or in the evening unless the lessee, John Ebers, 'fulfilled certain promises which he had made'.⁶¹ Ayrton would not wait and changed the opera to Rossini's *Otello*, a familiar, much-performed work. Vestris then changed her mind and offered to sing but 'the chorus singers living in distant parts of town, had been dispersed and could not be reassembled' (this cannot be the correct reason since both operas use a chorus). The 'certain promises' that Vestris referred to might have been financial, but we should not assume that they were. It was not unknown for star singers to pressurise theatre managements by refusing to sing unless their financial demands were met, but Vestris was a middle-ranking performer who never made more than £600 for a season. When visiting the King's Theatre from Drury Lane she charged a relatively modest fee of between £19 and £25 a performance. Her leverage was limited. A more plausible explanation for her behaviour is that she felt insecure because insufficiently prepared; she made her willingness to perform conditional upon some numbers being cut.

That evening, the theatre was filled 'to a perfect squeeze and those thought themselves happy who could even procure standing room'.⁶² When curtain rose on *Otello*, the audience made so

⁶⁰ GB-Lbl Th.cts 42

⁶¹ Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 59

⁶² *The Times* 18 May 1825 p. 4

much noise that the orchestra had to stop playing.⁶³ There followed a protracted dialogue between performers and audience. The tenor Garcia gallantly blamed Madame Vestris. Some of the audience asked how many rehearsals there had been for *Semiramide*. Garcia replied that they had managed 'seven rehearsals but not one perfect one'⁶⁴ and Ayrton told the audience 'we were to have had a perfect rehearsal last night and another this morning; but owing to a misunderstanding with some of the performers, several did not attend...'⁶⁵ ('Perfect' in this context appears to mean not 'flawless' but an old usage meaning 'complete' or 'conforming to the original text').⁶⁶ Eventually, the performance of *Otello* continued, with some success⁶⁷ but when *Semiramide* was performed on 20 May, the entrance of Vestris was greeted with 'a volley of hisses'.⁶⁸ She left the stage, then returned to make a tearful speech stating that she 'had regularly attended for the purpose of going through with the rehearsal, but the last time she made the attempt, scarcely half the orchestra was filled'.⁶⁹

Semiramide has not the stately quality of *La Donna del Lago*. It is fast paced, with frequent abrupt changes of mood and tempo. As in *La Donna del Lago*, the demands made of the orchestra are intensified by the absence of *recitativo secco* between numbers, but there are none of the complex interactions between chorus, orchestra and a military band on the stage or the extremes of vocal virtuosity that are encountered in the earlier work. It should not have presented the difficulties that it did - unless the orchestra was under-rehearsed or, conceivably, not rehearsed at all. It is quite possible that this was so; a great many outside concerts were promoted during the ten days allowed for the preparation of *Semiramide*. Mr

⁶³ *Morning Post* 18 May 1825 p. 3

⁶⁴ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 18 May 1825 p. 3

⁶⁵ *The Times* 18 May 1825 p. 4.

⁶⁶ OED

⁶⁷ *Morning Post* 18 May 1825 p. 3

⁶⁸ *Morning Post* 21 May 1825 p. 3

⁶⁹ *The Times* 21 May 1825 p. 3

My dear Sir

Dear Sir

I have not yet
heard from Mr. & Mrs.
therefore I certainly
will not attend the
rehearsal tomorrow evening
or will I perform for
the *Semiramide* tomorrow
night.

I remain Sir

Yours Most Truly

L. Vestris
Monsieur & Madame.

III.2.10 Letter from Madame Vestris to William Ayrton on 16 May 1825 about the morning rehearsal for *Semiramide* GB-Lbl Add MS 52336 fo. 59

Webb had a benefit at the English Opera House on 11 May (though he probably used the house band) on the 13th there was an Italian concert at Devonshire House 'supported by Veluti, (sic) Pasta, and the rest of the phalanx of the King's Theatre.' There was a grand ball the following evening, at which some opera musicians probably played.⁷⁰ Madame Caradori had her benefit, a performance of *Così*, at the King's Theatre on 12 May, but it clashed with a benefit for Mr. Nicholson and Miss Cooke at the Argyll Rooms, and for that concert several opera players were named in the advertisements. A third concert that evening took place at the Apollonicon. Mr Bellamy had a benefit on Friday 15th evening at Hanover Square Rooms, which Cramer led.⁷¹ Madame Cittadini's annual concert took place on the 16th at Portman Square and was expected to be one of the busiest of the season.⁷² During the gap between the controversial *Otello* and the *Semiramide* first night, there was another benefit at the Hanover Square Rooms on the 19th for the Misses Bartleman (sisters of the late Mr. Bartleman). The opera band was probably so sparsely represented at the last-minute *Semiramide* rehearsal because players were preparing for Signor Rovedino's benefit on 16 May, at which Nicholson, Lindley and others played.⁷³

'We Stand Squarely on the Market': The Opera Crisis of 1828-9.

We do not know if there was any improvement in attendance at rehearsals after the *Semiramide* debacle. The opera went into decline, particularly after 1828, when Frederick Laporte took over from the bankrupt Ebers. He experimented with downmarket productions, abetted by his musical director Nicholas Bochsa, who had a well-developed taste for the trumpery. In their first season, they presented what amounted to a burletta, *La Rosa Bianca e la Rosa Rossa*, which was 'nothing more than a selection from the works of a dozen

⁷⁰ *Morning Chronicle* 12 May 1825 p. 2

⁷¹ *Morning Post* 10 May 1825 p. 1

⁷² *ibid.* p. 3

⁷³ *Morning Chronicle* 10 May 1825 p. 1

musicians, sometimes not very skilfully put together'.⁷⁴ The following season saw *I Messicani* 'the music selected and arranged from Spohr, Donizett, Celli, Pacini, Beethoven and Rossini'.⁷⁵ At the same time, Laporte tried to retain the patronage of the fashionable set, and at a rehearsal for *La Donna del Lago* the boxes, pit and 'as much of the stage as could be conveniently spared' were filled with gentry and amateurs listening.⁷⁶ He introduced French plays to the schedule having, presumably, negotiated a variation in the opera licence granted by the Lord Chamberlain; the one issued to Ebers in 1821 prohibited 'any other species of entertainments to be presented.'⁷⁷ We do not know if the plays used music, but the new venture was a success: *The Times*, reviewing Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro*, called it 'the most perfect French performance we have perhaps witnessed in this country'.⁷⁸

There are indications that the character of the opera audience began to change during Laporte's first season. This was not universally acclaimed:

If the Opera-house once loses its aristocratic character, its occupation is gone. Fashionable people will not sit in an atmosphere of orange peel and city dust, or be squeezed between a fat citizen and his apprentice or shopman...⁷⁹

It is not certain that this would have worried Laporte or Bochsa. They might have concluded that if the *bon ton* were sufficiently outnumbered by fat citizens and their shopmen then they were disinclined to worry. The first season went well, at least on stage; a review of the closing performance in August described it as 'unexampled, for a series of years, in brilliancy

⁷⁴ *London Evening Standard* 20 February 1828 p. 4

⁷⁵ *The Times* 16 March 1829 p. 4

⁷⁶ *Morning Chronicle* 31 January 1829 p. 2

⁷⁷ Ebers, *Seven Years of the King's Theatre* p. 383

⁷⁸ *The Times* 1 July 1828 p. 3

⁷⁹ GB-Lbl Th cts 42

Names of the performers
of the Orchestra of the King's Theatre for the Season
1825-

Leader of the Band
Spagnoletti

1st Violins

Mep.^r Burg
Stadhill
Littolf
Pigott
Kearn
Ellas
B. Taylor
A. Griesback
alsopt

2^d Violins

G. Ware
Collard
Simonet
Nicks
Anderson
Abbott
Fiebig
Desrois
Ch. Griesback

Tenors

F. Ware
Wilcox
Cookes
Rogers

Violoncellos

H. Lindley
Crouch
W^m Lindley
Brooks

Contrabass

Dragonetti
Anfossi
J. Taylor
Wilson
Bond

Wilton 1st Oboe
till the arrival of the
one from Paris
Sergeo 2^d D.

Leader of the Ballets
M^r Lacy

III 2.11 William Ayrton's list of the King's Theatre orchestra for the
1825 season. Continued on following page.
Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add. Ms 52335 fo. 51

Morgan junr. }
Taylor } Flutes

Willman }
Powell } Clarinets

Mackintosh }
Tully } Bassoons

Ruzzi }
Rais }
Petrides } Horns
Petrides }

Harpur }
and }
L. West } Trumpets

Mariotti }
Smithers } Trombones
Schoenger }

Challoner Harp.

Carr Octavine, and when no part for him to play the Violon

Seaton Drums

Fisher Tide Drum —

and success'.⁸⁰ Brilliancy and success did not extend to the orchestra. One review said that Mlle. Sontag 'was wretchedly supported by the other singers and the orchestra':

the company to which the *execution* (in more senses than one) of Mozart's *chef d'oeuvre* was consigned, would have disgraced a barn on the Continent: and the orchestra made such a discordant noise and *charivari*, that instead of a *band*, they should be styled a *banditti*.⁸¹

Standards in the band had been dropping for some time, and many of the better players had left. Parke ascribed the decline to a reduction in fees:

... the salaries of the instrumental performers having been so much reduced, that musicians of superior talent would not remain in the orchestra:... it is difficult to determine which deserves most censure, the manager for parting with a phalanx of talent, or those who had the temerity to succeed them.⁸²

The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* saw the problem differently. Noting that the orchestra had formerly been the 'first in Europe', it blamed 'dangerous concessions' and 'laxity which for obvious causes had crept into the musical arrangements',⁸³ almost certainly an allusion to absences. Laporte complained that the band '...was so much engaged at the different concerts, oratorios in town, and festivals in the country that it could not, or would not attend the duties at the opera...it was with the greatest difficulty that one or two rehearsals

⁸⁰ *Morning Post* 4 August 1828 p. 3

⁸¹ Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 p. 31

⁸² Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 pp. 270-1

⁸³ QMMR vol. IX p. 263

could be obtained in the week...'⁸⁴ There had been cases of performances delayed because not all the orchestra were at the theatre in time for the start.

Casus belli was made over the Cambridge Festival, which engaged some of the opera players and ran from the morning of June 28 to the evening of 1 July 1828, while the opera season was still in progress. Bochsa had initially agreed to the necessary absences; there were only two opera performances during this period, Rossini's *Otello* and Paisiello's *Nina*; both familiar repertoire and in the latter case, very easy to perform with well chosen deputies. On the other nights, plays were given. Molière's *Tartuffe* on the 27th and Beaumarchais' *Figaro* on Monday 30th. Bochsa tried to rescind his permission after the Cambridge arrangements were in place but the musicians, admitting their absence was 'incompatible with strict subordination',⁸⁵ went to Cambridge anyway. There were no adverse reviews of the King's Theatre performances, but in correspondence in the press, Laporte made much of the problems caused by musicians hurrying back from Cambridge to perform,⁸⁶ a nonsensical claim since the theatre had been closed on the day the band returned.

In the autumn of 1828, the theatre introduced a radically revised orchestra contract for the 1829 season. Under Ebers, it had amounted to little more than an undertaking to play a given instrument for an agreed fee.⁸⁷ The new terms resembled in their complexity the agreements that were entered into with singers; they restricted what outside work was allowed and imposed limits on musicians' travels away from London. It is not certain who was responsible for the wording. Bochsa attributed it to Laporte, who was in Italy recruiting singers, but an editorial in the *Times*, referring to 'the unlucky choice made by the managers of the individual who has been placed at the head of the musical department' wrote that

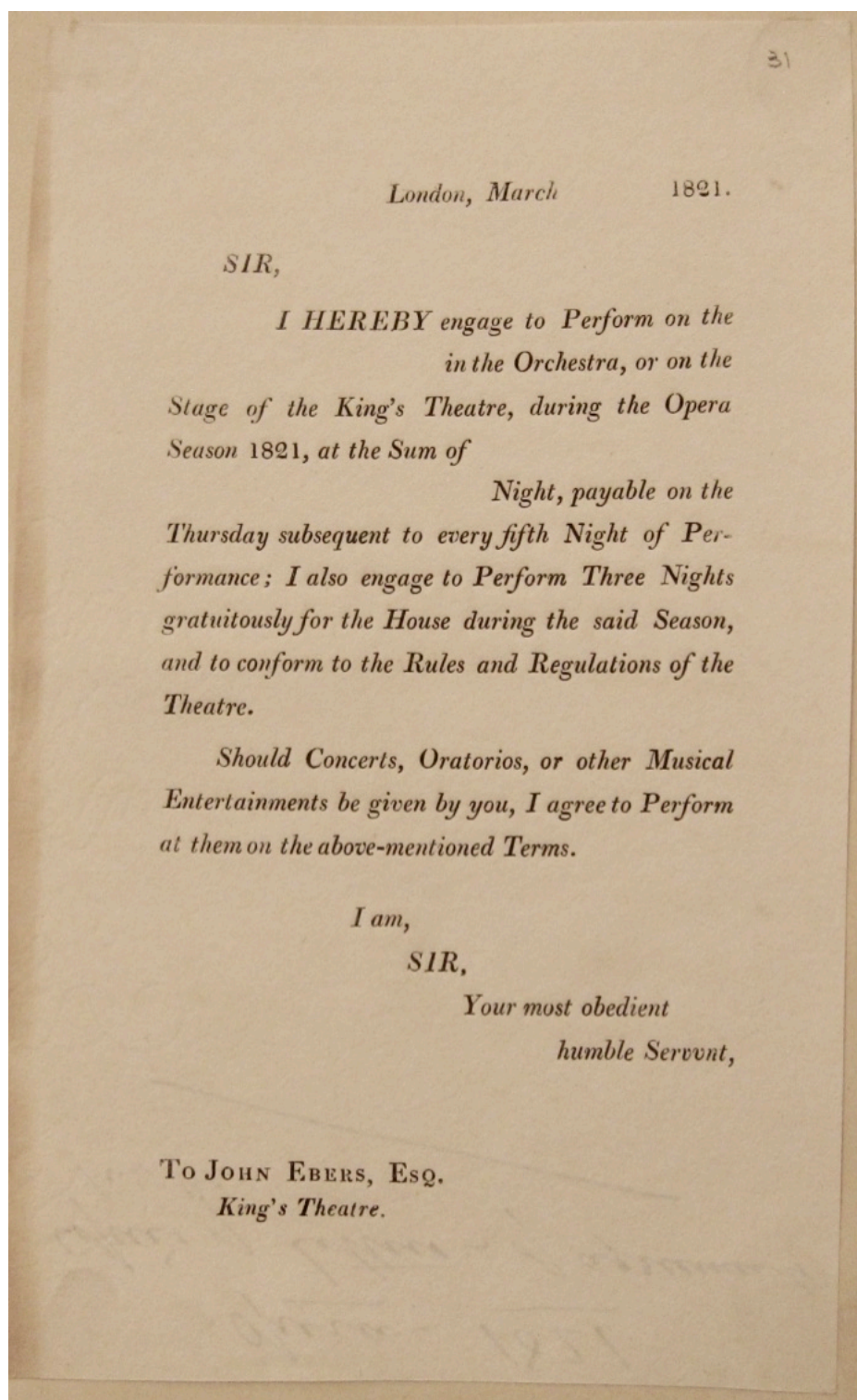
⁸⁴ *The Globe* 31 January 1829 p. 4

⁸⁵ *Explanation of the Differences* p. 13

⁸⁶ *London Evening Standard* 31 January 1829 p. 3

⁸⁷ Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add. Ms 52335 fo. 31

Bochsa was responsible for the new terms, having got himself appointed by suggesting the contract as a way of saving £600 a year.⁸⁸



Ill. 2.13 Blank pro-forma musician's contract for the King's Theatre.
Ayrton papers GB-Lbl Add. Ms 52335 fo.31

⁸⁸ *The Times* 17 January 1829 p. 2

Negotiations rapidly reached impasse. The band was already disaffected, resenting the theatre's departure from its normal schedule of two performances a week, generally on Tuesdays and Saturdays, in favour of operas put on speculatively at short notice, either because competition seemed to be thin on a particular evening or a popular singer happened to be available. The advantage of working at the opera was that its sparse and predictable schedule made it easy for players to organise other work around it. This had broken down, and the band complained that '...*casual* performances should, in common justice, be preceded by a reasonable length of notice; if, as is enjoined, a full attendance of the band be expected'.⁸⁹ They were also concerned that during the 1828 season the Antient Concert and Philharmonic Society had not been free of competition from the opera, which by tradition had never clashed. Laporte and Bochsa, reasonably enough, wanted an orchestra that attended rehearsals and was in the pit ready to play at the start of a performance. Laporte's plan for more performances needed the players to be more committed to the theatre. It was not so much that he wanted a monopoly, as the players alleged, but that he wanted to run a much fuller schedule without paying the full opera rate. In addition to three unpaid performances per season that had been agreed under the Ebers management, Laporte proposed to pay any nights beyond the fifty contracted at half the basic rate. This represented a threat to the band's outside earnings:

...to play on any occasion for *half price* carries with it a degree of degradation, not only inimical to our feelings as men, but also (and surely it may be said without arrogance) unjust to our reputations as professors.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *Explanation of the Differences* p. 12

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 11

Finer feelings aside, once it became known that the opera players had agreed to play for half pay, negotiations with the festivals and casual concerts that made up so much of their income would have become considerably more difficult. Laporte replied: 'we stand squarely on the market' and the players riposted: 'Let him bid a reasonable price, and the goods are his'.⁹¹ Since the band raised no objection in principle to his expanded schedule, it is not clear why Laporte went to so much trouble to secure such a small financial advantage. He claimed that the orchestra's pay rise under Ebers was a significant factor in the theatre's insolvency, but a well-attended opera performance took over £600 at the door, excluding subscription income. The singers, whether stars being paid thousands or the female chorus on 11s 6d a week, were contracted for the season and would not be an additional expense if an extra performance were put on; paying the band a full fee would only have cost an extra £30 to £50 per night.

It is inconceivable that Laporte and Bochsa failed to understand the relationship that orchestral players had with their core theatrical engagement, but the means they chose to alter its terms were bound to cause conflict. Not all the conditions in the contract were unreasonable; clause VI stipulated that the players should be present at 'all and every Rehearsal which may be called'.⁹² Others would have ended the players' freelance activities altogether: they were to regard themselves as 'at all times at the disposal of the manager' and under clause II it was forbidden to accept any other engagement without first ascertaining that it would not interfere with the business of the theatre'. This was a phrase commonly used when granting leave of absence, but the players interpreted it as prohibiting any engagements that might clash. As they said, even the Fantoccini puppet shows had the potential to take away business. Worse still was a requirement under clause VII not to leave London without permission, on pain of dismissal and forfeiture of outstanding fees, added to the

⁹¹ *ibid.* p. 29

⁹² *ibid.* p. 43

management's insistence that instruments be left in the theatre for the whole of a rehearsal or performance day. The effect on outside work would have been calamitous and, given the patent theatres' tendency towards leniency over absence, would have placed the opera players at a competitive disadvantage. As they put it: 'To engage at a morning concert is forbidden, because an opera rehearsal may be called'.⁹³ The outrage caused by Bochsa's insistence that instruments be left in the theatre is a little surprising, but it seems that even the more successful players did not always have second instruments even though many of them engaged in dealing on the side. The only documentary proof of this is an insurance agreement entered into by Charles Godfrey in 1826, around the time he became bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards. Until then, he had been first bassoon in the Coldstream band and was making an extra 10s. a night at Covent Garden. Even so, he insured only one instrument.⁹⁴

It is not clear why Laporte negotiated with the players as if they were at a disadvantage. They were operating in a seller's market: the difficulties over attendance would not have arisen if it had been otherwise. There may have been a hidden agenda. Bochsa had, from the start of negotiations, threatened to replace the orchestra with 'a whole French band, ready to embark'.⁹⁵ He and Laporte denied wanting to favour their compatriots (without the accusation having been made that they did) but it is possible that in offering terms that they knew would be refused they were looking for a reason to import musicians, who would belong to none of the networks that had caused problems with absenteeism, and might very well be more docile than the habitually outspoken British players. This might account for clause V in the contract, which was bound to meet with refusal:

⁹³ *ibid* p. 11

⁹⁴ Sun Insurance Company Ledgers GB-Llma City of London MS 11936/515/1053728

⁹⁵ *Explanation of the Differences* p. iv

The undersigned Gentlemen are to observe all the rules and regulations made, or that MAY BE MADE by the Manager or the DIRECTOR of the Musical Department.⁹⁶

Laporte's character probably played a part in all this. His management style was combative - literally so: in June 1828 a row over the ballet led to 'high words between the parties' whereupon the ballet-master, Mons. Petit, challenged Laporte to a duel. He accepted. Petit was arrested before combat could be joined and was bound over to keep the peace in the sum of £1000.⁹⁷ Given Laporte's willingness to settle an artistic disagreement with swords or pistols, we should not be surprised at his spirited defence of his position and obduracy in negotiation.

The band published a pamphlet which sparked a debate in the press and managed to turn a trade dispute into an argument *ad hominem*, with the musical director Bochsa as the villain of the piece. The players suspected that it was he and not Laporte who had devised the more draconian aspects of the contract and attacked him from the outset:

The name of M. Bochsa is too well known to require comment; nor will it appear strange that such a man, selected as Managerial representative, should, in advocating the cause of his absent Principal, have frequently excited disgust, while striving to produce conviction'.⁹⁸

Bochsa was an easy target. He had been forced to leave the Royal Academy of Music when it was revealed that a Paris court had handed down to him, *in absentia*, a sentence of branding and fifteen years' hard labour for theft and forgery. He was often called 'the branded professor' in the press. He was said to have married, bigamously, the sister of the courtesan

⁹⁶ *ibid.* p. 42

⁹⁷ *London Evening Standard* 16 June 1828 p. 4

⁹⁸ *Explanation of the Differences* p. v

Harriette Wilson and installed her as poet in the King's Theatre. A review of her adaptation of *Otello* complained of: 'the immortal conceptions of our great Poet, *traduced* into Italian, and rendered back into double-distilled nonsense by Harriette Wilson's sister'.⁹⁹ When he left London for good in 1835, he did so in the company of Anna, the wife of Henry Bishop. Bochsa's modern reputation is largely based on a series of highly entertaining but improbable articles written in 1907 by Arthur Pougin in *Le Menestrel*,¹⁰⁰ and the sensationalism surrounding him makes it difficult to form a fair picture. He had significant abilities as a harp virtuoso, a conductor and as a prolific if somewhat trivial composer. Parke called his music 'scientific and pleasing' but added that 'there is something repulsive in a gigantic sort of a personage like Mr. Bochsa playing on so feminine an instrument as the harp...'¹⁰¹ In his way he was innovative, and his adaptation of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* for the ballet stage was a pioneering example of what is now common practice.¹⁰² The press often attacked Bochsa's 'intolerably noisy' music, and one critic found it so noisy that he suggested the orchestra's drum department should be paid double.¹⁰³

Press coverage descended into scandalmongering; *The Morning Advertiser* published the story of a widow arraigned before magistrates for theft. She successfully defended herself by saying that she had been starving because Bochsa had not paid her late husband for language lessons.¹⁰⁴ She received a gift from the bench so that she could buy food. The Editor of the *Standard*¹⁰⁵ suggested that if the 'fiddlers' of the opera didn't like the new regime they should leave, but opinion seems mostly to have been on the side of the band. The *Examiner* voiced the popular view:

⁹⁹ *The Globe* 3 April 1828 p. 2

¹⁰⁰ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5782849h.item>

¹⁰¹ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 p. 183

¹⁰² J. Q. Davies, 'Dancing the Symphonic: Beethoven-Bochsa's *Symphonie Pastorale*, 1829', *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 27:1 (2003), 25-47

¹⁰³ *Evening Mail* 10 April 1826 p. 4

¹⁰⁴ *Morning Advertiser* 22 March 1828 p. 4

¹⁰⁵ *London Evening Standard* 31 January 1829 p. 3

Had he endeavoured to lower some of the salaries of the principal singers and dancers, little might have been said against it; but no - he attacks the performers in the orchestra, whose acquirements have cost them years of trouble and exertion, for which they reap less emolument than any other branch of the musical profession'.¹⁰⁶

It is unlikely that an appeal to his better nature weighed heavily with Laporte, but he would have been disturbed by a letter published in *The Times* on the 16th of January 1829. J. H. D'Egville and J. Bebb, executors of the will of J. Taylor, who controlled the tenancy of the Kings Theatre, expressed dismay at the inflated fees paid to star singers, changes made to ticketing and the way the orchestra had been treated. They named several of the orchestra and said, ominously, that '...several persons of distinction are induced to prevent a renewal of the licence on several grounds'.¹⁰⁷

Consequences

At the end of December 1829, the sixteen signatories of the original letter of protest left the orchestra. They included many of the best players; the flute player Charles Nicholson, Willman the first clarinet, Harper the first trumpet and Lindley the principal cello. The French musicians duly arrived, but their first performance was not a happy one. Press reports noted that that tuning up was done before the players entered the pit - a new idea - and that the secession had affected only some of the band; Dragonetti was still there, but Harper and his No.2 had been replaced by the Gambati brothers. The *Times* reported:

...a simultaneous cry off! off!...which was general and sufficiently loud to drown the most zealous efforts of Mr.

¹⁰⁶ *The Examiner* 11 January 1829 p. 8

¹⁰⁷ *The Times* 16 January 1829 p. 2

Bochsa's newly-constituted orchestra, was increased to a deafening noise by the applause commenced by Mr. Laporte's partisans...Such was the uproar at one time that the choristers made an attempt to withdraw...¹⁰⁸

Feeble attempts were made during the evening to renew the disturbance.¹⁰⁹ One writer thought that '...so abortive an attempt at riot was never before witnessed'.¹¹⁰ A letter to the *Globe* said that the 'futile' disturbance was made by twenty or thirty people shouting 'no foreigners', which the correspondent took as being directed at Bochsa.¹¹¹ Most papers were more interested in the plain face and ungainly person of the singer Madame Monticelle.¹¹² Reviews and comment on the 1829 season were unfavourable. Some tried to be fair to the new orchestra of '...young importations from Paris, of decided ability, certainly but still without the talent or experience of the veterans whom they have succeeded' but could not resist a dart at Bochsa '...who seems willing to subject them to the same slavery to which he is himself by the French laws subjected'.¹¹³ The same paper gave a glowing review of Marschner's *Der Vampyr* at the English Opera House¹¹⁴ but thought that the Italian Opera's production of *Il Conte Ori* 'would have been disgraceful for a barn or booth at a fair'.¹¹⁵ It reported that 'a more disgraceful performance never took place...when the opera of *L'Italiana in Algeri* was attempted by a set of the most incompetent persons...'¹¹⁶ The orchestra, it was said, had deteriorated further, and for the same reasons that had caused the original problem:

¹⁰⁸ *The Times* 2 February 1829 p. 2

¹⁰⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 2 February 1829 p. 3

¹¹⁰ *Morning Post* 2 February 1829 p. 3

¹¹¹ *The Globe* 2 February 1829 p. 2

¹¹² *Morning Chronicle* 4 February 1829 p. 3

¹¹³ *The Examiner* 8 February 1829 p. 4

¹¹⁴ *The Examiner* 30 August 1829 pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁵ *The Examiner* 8 March 1829 p. 9

¹¹⁶ *The Examiner* 22 February 1829 p. 3.

As for the band, it was never so bad as during last season...it is impossible, where there is a constant change of players, to get an effective and expressive style of accompanying. Boys from the Royal Academy, and deputies from theatrical orchestras, have been admitted into it; the trumpeters Gambati were the aptest at hurrying the time we ever heard. The wind instruments were quite unworthy...'¹¹⁷

The Gambati brothers provoked wildly divergent reactions. They had played Rossini's duet *Giorno d'Orrore* at the Argyll Rooms in May 1829 and excited 'equal astonishment and delight'¹¹⁸ at the perfection and sensitivity of their playing. Other listeners demurred: 'A pair of cracked *comb-and-paper* trumpets are an abomination in the *forte* of an orchestra, and such epithets only describe the tone of the Gambatis.'¹¹⁹ *The Atlas*, a somewhat partisan publication with few good words for Laporte, thought they were 'fit only to perambulate the streets with *Punch* and a puppet-show'¹²⁰ and the *Harmonicon* called them 'Brobdingnagian penny-trumpets'.¹²¹ A review of a student performance of *L'Italiana in Algeri* said the band 'was, to our thinking, perhaps, superior in accuracy to the congregation of performers who occupied the orchestra of the Italian Opera House during the past season'.¹²² It wasn't just the band: the *Times* said of one of Laporte's new, cheaper, dancers that she showed 'more pantomimic talent than acquirement in the science of pirouetting or the art of standing on one leg...'.¹²³

¹¹⁷ *The Atlas* 16 August 1829 p. 9

¹¹⁸ *Morning Post* 13 May 1829 p. 3

¹¹⁹ *The Atlas* 8 February 1829 p. 9

¹²⁰ *The Atlas* 1 March 1829 p. 9

¹²¹ *The Harmonicon* VII May 1829 p. 122

¹²² *London Evening Standard* 7 December 1829 p. 3.

¹²³ *The Times* 2 February 1829 p. 2

A new market

The fact that the sixteen dissenters felt secure enough to resign on a point of principle indicates how much demand for their services had grown. They would no doubt have been emboldened by the ten large-scale music festivals held in the provinces in the summer of 1828; by playing at them all (as many players did) a man could have doubled his opera earnings.¹²⁴ It would have been galling for them to give the extra opera performances on half pay, but had they agreed to do so, the King's Theatre would have remained a significant source of income. The rest of the orchestra did after all remain, though most of those who did so were not principal players, the main exception being Dragonetti.¹²⁵ It is not certain where the dissenters went. At the end of the 1829 season, a damning survey of the Winter theatres that decried the poor writing, 'char-woman work' of the composers and slovenliness of the way the music was performed, singled out the band at Covent Garden as an exception.¹²⁶ It is possible that some of the opera players moved there but more likely - given that Covent Garden contracted its orchestra in September - that the market had expanded sufficiently for a good player to be able to prosper as an unattached freelancer.

Laporte's resolve faltered at the end of the 1829 season. Threats over the renewal of his lease no doubt concentrated his mind but whatever his private reasoning may have been, by the 1830-31 season Bochsa, 'whose ignorance and insolence it was no longer possible to bear'¹²⁷ was no longer at the Opera and the players who had seceded were back in the orchestra.¹²⁸ It was an inconclusive end to the dispute. The unsatisfactory state of opera band management remained unresolved until Michael Costa introduced draconian reforms in the 1830s.

¹²⁴ See below p. 216

¹²⁵ *Morning Post* 2 February 1829 p. 3.

¹²⁶ *The Examiner* 28 June 1829 p. 5

¹²⁷ John Edmund Cox, *Musical Recollections of the Last Half Century* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872) vol. 1 p. 180

¹²⁸ *The Harmonicon* 1830 p. 134

3. Quadrilles, self-governance and opera wars: the profession 1830-1861



III. 3.1 John Orlando Parry *The Poster Man*
 Alfred Dunhill Collection, 48 Jermyn Street London W1
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Parrywatercolour.jpg>

The background of John Orlando Parry's 1835 painting *The Poster Man*¹²⁹ is a collage of advertisements. Weber's *Oberon* is there, so are Mr Braham's farewell concert and some French plays at the King's Theatre. There is a tableau of the last days of Pompeii at the Adelphi Theatre, and 'Herr Lidustroph's Company of Industrious and Russian Fleas' are advertised at no.5 Leicester Square. The poster man himself is pasting a playbill for *Otello* and *Nina* at the Italian Opera. Parry's picture is a portrait of a city's theatrical and concert life as it begins to transform. He painted it to celebrate his marriage in 1835. So far as we know, he did not create another for his silver wedding anniversary, but if he had done so his bill

¹²⁹ Alfred Dunhill Collection, 48 Jermyn Street London W1
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Parrywatercolour.jpg>

sticker would have needed a much larger wall. The musical market expanded more rapidly than ever before, and though some of the old models of performance and management persisted, the orchestral profession evolved a long way from what it had been at the start of the century, not least because the repertoire, and the way it was scored and performed, changed so radically. It was during this period that the problem of orchestral absenteeism was successfully tackled by Michael Costa and Louis Jullien.

Expansion

Between 1800 and 1832, eleven theatres were built in London and four destroyed, making an average of one new venue every four and a half years. Between 1832 and 1843, when the theatrical patent was abolished, fifteen theatres were built and seven disappeared, making a net gain of one every seventeen months.¹³⁰ By 1859, *The Entr'Acte* was advertising twenty-eight large theatres in London. Its editorial suggested that the metropolis now had one of some description in every parish.¹³¹ Between the seasons of 1826-7 and 1845-1846, concerts in London increased more than threefold, from 125 to 381.¹³² The socially exclusive audience for subscription series and benefits could not have driven such growth: expansion came from a 'shilling public' from the artisan and middle classes,¹³³ whose leisure time and expenditure were concentrated into evenings and weekends, a process that Ehrlich calls 'the discipline of the clock'.¹³⁴ These people would not buy a subscription, but if cheap tickets were sold at the door, they came. They wanted spectacular theatre and promenade concerts, a mixture of quadrilles and opera overtures imported from Paris in the late 1830s; at the peak of London's 'Musard mania' in 1838 -1842, there were up to eighteen of these a week at the

¹³⁰ Ganzel, *Patent Wrongs* pp. 384-396

¹³¹ GB-Llma City of London acc. 595/42

¹³² Weber, *Music and the Middle Class* p. 87

¹³³ *ibid.* p. 160

¹³⁴ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 66

Lyceum, Drury Lane, Princess's Theatre¹³⁵ and larger public houses such as the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand.¹³⁶ By 1856, there was a concert hall in the Surrey Gardens, whose seating was 'supposed to be between 6,000 and 7,000' with accommodation for another 10,000 in the gardens.¹³⁷

Orchestras grew. In 1832, the Olympic Theatre employed between seventeen and twenty musicians.¹³⁸ By 1840, the Princess's Theatre was using a band of forty for a season of new English operas.¹³⁹ Seven years later, when the Royal Italian Opera decamped from the Haymarket to Covent Garden, its orchestra had expanded from the fifty-five players employed in 1825, to eighty-five. At the Lyceum's *concerts à la Musard*, in the late 1830s, 'the celebrated band of sixty performers' was the main selling point¹⁴⁰ and by the 1850s, the Sacred Harmonic Society was using a professional orchestra with sixteen double basses 'and other instruments in proportion'.¹⁴¹ A review of Drury Lane's *concerts d'hiver* made a point of praising the 'huge band, excitingly powerful in quadrilles and waltzes'¹⁴² and the orchestras - sometimes called 'heaps'¹⁴³ - for Jullien's *concerts monstres* could run into the hundreds. Expansion was particularly marked among brass and wind instruments: in 1845, the *Illustrated London News* reported that a performance of *Suoni la Trombo* (sic) from Bellini's *i Puritani* was given by twenty cornets, twenty ophicleides 'and the same number of mighty wind instruments in each part'.¹⁴⁴ If the established classics happened to have been scored originally for modest forces, they were rewritten. A preview of the 1832 King's Theatre season boasted that works by Mozart, Gluck, Haydn, Beethoven and others would be

¹³⁵ *The Times* 30 October 1840 p. 4

¹³⁶ *The Times* 28 February 1839 p. 5

¹³⁷ *Illustrated London News* 19 July 1856 p. 14

¹³⁸ *The Sun* 7 February 1832 p. 4

¹³⁹ *The Atlas* 31 October 1840 p. 12

¹⁴⁰ *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 27 October 1839 p. 1

¹⁴¹ Lowell Mason, *Musical Letters from Abroad* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1854) p. 253

¹⁴² *The Atlas* 31 October 1840 p. 12

¹⁴³ *The Globe* 21 June 1845 p. 3

¹⁴⁴ *Illustrated London News* 28 June 1845 p. 13

'replenished' to include more wind and brass, since those composers had lived when modern improvements to those instruments were unknown and 'for a certainty would have availed themselves of their powerful assistance had they then existed'.¹⁴⁵ A review in *The Times* of *Don Giovanni* at Covent Garden was tolerant of the changes:

...though we would willingly dispense with the cymbals and big drum, added to Mozart's score in the first finale, we see no objection to the brass instruments...¹⁴⁶

Changing priorities

As popular concerts multiplied, the two established subscription series faltered. John Cox called the Antient Concerts "'Dry-as-dust" affairs...slovenly executed and carelessly conducted'¹⁴⁷ and an 'Old Subscriber' described chaotic rehearsals 'which made the conductor appear a mere cipher and the band a set of bunglers'.¹⁴⁸ The series ceased in 1848. While the Philharmonic Society's officers quibbled over transferability of tickets¹⁴⁹ its finances declined, and poor conductors degraded its performances. The appointment of Henry Bishop as chief conductor was particularly disastrous.¹⁵⁰ He was said to 'choose any tempo but the right one' and to hang upon the energies of the leader, Loder, like a dead weight.¹⁵¹

The Philharmonic Society's eight poorly paid and often poorly executed concerts might have lost importance for many players, but the personnel remained more or less stable during the decline. This was probably because the series retained a certain *cachet*; reputation still mattered in the freelance market. The opera offered fifty or so performances in a short

¹⁴⁵ *The Times* 5 September 1831 p. 5

¹⁴⁶ *The Times* 2 August 1858 p. 12

¹⁴⁷ John Edmund Cox, *Musical Recollections of the Last Half Century* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872) vol. 2 p. 43

¹⁴⁸ *Morning Post* 17 May 1835 p. 5

¹⁴⁹ Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic* pp. 53-56

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* pp. 66-68

¹⁵¹ *Illustrated London News* 5 April 1845 p. 16

season, the Concert of Antient Music, while it lasted, gave twelve, plus a *Messiah* in support of the RSM. The Philharmonic Society's eight Monday concerts were tied to paid rehearsals on the preceding Saturday morning, and when the New Philharmonic Society started, it too gave only eight concerts. The Crystal Palace concerts, which replaced their military band with an orchestra under August Manns in the late 1850s, were more frequent, but did not amount to anything like full time employment. It was easier to make a living but managing clashes and deputies was as much a part of a player's working life as it ever had been.

Theatre work was still dismally paid; in 1832, Leander Zerbini, the leader at the Olympic Theatre, was paid 3gn a week for a job that included hiring and paying the other players.¹⁵² Nicholson, the leader at Sadler's Wells, had the same wage in 1837. In June 1833, Thomas Harper was paid 3gn for a single trumpet *obbligato* in a morning charity concert at the Philanthropic Society's chapel. The timpanist Chipp received two, and Mr Smithies and two other trombone players had one each.¹⁵³ Each trombonist's fee for the morning was the same as the weekly wage paid to most of the Sadler's Wells band in 1837.¹⁵⁴ Oddly, at the very bottom of the profession things appear to have been a little better. In June 1850, 10s was given over the bar at the singing saloon above the Grapes pub in Compton Street to pay Mears and Spiller, a pianist and fiddler respectively, for an evening's work - 1s 6d more than they would have been paid at Sadler's Wells.¹⁵⁵ William Calcott, a violinist on the pub circuit, was a former leader at the Adelphi theatre and was well enough known to receive a benefit at the King and Queen in Foley Street in 1850. He might have fallen on hard times or succumbed to alcohol (entertainers received part of their payment in drink) but might just

¹⁵² *The Sun* 7 February 1832 p. 4

¹⁵³ Sir George Smart collection GB-Lbl C.61.h.4.(1.)

¹⁵⁴ Sadler's Wells Theatre Collection, orchestra paybook for 1837 GB-Lilhc S/SWT/1/1/2 L4.211

¹⁵⁵ Laurence Selenick (ed.), *Tavern singing in early Victorian London: the diaries of Charles Rice for 1840 and 1850* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1997) p. 190

have decided that 'free-and-easies' were less trouble. A busker interviewed by Henry Mayhew said that a street bandsman could make 'a guinea a week the year round'.¹⁵⁶

Such differentials nothing to encourage loyalty. Zerbini was dismissed by the Olympic's proprietor, Madame Vestris, and when he protested, he was removed from the theatre by a policeman. In the ensuing court case, which he won, it was stated that his missing rehearsals had been a factor in the decision to sack him.¹⁵⁷ In December 1839, a review of *Romeo and Juliet* at Drury Lane suggested that the culture of absenteeism was now out of control:

...Instead of three trombones we had only one (and that the tenor!), consequently the dirge in the middle suffered no slight curtailment of its due proportions; and a good natured gentlemen, to mend the matter, attempted to vamp up a bass by playing a succession of wrong notes on the ophicleide!! What with this, and only one clarionet (the second) instead of two, and four basses of which only one could be heard, we imagine the composer, Mr Macfarren...must have been excessively edified...This is disgraceful, and reflects small credit on the enthusiasm of the members of the orchestra...¹⁵⁸

We do not know what penalties, if any, were imposed on the missing players. As we have seen, in the 1820s fines had been levied for unexplained absence but it is possible that demand had outstripped supply to the point where players could pay the fine easily or, if dismissed, knew they could find another engagement. However, it is one thing to go on strike over a grievance, another simply not to appear for a performance without organising a

¹⁵⁶ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861) vol. 3 p. 163

¹⁵⁷ *The Sun* 7 February 1832 p. 4

¹⁵⁸ *The Era* 8 December 1839 p.3

deputy. That incident, and reports of others less colourful, suggest that the culture had reached the point where, as Joseph Bennett recalled:

There was hardly any discipline on the platform...these gentlemen did pretty much as they liked... Not even Mendelssohn, despite his personal charm and high distinction, could bend them to his will or secure decent order.¹⁵⁹

Changing orchestral behaviour: a tale of two conductors

From 1830, improvements were achieved by two conductors, Michael Costa and Louis Jullien. They made players attend rehearsals, eliminated deputies and kept their personnel more or less unchanged. In doing so, they brought the chaos to an end, at least in their own orchestras. Both recognised the potency of a single conductor standing at the front. Dual direction was unusually persistent in Britain; Koury cites an example of it as late as 1865¹⁶⁰ but Costa and Jullien both used a baton and insisted on being in sole charge. In other respects, they were quite different. Costa was an austere bully who kept control by the threat of dismissal. Jullien, who began working in London ten years later, was a dandy whose flamboyant exhibitions packed theatres and exasperated purists. As an impresario, he was able to decide his own schedule and his grasp of the market led him to a more benign regimen: he kept his orchestra together with good rates of pay and patterns of work that suited the way London musicians organised their diaries.

Both men insisted on thorough preparation. Jullien's rehearsals were closed to the public: handbills survive indicating that this rule was strictly enforced.¹⁶¹ Their players knew each

¹⁵⁹ Joseph Bennett, *Forty Years of Music* (London: Methuen, 1908) p. 335

¹⁶⁰ Koury, *Orchestral Performance Practices* p. 64

¹⁶¹ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.58

other well. Nothing has a more beneficial effect on ensemble, and this fact was used in Jullien's publicity:

These artistes having been constantly in the habit of performing together for nearly four years, produce that perfect ensemble which it is totally impossible to attain in an assembly even of the ablest musicians brought together merely for particular occasions, and not accustomed to practise in concert.¹⁶²

Under both men, orchestral players became less anonymous. After the Italian Opera's move to Covent Garden, publicity went into detail about the allocation of roles in the orchestra:

The two vacancies caused in the orchestra by the deaths of Mr. Moralt and Mr. Kearns, tenor players, have been filled up by Mr. Costa. Mr. Hill is now promoted to a position for which his great talents eminently qualify him, that of principal viola. Mr. W. Thomas has been taken from the second violins to take Mr. Hill's place, and Mr Westlake succeeds the late Mr. Kearns. Mr.

John Loder fills up the gap left in the second violins.¹⁶³

The announcement of the 1850 season went so far as to list all ninety-three members of the orchestra in the papers.¹⁶⁴ Advertisements for Jullien's 1851 concerts named thirty-two players,¹⁶⁵ many of them men of some distinction on the London scene. At various times, the Philharmonic players Griesbach, Cramer, Hill, Calkin, Thirlwall, Crouch, Hancock and

¹⁶² *Morning Post* 16 June 1845 p. 2

¹⁶³ *Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper* 4 April 1847 p. 10

¹⁶⁴ *Morning Post* 26 February 1850 p. 6

¹⁶⁵ *The Sun* 18 November 1851 p. 2

Casolani,¹⁶⁶ worked with him.¹⁶⁷ Tolbecque and Nadaud, leaders respectively of the Royal Italian Opera and the ballet, appeared with him for most of his London seasons.

Costa's modus operandi

When Costa was appointed the Royal Italian Opera's *maestro al clavicembalo* at the age of 22 the orchestra, amused by his 'unrough youth', sent him a welcome card with miniature razors attached to it. They may have been surprised by the speed with which he changed their working practices. John Cox's memoir recalls that the band 'chiefly consisted of the pupils of the principal violinists',¹⁶⁸ most likely a reference to the common practice of taking an apprentice on an engagement and pocketing his fee. Costa put a stop to that, then took draconian measures against absenteeism. John Ella recalled that the members of the band were 'neither very patient nor always punctual' at rehearsals.¹⁶⁹ He claimed to have suggested to Costa that players were earning so much from teaching, they could easily pay the fines that were imposed for absence or lateness. At the start of a season, Costa announced a new dispensation:

'Gentlemen, I am happy to tell you that I have abolished fines for absentees' (great applause); 'But, anyone absent at rehearsal without my permission forfeits his engagement' (murmurs sotto voce).¹⁷⁰

It is likely that Costa's obdurate nature worked to his advantage in taming what Henry Chorley called the 'rough materials' and 'disconnected folk' of his first orchestra:

¹⁶⁶ Adam Carse, *The Life of Jullien* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1951) p. 46

¹⁶⁷ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees GB-Lbl RPS MS 299

¹⁶⁸ Cox, *Musical Recollections* vol. 1 p. 180

¹⁶⁹ Ella, *Musical Sketches* p. 247

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.* pp. 247-248

good taste, good feeling, good manners are now the rule
(rather than the exception) in subordinate music; but
they were not so thirty years since.¹⁷¹

The evidence is overwhelming that the Kings' Theatre orchestra improved under Costa, but it is also clear that this was a matter of improved ensemble, nothing more. He was a poor musician. As a singer he had been 'far below mediocrity',¹⁷² as a keyboard player he was brutal; reviews criticised his 'ill accompanied' recitatives and said that he struck the keys like a bear.¹⁷³ He had a poor sense of tempo: on learning of his appointment to the Philharmonic Society, William Sterndale Bennett observed '...we might hear the whole of Beethoven's symphonies in one night (and) still have time to spare for supper'.¹⁷⁴ Even Costa's obituary mentioned his limited sympathies and called his alterations of established classics indefensible.¹⁷⁵ Berlioz was of a similar mind, attacking him in print for 'mutilating' the works of the great masters¹⁷⁶ and calling the additional parts for bass drum, ophicleide and trombones in *Don Giovanni* and other operas 'the utter ruin and destruction of art'.¹⁷⁷ Charles Hallé recalled a conversation in which a Lady Hastings was angry with 'interminable, monotonous, unmeaning recitatives' inserted into *Zauberflöte*:

Meyerbeer looked puzzled, Mozart's opera containing no
recitatives, and asked quietly: 'Quels sont donc les recitatifs
dont Lady Hastings parle?' [what, then, are the recitatives of
which Lady Hastings is speaking?] 'Ils sont de moi, monsieur'

¹⁷¹ Henry F. Chorley, *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1860) pp. 122-123

¹⁷² *The Harmonicon* (London: Samuel Leigh, 1829) p. 275

¹⁷³ *The Atlas* 7 March 1830 p. 10

¹⁷⁴ J. W. Davison, *From Mendelssohn to Wagner* (London: Wm. Reeves, 1912) p. 30

¹⁷⁵ 'Sir Michael Costa. Born, February 4, 1810. Died, April 28, 1884' *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* Jun. 1, 1884, pp. 321-323

¹⁷⁶ Hector Berlioz, *Mémoires* trans. David Cairns (London: Victor Gollacz, 1969) p. 574

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 106

[they are mine, Sir] said Costa, and Lady Hastings began to talk of something else.¹⁷⁸

He was a noisy conductor, who embraced the much-disliked habit of beating time audibly:

We wish signor Costa would content himself with being visible, and not audible, in the orchestra. He has literally beaten a hole in the top of his copy of the Overture of *Tancredi*. We hope he will...be satisfied with subjecting the irresponsible air to his 'unavoidable battoon' (sic).¹⁷⁹

The following year, reviews of his performances of *L'assedio di Corinta* evoked Aristophanes' *Frogs* in complaint:

...this was exaggerated and made offensive by (to borrow a word of Aristophanes) the perpetual phlatto-thratto-phlatto-thrat of the aforesaid Signor Costa, who has become altogether a nuisance...¹⁸⁰

With time the noise abated, but as a musician Costa remained a man of few ideas; as Bennett put it: 'he read the music and, reading nothing into it, was therewith content'.¹⁸¹ He was an ambitious composer, but his works were harmonically muddled and inclined to pomposity. None of this mattered. J.W. Davison saw in him 'a mind that was administrative rather than originative'¹⁸² and abolishing absenteeism and deputies was, fundamentally an administrative matter. Having hit upon a method that enabled an orchestra to play well without too much musical intervention on his part, he was able to elevate himself to the position of, effectively, the country's foremost conductor.

¹⁷⁸ Hallé, *Autobiography* p. 135

¹⁷⁹ *The Examiner* 7 June 1833 p. 6

¹⁸⁰ *The Examiner* 15 June 1834 p. 6

¹⁸¹ Bennett, *Forty Years of Music* pp. 53-54

¹⁸² Davison, *From Mendelssohn to Wagner* p. 108

Working for Costa

Costa's management style was ruthless and his insistence on being in control extended to making musicians share in his own professional gambles. He had a difficult relationship with Benjamin Lumley, who took over Her Majesty's Theatre after the sudden death of Frederick Laporte in 1842. This was largely over his ambitions as a composer. His opera *Don Carlos* was an expensive failure in 1844. According to Lumley, the vocal writing was unsympathetic and protestations from the singers, added to a significant financial loss, caused him to withdraw it.¹⁸³ Whatever the reason, Costa resented Lumley's reluctance to present more of his compositions and in 1846 he resigned. He was replaced by Michael Balfe.

The following season, a rival Italian opera company was announced for Covent Garden, with Costa as musical director. Costa wanted Lumley's orchestra to move to Covent Garden: the pressures he applied to achieve this were described by Tolbecque and Nadaud, leaders of the opera and ballet at the King's Theatre:

One may easily imagine what deep considerations were, to persons of limited revenues, the offer of increased pay, with the prospect of less labour (the suppression of ballet being promised), and, still more, the fear that no artist not engaging with the hostile party would be employed as heretofore at the Philharmonic and ancient concerts.¹⁸⁴

The paper described Costa's influence as 'baneful' but despite the pressure put on them, Tolbecque, Nadaud and twenty-two other players remained with Lumley, who compared the seceders to mediaeval *condottieri* following an admired captain.¹⁸⁵ Aside from considerations of loyalty - and perhaps a reluctance to return to Costa's regime - the men who

¹⁸³ Benjamin Lumley, *Reminiscences of the Opera* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864) pp. 89-91

¹⁸⁴ *Morning Post* 4 January 1847 p. 6

¹⁸⁵ Lumley, *Reminiscences* pp. 158-159

remained may have calculated that long-term prospects for the new company were uncertain. At Her Majesty's Theatre, the seasons of 1843-46 had been successful financially as well as artistically. As to consequential losses, the Antient Concert was in its death throes, and the latest surviving receipts show that by 1839 it was paying less than it had twenty years before.¹⁸⁶ Losing the small amount of work offered by the Philharmonic Society - which paid most of its players only £15 for the 1846 season - may have seemed preferable to finding oneself without an opera engagement if Costa's project folded after one or two seasons. At first, remaining with Lumley must have seemed a good choice: despite its starting capital of £35,000¹⁸⁷ the Covent Garden company was nearly bankrupt by the end of its first season. A new manager, Frederick Gye, rescued it¹⁸⁸ but the market for high-cost opera seats was too small to sustain two companies. Neither prospered despite - or perhaps because of - the popularity of opera at the minor theatres. For the players, loyalty did not pay. By 1852, Costa's company boasted a repertoire of thirty-six operas 'complete in Scenery, Costumes and Appointments'¹⁸⁹ and, perhaps with an eye on the more affluent portion of the shilling public, produced *Pietro il Grande*, a new opera by Jullien. Her Majesty's struggled to compete and, after a poor season in 1852, it closed, only reopening after the Covent Garden fire in 1856. It is unlikely that those who had remained loyal to Lumley found places at Covent Garden (certainly Tolbecque and Nadaud did not) but the work available elsewhere was by 1852 growing at such a rapid rate that good players ran little risk of finding themselves in difficulties.

¹⁸⁶ GB-Lbl L.22.a.21.

¹⁸⁷ See Willert Beale, *The Light of Other Days Seen Through the Wrong End of an Opera Glass* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1890) p. 44

¹⁸⁸ See Gabriella Dideriksen and Matthew Ringel 'Frederick Gye and "The Dreadful Business of Opera Management"'. *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 19:1 (1995), 3-30

¹⁸⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 15 March 1852 p. 4

Costa proved to be a somewhat uninvolved captain of his orchestral *condottieri*. The Covent Garden proprietor, Giuseppe Persiani, fled debts of £12,000 and went into hiding. The theatre manager, Thomas Beale, sent his son Willert in pursuit. After a fruitless search in Milan, Bologna and Venice, Persiani was discovered in Paris. Willert returned to London to act as manager while his father went to Paris to negotiate. His return was difficult:

A deputation from the band awaited me, members of the chorus came to me for special information, carpenters and scene-shifters asked me furtively for news as I crossed the stage, and ballet dancers crowded around the door... the malcontents continued to murmur at every possible opportunity until evening, and even during the performance of Lucrezia Borgia.¹⁹⁰

He received no support from Costa, who that evening between the acts sat in his usual chair onstage and was unusually sullen. He offered no help to the players and chorus who had followed him from the flourishing opera at Her Majesty's. He advised them to press their claims with the new management but beyond that he appeared not to be interested.

Throughout his career, he used insecurity and disproportionate sanctions as a means of control:

He himself was invariably present on payday and would remorselessly dock the salary of any musician who had been absent or late from any cause whatsoever. Did the unfortunate man venture to resist his tyranny, for tyranny it was, it meant not only the loss of his engagement at the opera, but at the

¹⁹⁰ Beale, *The Light of Other Days* p. 54

various provincial festivals and the Sacred Harmonic Society at which Costa's will was paramount.¹⁹¹

His friends were not exempt from rough treatment. In August 1848, John Ella got into a spat with him over payment for benefit concerts. There were five of these during that month, including a performance of *La Donna del Lago* for Delafield's benefit. Ella's account is incomplete, but suggests that he placed himself as intermediary between the band and its conductor:

The band complained that Delafield never asked them to play gratis - I said that D - at his own table declared that C- promised to obtain the Band's consent to play one night gratis but not three nights on half terms. Costa denied making the promise¹⁹².

Ella would have been wise to stay out of the row but probably thought his position protected him. A socially ambitious man, he counted among his friends Willert Beale and Persiani's successor, Edward Delafield. He wrote to the *Morning Post* in defence of the players who had abandoned Lumley, earning a public rebuttal from the theatre and an accusation from the editor of 'vague and malevolent assertion'.¹⁹³ He was apt to be querulous and critical of colleagues, some of whom would have remembered that it was he who had advised Costa to dismiss latecomers. Costa addressed the band over the issue of unpaid performances and seems to have won them over. Ella 'was insulted by the groans therefrom' and that evening resigned.

¹⁹¹ *Annals of Covent Garden Theatre* pp. 254-255

¹⁹² Scrapbook with two letters concerning the disagreement, with pencilled commentary by John Ella GB-Ob EllaC 81 p. 68

¹⁹³ *Morning Post* 7 January 1846 p. 3

That was not the end of the matter. At a directors' meeting of the Philharmonic Society four months later, which Costa attended as principal conductor, it was 'Resolved that the Re-engagement of the following gentlemen be taken into consideration at a full meeting of Directors'. Ten men, Ella among them, were considered for dismissal. In the event, the other nine were re-engaged but it was decided unanimously that Ella would be removed.¹⁹⁴ That by itself does not prove that Costa used his position to dismiss Ella, but it would have been in character for him to have done so.

High art, quadrilles and orchestral celebrities: the contradictions of Louis Jullien

Costa was 'the embodiment of calm, concentrated will without the least show or ostentation'. Jullien was not. It might be that a modern observer would not find him especially eccentric but in his own time he was regarded by some as a madman. He was one of the first conductors to realise that antics on the podium could be a selling point. His histrionics suited his unstable personality - and were very good for business:

He was ceremoniously, grandly emotional. He would appear in a demonstrative shirtfront, conduct with a demonstrative beat, would be warmed by the excitement of a quadrille into standing up on his gilt chair, wherein at the conclusion of a Symphony, he would sink back with demonstrative exhaustion ("charming languor"). He was melodramatic, transpontine... Costa was made of the sterner stuff, but Jullien with his bombast had perhaps a spark of ætherial fire.¹⁹⁵

'Transpontine' referred to the extravagant melodramas produced by the Surrey theatres across the bridges from the main part of the city. For much of the nineteenth century it was used to

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of Directors' meetings on 10 and 21 December 1848 GB-Lbl RPS MS 282

¹⁹⁵ Davison, *From Mendelssohn to Wagner* pp. 109-110.

describe anyone who, emotionally, went too far.¹⁹⁶ Jullien deserved the epithet, but not the commonly levelled charge that he was a fake:

...despite the unbounded charlatanism of the lucky
speculator...if Jullien achieves nothing for art, he achieves a
great deal for artists.¹⁹⁷

If there was dissimulation it was that he was a capable and serious musician masquerading as a phoney. Wilhelm Kuhe, one of Costa's most uncritical admirers, was one of many who understood that Jullien was trying to increase the audience for serious music:

...by including in his programme, as he invariably did, a
movement of a Beethoven Symphony or some other classic, he
was the means of popularising good music amongst a class of
the public who never had an opportunity of becoming
acquainted with these masterpieces.¹⁹⁸

'A great deal for artists': working for Jullien

For all his tomfoolery, Jullien's concerts contained much to attract a good player. A musician engaged for the first week of his November season in 1848 would have given six properly rehearsed performances of Beethoven's *Second Symphony*. After Jullien's death, one of his bass players, John Reynolds, wrote to the critic Joseph Bennett:

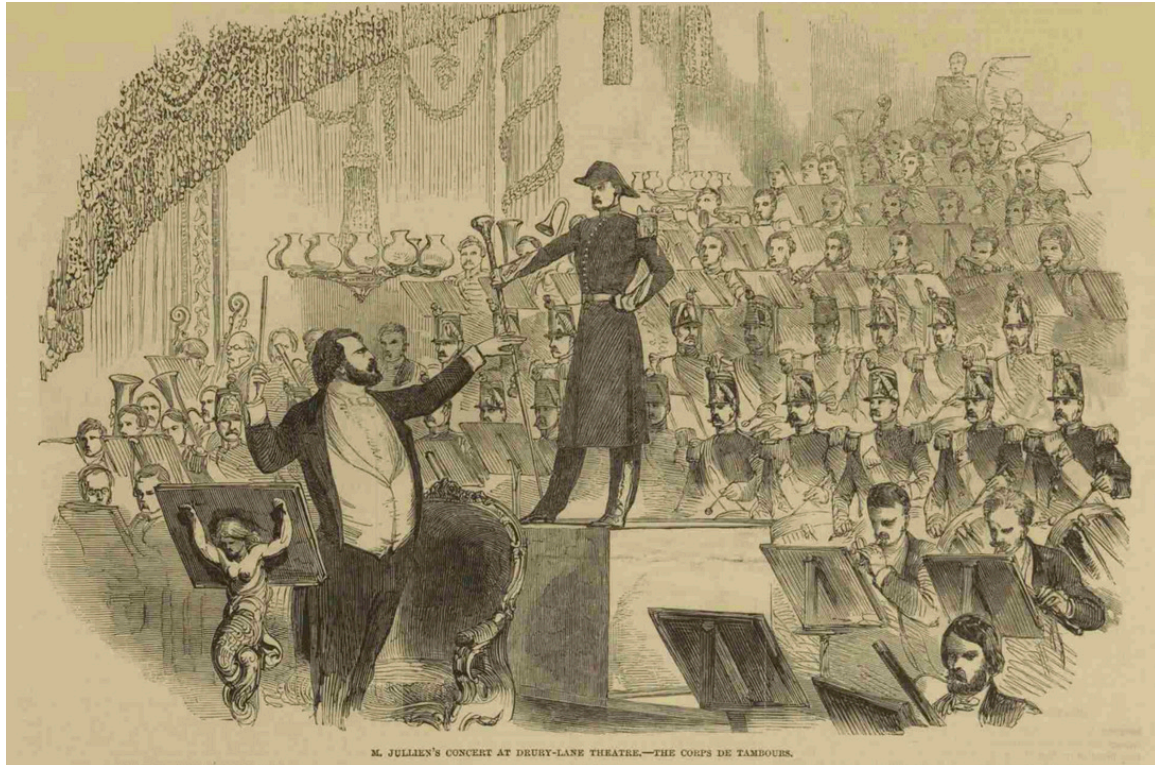
... never was Covent Garden or Drury Lane more crammed than
on a Beethoven night, when Jullien gave the concerts....I may
say that I never heard finer performances of many classical
overtures and symphonies than those directed by Jullien, and I

¹⁹⁶ OED

¹⁹⁷ *Illustrated London News* 6 December 1845 p. 13

¹⁹⁸ Wilhelm Kuhe, *My Musical Recollections* (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1896) p. 88

have played them under all the great conductors for over fifty years.¹⁹⁹



Ill. 3.2 A Jullien Concert at Drury Lane *Illustrated London News* 23 November 1850 p. 13

As a composer, Jullien was limited but in a different manner from Costa. He was light, trivial even, and never pretended otherwise. His transpontine histrionics may or may not have been useful to players getting on with the job. As with Costa's regimen, what mattered was that the discipline of proper rehearsal and no deputies produced results.

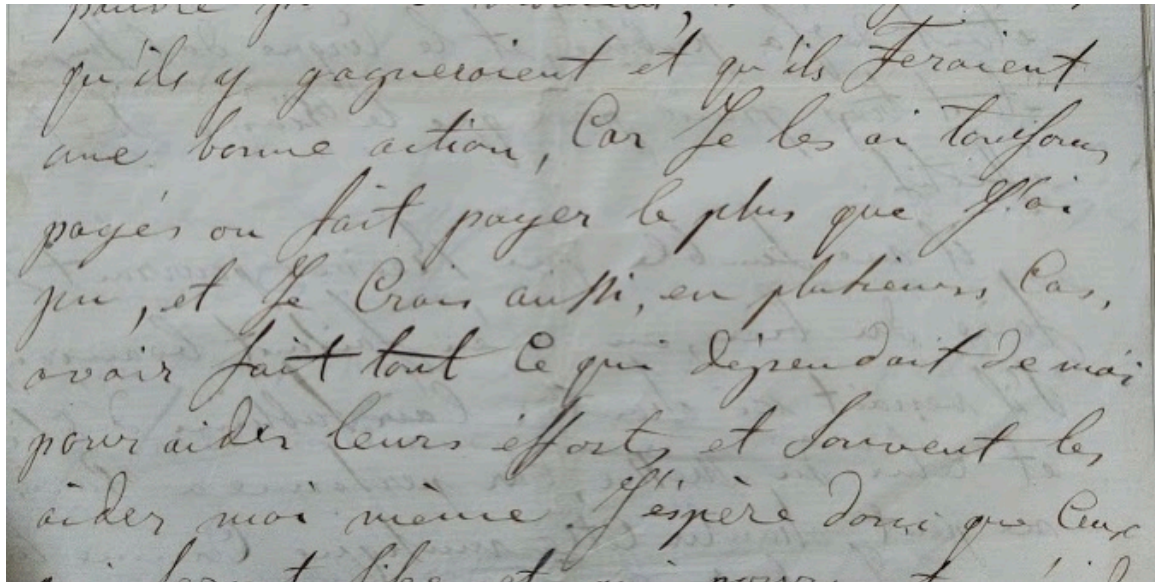
He organised his concerts as blocks of work to which players could easily commit. His season for the autumn of 1848 was typical: he took Drury Lane Theatre for a month from 3 November and gave six concerts a week.²⁰⁰ He paid his players at the highest rates he could afford.²⁰¹ His business records were lost in the 1856 Covent Garden fire but if we guess that

¹⁹⁹ Bennett, *Forty Years of Music* pp. 208-209

²⁰⁰ *Lady's Newspaper* 23 October 1848 p. 23

²⁰¹ Davison, *From Mendelssohn to Wagner* p. 244

he matched the usual opera and benefit rate of around 1gn a night, the resultant fee of 24gn for a month's work would have been an attractive proposition. Those who had the stamina earned extra fees at the private parties where Jullien conducted after the main concerts. If the rehearsal schedule precluded other engagements, it was a tolerable restriction.



III. 3.3 Detail of a letter from Louis Jullien to J. W. Davison 3 July 1859, mentioning players' fees. Lbl Add MS 70922 fo. 181

His popularity ensured financial stability - most of the time. 'An old associate' of Jullien's said that in 1856 the players in the Surrey Gardens Hall went on strike because they had not been paid; Jullien stood on a chair to address them and then, as his business associate approached cried 'Gentlemen, my prayers have been heard; *voilà l'homme avec l'argent*'. Though the players swarmed 'like bees round a lump of sugar' they were not paid and went home. Jullien promptly enlisted the help of a military band playing in the gardens and gave his concert with them. Taking advantage of the fact that the Indian Mutiny was then in progress, he announced to the audience that 'his Sepoys had revolted and that had it not been for the gallantry of the British soldiers he would have been sacrificed'.²⁰²

²⁰² *Watson's Art Journal* vol. 7 No.11 (July 6, 1867) p.172 The story is repeated, with modifications, in Walter Maynard, *The Enterprising Impresario* (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co. 1867) pp. 160-161

Jullien was the most prolific concert promoter in the country and one of the largest employers of musicians: in the ten years from 1840 to 1849 he gave fifteen seasons of promenade concerts in London theatres, four summer seasons at Surrey Gardens and one season of grand opera.²⁰³ The promenade concerts alone created more than four times the employment that the Philharmonic Society offered, and for the smaller group that he toured with, there was work outside the capital as well. It was unusual for a singer to perform at a Jullien concert. When an operatic aria was programmed, it was usually played as a wind solo, and the soloists, for the most part, played in the orchestra as well. Their names appeared in advertisements and reviews and a few - the trombonist Cioffi, the trumpeter Koenig, and Prospère the ophicleide player - became minor celebrities. It is likely that his orchestral soloists earned decent extra fees; he was certainly generous to his star performers. Camillo Sivori, reputed to have been Paganini's only pupil, earned £1,000 for two months of concerts in 1845²⁰⁴ and in 1857 Joseph Joachim was offered £240 for a month, though he declined to appear.²⁰⁵

Players as entrepreneurs: string quartets and the Musard craze

The late 1830s saw an experiment with something akin to a self-governing orchestra. From the middle of the decade, some of the better-known players began promoting their own chamber music series. Christina Bashford identifies a dozen of them beginning in 1836 alone.²⁰⁶ The 'Quartett Concerts' (sic) at Hanover Square Rooms began in March of that year, promoted by Henry Blagrove. They were followed by the Classical Chamber Concerts at Willis's Rooms with Mori leading, Lindley on cello and Dragonetti on the bass. The repertoire was serious - it was at events like these that Beethoven's late quartets were first

²⁰³ Carse *Life of Jullien* p. 65

²⁰⁴ *Weekly Dispatch* 3 August 1845 p. 8

²⁰⁵ See Joachim's letter in the Introduction p. 25

²⁰⁶ Christina Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets and the London Press, 1836-ca.1850', *The Musical Quarterly*, 84:1 (2000), 84-122

heard in England - and they were not confined to string chamber music; in 1838 Puzzi put on wind quintet concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms, performing Reicha and Krommer.²⁰⁷

There was money to be made. *The Times*, reviewing a series of inexpensive chamber concerts mounted by John Thomas Willy in 1849-50, in which he performed a Beethoven piano trio with William Sterndale Bennett, praised the promoter with a distinctively Victorian mixture of high-mindedness and respect for profit:

The crowds...have not been attracted to the promenade concerts unobserved by Mr Willy and others...He sees that there is a public taste for good music at a cheap rate, and determines to profit by it. His aim is, not to lose money “for the love of art”, but to make money by legitimate means. Mr Willy is therefore as much a speculator as M. Jullien.²⁰⁸

Blagrove, Willy, Puzzi, Lindley and Dragonetti all undertook orchestral work, and it is easy to imagine band-room conversations prompting colleagues to try something on a larger scale.

There was room in players' schedules for the experiment: the opera season had been shortening throughout the decade. In the 1820s it had occasionally begun in late December, but in 1833 the first night was 16 February²⁰⁹ and in 1836 the season ran only from 5 March to 6 August.²¹⁰ That year, the St James's Theatre and the Colosseum had given promenade concerts. Neither was successful, but in early 1838 four players from the Philharmonic Society and opera, Thomas Harper, Henry Platt, Grattan Cooke and Richard Hatton, mounted a series of their own at the Lyceum. Only performers were allowed a stake in the venture,

²⁰⁷ *Morning Post* 3 February 1838 p. 5

²⁰⁸ *The Times* 1 January 1850 p. 1

²⁰⁹ *The Times* 18 February 1833 p. 2

²¹⁰ *The Times* 25 February 1836 p.2 and 8th August 1836 p. 2

and the concerts were put on 'for their joint benefit as to profit and loss'.²¹¹ They followed the *à la Musard* formula of opera overtures interspersed with quadrilles. The auditorium was decorated, and doors opened an hour before the performance so that money could be spent on food and drink. A penny pamphlet called *The Concert Companion*²¹² contained programmes and gossip. It gave the name of every member of the orchestra, roughly half of whom played at the Philharmonic Society and the opera.

Being one's own orchestral manager potentially eliminated wrangles over absence. In that respect the genesis of the promenade concerts cooperative bore some similarity to that of the London Symphony Orchestra, which was formed in 1904 partly as a reaction to Henry Wood's refusal to allow deputies at rehearsals. It had something of the same revolutionary impetus too. The tone of the *Companion* was cheerful and garrulous, but sometimes revealed underlying resentments:

This is, without exception, the most successful project ever entered into by instrumental performers in this country... if the result be unpleasant to the managers of our theatres...they have in some measure been instrumental in causing the same. The unmerited neglect and the grudgingly paid salaries which have been doled out to the talented musicians of England...have been always sources of vexation and chagrin to the whole profession....their industry is great, and their capability not to be surpassed; but should anyone doubt this latter quality in them, let him attend these concerts...²¹³

²¹¹ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 19 April 1840 p. 5

²¹² *Concert Companion* bound, an incomplete set. GB-Lbl General Reference Collection 7892.tt.12. .

²¹³ *Concert Companion* No.XLV (November 1839)

THE CONCERT COMPANION.

No. 11.]

[PRICE 1d.]



Theatre Royal Lyceum and English Opera House.

PROMENADE CONCERTS A LA MUSARD.

PROGRAMME FOR THIS EVENING.

PART I.

Overture, "Anacreon" ... Cherubini
Quadrille, "Venise" ... Musard
Overture, "Oberon" ... Weber
Quadrille, "Le Danois" (by desire) ... Musard
Overture, "Les Aveugles de Tolède" ... Mehul
Waltz, "Le Duc de Reichstadt" ... Strauss

PART II.

Overture, "Guillaume Tell" ... Rossini
Quadrille, "La Prison d'Edinburgh" ... Musard
Overture, "Zampa" ... Herold
Quadrille, "Les Echos" ... Musard
Overture "Gustavus" ... Auber
Waltz, "Hommage à la Reine d'Angleterre" Strauss

Wednesday and Saturday, December 26 and 29, a Solo on the Clarinet by Mr. Lazarus.
Thursday and Friday, December 27 and 28, a Solo on the Violin by Mr. Willy.

NAMES OF PERFORMERS.

Conductor.	Mr. Blagrove,	Mr. Gibbs,	Mr. Pigott,	Oboes.	Cornets à Piston.	Tromboni.
Signor Negri.	C. Betts,	Elsmore,	White,	Mr. G. Cooke,	Mr. C. E. Laurent,	Mr. Smythies, sen.
Leader.	Wood,	Streather.	Acraman.	Keating.	Jarrett.	Smythies,
Mr. Willy.	Case.	Tenors.	Double Basses.	Clarionets.	Horus.	Healy.
Deputy Leader.	Second Violins.	Mr. Hill,	Mr. Edgar,	Mr. Lazarus,	Mr. Platt,	Kettle Drum.
Mr. Patey.	Mr. Watkins,	Calkin,	Griffiths,	Mc. Donald.	Rae,	Mr. Goodwin.
First Violins.	G. Richards,	Alsept,	G. Cubitt,	Bassoons.	C. Harper,	Side Drum.
Mr. W. Cramer,	Hope,	Eastcott,	Severn,	Mr. Baumann,	Horn.	Mr. Horton.
Bannister,	Ireland,	Barnett,	Griffiths, jun.	Keating, jun.	Trumpets.	Big Drum.
Dunsford,	Smith,	Violoncellor.	Mr. Richardson,	Flageolet.	Mr. Harper,	Mr. Dumont.
Shallchen,	Jacobs,	Mr. Hatton,	Roe, sen.	Mr. J. Streather.	Harper, jun.	Triangle.
Payton,	Brooks,	Goodban,	Saynor.		Ophicleide.	Mr. Bernard.
					Mr. Ellison.	

THE SOLOS WILL BE PERFORMED BY

Messrs. WILLY, HARPER, PLATT, G. COOKE, HATTON, BAUMANN, RICHARDSON, LAZARUS, C. E. LAURENT, HILL, EDGAR, J. STREATHER, PATEY, SAYNOR, HARPER, JUN., RICHARDS, &c.

Admission One Shilling.—Doors open at Half-past Seven.—The Concert commences at Eight, and terminates by Eleven.

Stalls for the Balcony, and Seats in the Dress Circle, to be had on Payment of 1s. extra.

Private Boxes, £1 1s. and 10s. 6d. each, may be obtained at the Theatre; also of Messrs. SEGGIN, 12, Regent Street

MITCHELL, Bond Street; SAMS, St. James' Street; ANDREWS, Bond Street, and all the Principal Libraries.

The Quadrilles to be had at Messrs. Boosey's, Holles Street, Oxford Street.

CAUTION.—The only correct Bill of the Evening is sold within the Theatre, price One Penny. Those sold at the Doors are incorrect.

Ill. 3.4 Two pages from the *Theatrical and Concert Companion*

Promenade finances and competition

The Lyceum held 2100. Admission to the promenade was 1s, a seat in the balcony circle cost 2s and private boxes seating eight people were 1gn.²¹⁴ £150 seems a fair if conservative estimate for a full house, excluding takings from refreshments. In March 1839, at the end of the first season, the profits were 'amiably divided.'²¹⁵ The band seem not to have foreseen that their success would breed competition. They moved to the Adelphi Theatre and resumed their concerts, whereupon the Lyceum engaged the band of the Coldstream Guards for a season of 'military promenades' following much the same formula as the Musard concerts.²¹⁶ After that, the Valentino Orchestra carried on in similar fashion. Other theatres joined in, with the Theatre Royal, Haymarket boasting of its 'Orchesonium or Ascending Orchestra' which would give its 'highly popular' band as much weight of sound as the one at the Lyceum.²¹⁷ Under the heading 'Musard Multiplied' one paper mocked the crowded market, suggesting that a 7,000-seat concert hall in Leicester Square would soon replace all of London's theatres.²¹⁸

The original players, struggling financially, published a disclaimer stating that they, the founders of 'this new and admired Entertainment' were, essentially, the original and best and had 'nothing to do with the different establishments now offering promenade concerts'. This was not quite true: the clarinettist Henry Lazarus and a couple of the other cooperative players were also playing solos at the Lyceum's military promenades. The Adelphi series was a failure, and the members of the cooperative became liable for its debts. There was litigation to follow. Those who had not taken part in the Adelphi season were excluded from rehearsals for the series that began at the Lyceum in October 1839. The following April, the

²¹⁴ *Morning Advertiser* 6 October 1841 p. 2

²¹⁵ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 19 April 1840 p. 5

²¹⁶ *The Sun* 24 April 1839 p. 1

²¹⁷ *Morning Post* 23 April 1839 p. 2

²¹⁸ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 21 April 1839 p. 5

disagreement got as far as the Court of Chancery²¹⁹ but seems to have been resolved out of court.

There were soon more promenade concerts than demand could support. Eduard Eliason experimented with a band of seventy at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand in 1839,²²⁰ then at the end of 1840 he took a lease on Drury Lane and engaged Musard himself to conduct. John Willy put on a series at the Princess's Theatre, but his orchestra was small and unimpressive; audiences were barely large enough to cover the cost of lighting the theatre.

He closed before the intended end of his season and suffered a heavy financial loss.²²¹ It was said of the Lyceum cooperative that though 'individually and as a whole they bear away the palm of merit' and had the best solo performers, they were 'exerting themselves more than ever to battle against the fearful rivalry which they have to contend with'.²²² Soon the concerts were 'at that stage of failure which threatens their speedy extinction'²²³ and it was hinted that the players of the cooperative had been outwitted by the theatre's management so that they found themselves performing without pay.

The details of the cooperative's end are not clear. A season at the Lyceum was announced, starting in October 1841, but it was under the direction of a Monsieur Emile Laurent. He was a cornopean virtuoso and an experienced impresario. He engaged Musard to conduct.²²⁴ The following year, Jullien presided, and brought with him several players from his Paris concerts.²²⁵ It appears that under Laurent, the Lyceum musicians, who were mostly the same as in earlier seasons, had reverted to the status of employees. The fashion for quadrille

²¹⁹ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 19 April 1840

²²⁰ *The Times* 28 February 1839 p. 5

²²¹ *Weekly Dispatch* 24 January 1841 p. 8

²²² *Weekly Dispatch* 18 October 1840 p. 5

²²³ *The Atlas* 31 October 1840 p. 12

²²⁴ *The Era* 26 September 1841 p. 5

²²⁵ Carse, *Life of Jullien* pp. 44-46

concerts proved long-lasting, but there do not appear to have been further experiments in self-governance among the musicians who played in them.

Opera wars, foreign invaders and a population explosion: the mid century

After the departure of Costa and most of his orchestra for Covent Garden in 1847, *Punch* was initially partisan for Lumley's company. It described the rivalry between the two houses in military terms:

The operatic war has commenced between the two great powers, and the season seems favourable to hostilities on both sides... On both sides there is a determined and well disciplined band, under experienced leaders... We shall frequently visit the seat of war, provided we find the seat agreeable.²²⁶

It was a war fought on more than one front. London's population had doubled in the previous thirty years, and the advent of railways had led to musical tourism; *The Musical Herald* noted people in boxes at Her Majesty's who 'came all the way from Manchester, Liverpool and other distant places'.²²⁷ With demand so strong, opera speculations increased, apparently undeterred by the financial difficulties suffered by the rival Italian opera companies. At the time of the rift, Drury Lane was engaged in vigorous promotion of English operas, and by 1846 had already presented fourteen of them.²²⁸ In the autumn of the same year, the Princess's Theatre began an opera season with *The Wilis, or the Night Dancers* by Edward Loder. A critic speculated: 'it is evident that the literary drama will for some time give way to music'.²²⁹ It was an astute observation: opera was, like concerts before it, developing into mass entertainment. In 1850 the Royal Grecian Saloon mounted several, including Auber's

²²⁶ *Punch*, 29 March 1851, quoted in Oscar Maurer, 'Punch and the Opera War, 1847-1867', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 1:2 (1959), 139-170

²²⁷ Quoted in Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic* p. 99

²²⁸ *Morning Post* 10 November 1846 p. 5

²²⁹ *Evening Mail* 28 October 1846 p. 2

*Fra Diavolo*²³⁰ and in 1852 the Royal Surrey Theatre had a long season under the direction of Miss Romer, which included Balfe's *The Enchantress*, Flotow's *Leoline* and 'a Grand Opera' that for some reason was not identified.²³¹ Even the St. Helena Gardens in Rotherhithe competed, with a production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. The 1855 opera season at Drury Lane included *Freischütz*, *The Bohemian Girl* and Wallace's *Karitana*²³² while the Great National Theatre in Shoreditch was offering *Faust and Marguerite*. By 1859 it was possible to see an opera of some kind on most nights of the week. Drury Lane gave *Lucia di Lammermoor*,²³³ the Royal English Opera performed Meyerbeer's *Dinora*,²³⁴ and its production of his *Le Pardon de Ploërmel*, received a glowing review in the *London Evening Standard*, which singled out 'one of the finest (if not the best) orchestras ever gathered in an English theatre'.²³⁵ Canterbury Hall in the Westminster Road was presenting 'Verdi's Grand Opera *Macbeth*, produced here for the first time in England' while the City of London Theatre in Norton Folgate had *Il Trovatore*. When the New Royal Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel performed *Il Trovatore* and after it *La Sonnambula* (sic) a review said that it was played 'to such an audience as we never before saw within those walls, cramming every part...'²³⁶ Smaller venues like the Winchester Hall presented operatic choruses and the Green Gate Saloon advertised a programme that must have used some sort of orchestra since it began its entertainment with the overture to *Semiramide*.

Apart from newspaper advertisements, records for those lesser theatres are almost non-existent, but it is likely that those which combined opera with other entertainments kept a modest permanent house band which they expanded for opera nights. In 1859, the Great

²³⁰ *The Era* 21 July 1850 p. 1

²³¹ *The Era* 20 June 1852 p. 1

²³² *The Era* 12 August 1855 p. 1

²³³ *Morning Chronicle* 14 October 1859 p. 3

²³⁴ *London Evening Standard* 1 November 1859 p. 4

²³⁵ *London Evening Standard* 4 October 1859 p. 3

²³⁶ *East London Observer* 22 October 1859 p. 3.

National Theatre presented *Lucia di Lammermoor* on Tuesdays and Fridays, with plays the other nights. The City of London Theatre was performing the same opera on Mondays and Thursdays, again with plays on no-opera nights,²³⁷ which suggests there may have been one company moving between the two theatres.

Operas were presumably cut to make room for the farces and pantomimes that were given after them: unless the New Royal Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel shortened *Trovatore* and *Somnambula* drastically, its evening's entertainment would have gone on for something approaching seven hours. Large forces were common - the Pavilion advertised a chorus and orchestra of more than seventy²³⁸ - but the makeup of the bands is not recorded. The operas were unlikely to have been performed in their original form; Costa was cheerfully mutilating the works of the masters at the Royal Italian Opera, and it would be fanciful to imagine that a theatre in the East End was more scrupulous. Theatres which presented operas as items in a mixed programme probably re-orchestrated them to suit whatever forces happened to be available. 'Replenishing' a score so that military wind players carried more of the musical burden was a possibility, so too was simplification of string parts. It is a reasonable assumption that the string section at the great National Theatre in Shoreditch was not of a higher calibre than the one that played the simple parts in *The Dillosk Gatherer* at the Lyceum, and editing might well have been a matter of practical necessity.

The sheer quantity of opera and burletta on offer indicates a much-increased orchestral population. Many, perhaps most, of the players came from the army, and there was a significant number of instrumentalists whose musical activities only formed part of their income; these will be dealt with in later chapters. It is striking that the additional players appeared very rapidly at the start of the 1850s. It is a reasonable assumption that some at least

²³⁷ *The Era* 18 November 1855 p. 1

²³⁸ *East London Observer* 29 October 1859 p. 4

came from abroad, but the limited documentation is contradictory. At the upper end, foreign influence was nugatory. In 1825 the Philharmonic Society's 66-strong band had included sixteen foreigners; by 1852 the band had grown to eighty-one but only employed twelve from overseas. It was similar elsewhere: only fifteen of Covent Garden's large 1850 orchestra were of overseas origin. Her Majesty's Theatre, however, faced in 1847 with the loss of its orchestra, was said to have engaged most of its new band from Europe. The reasons for doing so may have been more complex than a simple need to find musicians. Balfe seems to have been a poor conductor and when he took over from Costa, he had encountered difficulties with the orchestra, described by one paper as having a 'disposition to disallow his competence and scorn his governance'.²³⁹ It was hoped that his imported players might be more inclined to show 'a fitting sense of dependence'.²⁴⁰ Of the minor theatres we know nothing. They may have been staffed by musicians from the continent, they may not.

The band list for the first season of the New Philharmonic Society in 1852 suggests that things were changing. Forty-nine of the players had foreign names,²⁴¹ and the 112 musicians included only thirty players who were either engaged by the Philharmonic Society or the opera. We cannot tell how many were resident in London and how many were imported just for those concerts. Travel had, by 1852, become inexpensive and easy; the General Steam Navigation Company charged 16s. one way from London to Paris in second class and on the morning after the Society's first concert there was a sailing at eight o'clock from St Katherine's Wharf.²⁴² For many of the men who played under Berlioz, a trip to London for a single concert would have been a more attractive proposition than spending a long time there. London was increasingly an unhealthy place to live:

²³⁹ *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 18 February 1847 p. 1

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ Prospectus and programmes for the first season of the New Philharmonic Society GB-Lbl e.1395.a.(1)

²⁴² *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 24 March 1852 p. 1

Since much of the capital's drinking water was drawn from the river the citizens of the metropolis were literally drinking one another's sewage but this was of less immediate concern than were the foul smells...²⁴³

Vagrant sewage notwithstanding, upheavals in Europe in 1848 drove some players to London. Bernard Porter's assessment of the 1848 migrants as 'too interested in politics and in returning to want to stay in Britain long enough to stimulate its industry'²⁴⁴ may be generally correct, but for the musicians among them the growing market for players was an incentive to remain. There was a large Italian enclave in Holborn, near the theatres²⁴⁵ and the German exiles included many artists and musicians. The more educated among them complained of hostility toward the arts and serious music among the British²⁴⁶ but escape from the constraints of court employment may have been attractive. Ella mentioned a refugee Adolf Politzer, a Hungarian quartet player²⁴⁷ who worked at the New Philharmonic Society. The leader of the second violins there, Leopold Jansa, was an indirect refugee: he had taken part in a morning concert at Willis's Rooms in aid of Hungarian refugees,²⁴⁸ for which he had been deprived of his position in the Hapsburg court chapel and banished from Austria.²⁴⁹ At the lowest end of capability, fiddlers who might have struggled to find employment at home, would have been able to work at some level in the London profession. We do not know whether any immigrant players encountered hostility; it is conceivable that locals who were having trouble finding deputies welcomed their appearance.

²⁴³ Stephen Halliday, *The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the cleansing of the Victorian metropolis* (Stroud: The History Press, 2018) p. ix

²⁴⁴ Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 22

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* pp. 42-43

²⁴⁶ Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: exile and asylum in Victorian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986) p. 194

²⁴⁷ John Ella (ed.), *Record of the Musical Union* 1 June 1852

²⁴⁸ *The Sun* 14 July 1851 p. 3

²⁴⁹ Grove entry for Leopold Jansa

Cultural differences and playing styles

Did such a turbulent, commercial environment have musical consequences? Richard Wagner thought it did. In 1855 he described the Philharmonic Society orchestra in ambivalent terms:

A magnificent orchestra, as far as the principal members go.

Superb tone - the leaders had the finest instruments I have ever listened to - strong *esprit de corps* - but no distinct style.²⁵⁰

This was nothing new. In 1829, Mendelssohn had complained:

...everything spiritual is lacking...no tender oboes, clarinets, or bassoons, everything is rough and clumsy; no liveliness, but just speed, no respect for the work of art...²⁵¹

There was no 'London school' of string playing equivalent to those found in Paris or Milan; the ever-changing mixture of nationalities, styles and levels of competence made such a thing impossible. It would be going too far to say that a wide range of approaches and working on minimal rehearsal amounted to a national style, but certain characteristics were unique to London. The habit of under-rehearsal (or no rehearsal at all) remained when Costa or Jullien were not involved. A review in *The Times* of the Sacred Harmonic Society encapsulated the problem:

... we humbly suggest that when an oratorio of the high character and extreme difficulty of *Elijah* is to be given... A preparatory rehearsal is not only advisable, but indispensable.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Reginald Nettel, *The Orchestra in England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956) p. 185

²⁵¹ Letter from Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy to Adolf Marx, 9 May 1829 quoted in Rudolf Elvers (ed.) and Craig Tomlinson (trans.), *Felix Mendelssohn, a life in letters*. (New York: International Publishing Corporation, 1986) p.67

²⁵² *The Times* 24 December 1850 p. 8

In 1852, an otherwise favourable review of *Fra Diavolo* excoriated the orchestra at Drury Lane, suggesting that a mixture of exhaustion, disaffection and incompetence was still very common:

Either they had not rehearsed sufficiently, or they failed to pay unremitting attention to the indications of the director's *baton*...if out of 50 performers some cannot play and some do not, while some though capable, are negligent and careless, the efficacy of their body becomes materially reduced. We can account in no other way for so many *contretemps*, and so many instances of coarse and unfinished execution in the music...²⁵³

Perhaps the most distinctive quality in British orchestral playing in the mid century was the level of aggression in the brass, especially the trombones. From the late 1830s there were regular complaints about it; the reorchestration of *Don Giovanni* used at the Royal Italian opera in 1840 provoked a transpontine response in one reviewer:

The superb overture was ruined by those abominable trombones ... The drums, trombones, and horns, and trumpets, as they were played on Thursday night, could have no relation to anything but some terrible battle..."*Vedrai Carino*"...was ruined by the boisterous noisy accompaniment.²⁵⁴

Not all of this was the players' doing; the orchestration must have been very heavy handed. There are no trombones in Mozart's version of the overture, and the only drums are timpani. In the original, *Vedrai Carino* is a tender, lightly scored aria sung as Zerlina comforts

²⁵³ *The Times* 26 January 1852 p.8

²⁵⁴ *Weekly Dispatch* 19 July 1840 p. 4

Masetto. A 'boisterous, noisy accompaniment' suggests that the practice of 'replenishment' had reached the point where it took no account of the action on stage. Sadly, a comparison of the 1840 score with the original is not possible. The King's Theatre Collection has no material from that production; most likely it was lost in the 1856 fire. Covent Garden was not alone in its lack of refinement. *John Bull*, bewailing the 'storm of drums, trumpets, trombones and cymbals' at Drury Lane added:

We do not complain of this as peculiar to the Drury Lane orchestra, for the abomination is universal.²⁵⁵

In generally favourable review of Balfe's opening night at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1847, a journalist suggested that 'the lacerating brilliancy of the brass instruments at times required abatement'²⁵⁶ and three years later the Sacred Harmonic Society's brass prompted a similar suggestion after a performance of *Elijah*:

The trombones go to work with such zeal that they fairly drown all the rest...²⁵⁷

Some of these complaints may have been prompted by nostalgia for earlier, gentler ways of playing. The volume at popular concerts must have exerted influence, as did the presence of so many military players. But whatever the reasons for them, the new styles prevailed.

A tale of two trombone players: Schmidt and Cioffi

In May 1829, a Mr. Schmidt performed variations on *Di Tanti Palpiti* at the King's Concert Room and at a couple of private concerts. Parke dismissed the exercise as having 'excited more surprise than he gave delight'²⁵⁸ but though others tried to be kinder to him, Schmidt was no more than a curiosity:

²⁵⁵ *John Bull* 10 October 1846 p. 11

²⁵⁶ *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 18 Feb 1847 p. 1

²⁵⁷ *The Times* 24 December 1850 p. 8

²⁵⁸ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 p. 281

He must necessarily have devoted much time and attention to the instrument, but that it can ever become a really effective one is more than doubtful.²⁵⁹

Schmidt appears to have made no further appearances in London, though he was celebrated in Germany and his reputation spread far enough for *The American Musical Journal* to mention him in the same sentence as Harper, calling him 'the best trombone that ever existed'.²⁶⁰ Had he appeared a decade later, his reception would have been different.

Felipe Cioffi was an Italian American who moved to London in 1846. He had developed a virtuoso technique out of necessity: it was usual in American theatres to use a trombone in place of scarce celli and basses. He became known as 'the universal favourite' for his solos; he quelled a riot at Niblo's Pleasure Garden in New York by playing *Hail Columbia* and leading the rioters out into the street.²⁶¹ It is not clear why he moved to London, though there may have been domestic reasons; his wife followed him to England from America, financing the trip by the sale, for \$505, of a slave. Finding him cohabiting with another woman, she returned to the USA.²⁶²

It is possible that Costa headhunted him. He certainly established himself with remarkable speed:

Cioffi has not been more than fifteen days in London, and is engaged at the Italian Opera and likewise at the Philharmonic Concerts...whenever Signor Cioffi is heard, he

²⁵⁹ *Morning Post* 8 May 1829 p. 3

²⁶⁰ David M Guion, 'Felipe Cioffi: A Trombonist in Antebellum America', *American Music*, 14:1 (1996), 1-41

²⁶¹ Cynthia A. Hoover, 'A Trumpet Battle at Niblo's Pleasure Garden', *The Musical Quarterly*, 55:3 (1969), 384-395

²⁶² *Morning Post* 29 December 1846 p. 7

will at once be admitted to have that superiority of the
trombone which Puzzi claims for himself on the horn.²⁶³

That has more than a hint of press release about it but was more or less accurate; he was engaged by the opera. It was probably Costa who alerted Cioffi to a vacancy at the Philharmonic Society. On 9 March 1846, Mr Winterbottom had been engaged on first trombone for a trial of new works and the first concert, but on the 22nd, at a meeting that was attended by Costa, the directors gave the principal position to the newcomer:

Resolved that Mr. Cioffi the Trombone player be offered
£11.0.0 for the season, that should he accept it, a letter be
written to Mr. Winterbottom thanking him for his attendance,
enclosing him 3 guineas, and stating that the Directors hope to
give him a permanent engagement on a future occasion.²⁶⁴

This they did; Winterbottom was permanently engaged as third trombone from 1848, after the dismissal of John Smithies.

Joseph Bennett recalled that Costa 'remained to the end a noisy musician, and trombones were more dear to him than any other instruments in the orchestra'.²⁶⁵ Very likely the 'abominable' quality at Covent Garden was a direct result of his urging and it is easy to imagine him being attracted to Cioffi's brash style. That had been commented on in the New York press, which ironically praised him for 'gallantly' drowning a lacklustre prima donna at the opera.²⁶⁶ Complaints about loud brass had been going on for years before Cioffi appeared in London, but the placing of a charismatic virtuoso as what amounted to the foremost player

²⁶³ *The Examiner* 18 April 1846 p. 5

²⁶⁴ Minutes of Philharmonic Society directors' meetings 1837-1847 GB-Lbl RPS MS 281

²⁶⁵ Bennett, *Forty Years of Music* p. 51

²⁶⁶ Guion, 'Felipe Cioffi' p. 5

in the metropolis was bound to affect the playing of the men around him - assuming that by then they needed any encouragement to play out.

An orchestra destroyed?

In 1861, Costa again presented his musicians with a conflict of loyalty, one whose consequences illustrate the change over the previous thirty years in numbers and ability of the players available:

Mr Costa...refused to engage his band this year for the Opera unless every member pledged himself to play nowhere saving and except at Covent Garden *sans* permission. Mr Costa stated that operatic performances were intended to be given at the theatre on Mondays; and that not wishing to be deprived of his band to suit any society, he was compelled to enforce this stipulation.²⁶⁷

Some journalists saw this as an attack upon the Society by Costa, who had resigned in 1854 after disagreements about players and a row over his disinclination to include a concerto by Sterndale Bennett.²⁶⁸ The Philharmonic directors could have moved their concerts from the traditional Monday evenings and kept their orchestra intact, but they chose not to. The musicians' dilemma was less acute than it had been for the men who left Her Majesty's Theatre in 1847. By 1861, the Society was giving only six concerts a season and the work was poorly paid. It would have been irrational to remain loyal to it at the expense of losing the opera, and only fifteen players from the 1860 season appeared in 1861.

²⁶⁷ *Morning Chronicle* 5 March 1861 p.5

²⁶⁸ Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic* pp. 107-110

Compared with the problems encountered by Laporte in 1829 or Lumley in 1847, finding replacements was an easy task. When the crisis first broke, Sir George Smart had foreseen that it would be so:

... it will not be forgotten that in former years the works of the great composers were unknown to many of the Philharmonic Band but at present these works can be heard in many places from which efficient performers may be selected...²⁶⁹

Players were found at Her Majesty's Private Band, Her Majesty's Theatre, and the Crystal Palace. A principal double bass was brought from Southampton. Reviews of the opening concert were, for the most part, favourable. There were hints that the orchestra was a little rough because of players' lack of familiarity with each other but *The Times* was complimentary, reporting that Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* had been played 'with a fire and precision, in short, added to a delicate observance of light and shade...that satisfied the most exacting among the audience'.²⁷⁰ The press may have been partisan, sympathising with musicians who had had to secede involuntarily and with the Society, but still it was clear that a functioning orchestra had been found. The Society benefited from a new orchestral profession whose members had widespread familiarity with the works of the masters. Its archive contains no reference to the irony that in quite a few cases this must have been the result of working under 'charlatans' like Jullien. Ehrlich, with good reason, calls the boom in employment that characterised the 1870s onward 'the flood' but as we have seen, the river was in full spate by 1861.

²⁶⁹ Letter from Sir George Smart to George Hogarth GB-Lbl RPS MS 364 fo. 59

²⁷⁰ *The Times* 6 March 1861 p. 5

4. 'Very low characters, though tolerably well drest': the pleasure gardens

...as we entered, a scene presented itself splendid beyond description, and almost beyond conception, exceeding all that poets have told of fairylands and Elysian fields.¹

Benjamin Silliman

The story of the pleasure gardens in the nineteenth century is, with interruptions, one of decline. Their best years were behind them by the 1780s, and all were out of business by 1900. Their economic eclipse was accompanied by a musical decline of sorts. No composer to match Haydn, Handel or Arne worked in the later gardens. James Hook, the musical director of Vauxhall from 1774 to 1820, was a composer of agreeable but slight music and many others could not aspire even to his level. Where orchestral employment is concerned, the picture is more complex. The gardens that survived longest did so partly by exploiting the increased audience for music, so that while the number of venues diminished, those which remained open employed more musicians. This chapter explores musicians' place in garden evolution. It does so largely by inferring work patterns from ephemera and press reports. Names of garden performers were rarely recorded, and account books are almost non-existent, but music was ubiquitous and was written about regularly enough for a picture of sorts to emerge.

At various times during the eighteenth century, sixty or more tea gardens, spas and resorts were open for business.² Not all were on the scale of Vauxhall or Ranelagh: some were little more than pubs with gardens³ and there were eccentric enterprises like the Folly on the Thames, a barge on which concerts were given.⁴ Musicians were not engaged at all of them,

¹ Benjamin Silliman, *A Journal of Travels in England, Holland and Scotland, and of two passages over the Atlantic in 1805 and 1806* (Boston: Hone and Deforest, 1812) p. 211

² Sarah Downing, *The English Pleasure Garden 1660-1860* (Oxford: Shire, 2009) p. 27

³ Warwick Wroth, *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1896)

⁴ Warwick Wroth Collection, *Pleasure Gardens of South London* GB-Lml L75.8 vol. 2 p. 68

but enough were for *alfresco* entertainment to be an important source of work for players at all levels of the profession. It was not always dependable; running a garden was an uncertain business. Apollo Gardens, also known as the Temple of Apollo, had a concert hall which its proprietor, Mr Claggett,⁵ considered 'one of the best adapted Rooms for the purpose in this kingdom', offering 'one of the most rational, chaste, and refined entertainments in the metropolis'.⁶ It opened in 1787 and went out of business almost at once. More resilient ventures adapted to changing conditions, sometimes ceasing in the process to be gardens at all. Sadler's Wells started as a health spa, became a pleasure garden, then transformed into a theatre. The prospectus for the Panharmonion, which opened in 1831 to the south of what is now King's Cross Station, described plans for panorama, a dramatic academy and an academic theatre⁷ but in the end, the main attraction was the 'suspension railway,' an elevated monorail below which an ornate gondola grandly titled the William The Fourth Royal Car was suspended. A contemporary engraving shows that it was powered round the grounds by a man turning a crank.⁸ Those who read the market well prospered. The Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens opened its gates in 1831 and rapidly developed into a popular music venue. Cremorne began trading the following year, as a school of 'skilful and manly exercises'. It operated as a pleasure garden from 1845 and like the Panharmonion, it found that fairground attractions were what brought the public in. A few other gardens were what we might nowadays call 'pop-up' enterprises. Batty's Hippodrome, which was five minutes' walk from the Great Exhibition and boasted two brass bands, operated only in 1851 and 1852.

⁵ It is not certain whether this was Walter Claggett (see above, Chapter 1) or Charles Claggett, the instrument inventor endorsed by Haydn.

⁶ Wroth Collection GB-Lml L75.8 vol. 1 p. 7

⁷ GB-Lbl Crach1.Tab4.b3 pp. 160-162

⁸ GB-Lbl Crach1.Tab4.b3 p. 172

The garden concert

In 1795, *Sunday Walks Around London and Westminster* distinguished between the 'very low characters, though tolerably well drest', at the Marble Hall,⁹ the patrons of Ranelagh who were 'rather more select and genteel than at Vauxhall', or the crowds at the Temple of Flora, who were 'very so-so'.¹⁰ These considerations influenced the kind of music performed. The 'select and genteel audience' at Ranelagh were given an orchestral concert in the rotunda on three nights a week.¹¹ Its rival Vauxhall gave an orchestral concert every evening, Bermondsey Spa had a daily performance of 'selected Songs, Duets, Burlettas &c' with a band¹² but at most of the others, an orchestral concert was an occasional attraction. The downmarket Bagnigge Wells usually offered organ music and charged an extra 3d. when there was a band¹³ and the downright disreputable Dog and Duck operated in much the same manner. The tiny Cumberland Gardens occasionally advertised 'A Grand Promenade and Dejeune' (sic) with a military band and Pandians (a combination of pan pipes and other whistles) in attendance. Mulberry Gardens in Clerkenwell engaged British musicians only, its proprietor holding that 'the manly vigour of our own native music is more suitable to the ear and heart of a Briton than the effeminate softness of the Italian'.¹⁴ The instrumentation was not stated.

Vauxhall's concerts were given from a bandstand or, in bad weather, in the rotunda theatre.

Rowlandson's illustration of the orchestra shows a tall structure with supper boxes underneath

⁹ Anon., *Sunday Walks Around London and Westminster* (London: J. Aitkin, 1795) p. 39

¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 40

¹¹ *The Times* 5 June 1788 p. 2

¹² *Public Advertiser* 2 September 1786 p. 1

¹³ James Stevens Curl, 'Spas and Pleasure Gardens of London, from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries'. *Garden History* 17:2 (1979), 2

¹⁴ William Biggs Boulton, *Amusements of Old London* (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1901) vol. 1 p. 64

it.¹⁵ In the eighteenth century it was usual for the concert to begin around 6.00, but by the 1820s it was a much later affair, in two halves with an interval around 10.00.¹⁶



Ill. 4.1 Thomas Rowlandson: *The Vauxhall Gardens Bandstand*
Victoria and Albert Museum Prints and Drawings Study Room,
room WS, case R, shelf 25, box L
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O17299/vauxhall-gardens-watercolour-rowlandson-thomas/>

The start of the Vauxhall concert was signalled by a bell; Dickens described the stampede when the signal was given: 'the people scampered away, pell-mell, to the spot from whence the sound proceeded; and we, from the mere force of habit, found ourself (sic) running

¹⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum Prints and Drawings Study Room, room WS, case R, shelf 25, box L

¹⁶ C. F. Partington, *A Brief Historical and Descriptive Account of the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall*. (London: Vauxhall Gardens, 1822) pp. 31-32

among the first, as if for very life'.¹⁷ Ranelagh, on the north side of the river, opened its Rotunda doors at 6.30. A small wind band played at 7.00 and the main concert was half an hour later.¹⁸ Canaletto's 1754 painting of the interior shows the musicians grouped to the right of the picture in a pavilion above the main floor.¹⁹



Ill. 4.2 Canaletto *The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh* London (1754) National Gallery, Room 34
<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/canaletto-london-interior-of-the-rotunda-at-ranelagh>

Repertoire

Vauxhall's programme was published in the morning papers and posters were put up around the city. In the evening, the running order, limited to sixteen pieces, was hung on a tree near the bandstand. The concert usually began with an overture after which vocal and instrumental pieces alternated. There would be a couple of concertos, for violin or oboe, occasionally for trumpet. The gala on June 22, 1803, followed this formula. There was a 'full overture' by Arne, a 'full piece' by Haydn, concertos played by William Parke and Mr

¹⁷ Charles Dickens, *Vauxhall Gardens by Day in Sketches by Boz* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1836) p. 143

¹⁸ GB-Lbl 37/840.m.28 p. 26

¹⁹ London, National Gallery, Room 34

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/canaletto-london-interior-of-the-rotunda-at-ranelagh>

Schmidt (who was Principal Trumpet to the Prince of Wales) and some songs and glees.²⁰

C.F. Partington's 1822 description of Vauxhall Gardens says the concerts were different each evening²¹ but books of words 'for the season' suggest that at least by the 1830s there was a core repertoire into which novelties were fitted. The formula for 1837 was typical:

Act 1

Overture

Song 'My Bridal Day' Miss M Taylor

Ballad 'I'll Think on Thee' Mr Robinson (composed by Mr Standsbury)

Song 'MP, or, Election Miseries' Mr Buckingham.

Song 'Fatherless Patty' Miss Agnes Taylor

Duet 'Mr and Mrs John Jenkins' Miss M Taylor and Mr Buckingham.

Finale 'Come My Merry Men'.

Act 2

Overture

'Victoria Ode' by the company.

Comic Song 'Seven Ages'

Song 'Thy Smile Was Sweet'

Finale 'Old King Cole'.²²

Smaller gardens like Bermondsey may have followed a similar pattern but there is no clear evidence; their advertisements usually said no more than 'instrumental entertainment as usual'. Like the theatres, gardens ran anything that was well-received for as long as it remained popular. In 1820, William Parke was a soloist at Vauxhall. After a concerto of his

²⁰ *Morning Post*, 22 June 1803 p. 1

²¹ *Royal Gardens, Vauxhall* p.32

²² GB-Lbl 1609/2264 fo. 13

own devising, subtitled *The Ascension*, he played variations on *God Save the King* which was repeated 'with great success every night during that season'.²³

Incidental music

Music of some sort was played most of the time. In 1786 'separate bands of musick' were provided for dances in a temple and the ballroom at Vauxhall.²⁴ The Pandians played between halves of the concert and from 1790 onwards, the Duke of York's band performed a selection of martial music every evening.²⁵ They also accompanied the acrobats and tightrope walkers. Ranelagh regularly advertised 'Horns, Clarinets &c between the acts', presumably some sort of *Harmoniemusik*. From at least 1788²⁶ Vauxhall provided *Tafelmusik*: 'When the music is finished, great numbers of the company retire to the pavilions to supper, and some are attended with French horns and other music'.²⁷ Sounds and sweet airs emanating from unexpected places were common. The Ranelagh Regatta of 1775 had 'drums, fifes, horns and trumpets that formed several little concerts under the several arches of the bridge'²⁸ and Parke describes a song echoed by a bugle horn at a gala concert at Vauxhall in 1817.²⁹ Boulton and Silliman both describe caves excavated for the burial of musicians 'from whose fiddles arose mysterious music'³⁰ and in the 1820s, there were several portable orchestras distributed around Vauxhall and in these the Military, Scots and Pandian bands played. They also performed in the ballroom after the concert and for the fireworks.³¹

²³ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 155

²⁴ Jacob Henry Burn scrapbook GB-Lbl Cup.401.k.7. p. 311

²⁵ *Morning Post* 22 June 1803 p. 1

²⁶ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 106.

²⁷ J. A. Edwards, *A Description of Southwark, Lambeth Newington &c.* London 1795
GB-Lbl Maps C.24.e.12. p. 23

²⁸ GB-Lbl 37/840.m.28 p. 29

²⁹ Parke, *Musical memoirs*. vol. 2 pp. 135-6

³⁰ *Amusements of Old London* vol. 2 p. 19

³¹ *ibid.* p. 33

On nights when there were no fireworks an 'immense and magnificent golden car, containing a band of music and drawn by two elephants'³² was paraded through the gardens.

Performers

Performers' names are difficult to trace. Singers were always advertised in the public prints, instrumental soloists or leaders sometimes received a mention, the rank and file never unless a player was giving his services for a charity event or his association with the opera or one of the patent theatres was thought to be a draw. An advertisement for a concert given at Ranelagh in 1802 to raise funds for a memorial to Dr. Arne gave the names of Parke (which brother was not stated), the trumpeter Mr Woodham jun, Mr Shield and four members of the Ashley Family³³ At the Vauxhall Jubilee in 1786, Mr Pieltain led the orchestra, Parke played the oboe but for the rest, all we know is that the 'considerably increased' orchestra was made up of 'the most approved instrumental performers'.³⁴ Parke records that in 1806 Mr Holmes, the principal bassoon at the King's Theatre, was praised for his rendition of a difficult obbligato. The papers ignored his performance.³⁵ In 1820 the *Morning Post* mentioned Parke's 'superior excellence' in his variations on *God Save the King* and added that the symphonies of Mozart, Haydn and Paer were finely executed.³⁶ Spagnoletti led the Vauxhall orchestra when Henry Bishop conducted on 21 August 1826,³⁷ and Mori led the benefit concert for Signor Venafrà there on Friday, 14 August 1835.³⁸ Of the many others, nothing is known.

The music in general, and the orchestra in particular, do not seem to have been considered worth advertising in detail. That does not automatically imply a lack of importance: a

³² *ibid.* p. 27

³³ Burn scrapbook p.2 40

³⁴ *ibid.* p. 310

³⁵ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 p. 6

³⁶ *The Morning Post* 30 June 1820 p. 3

³⁷ GB-Lbl Cup.401.k.7. p. 439

³⁸ GB-Lbl 1609/2264 fo. 1

pleasure garden was one of the few places where orchestral music could be heard for a modest outlay and the fact that it was there at all was probably enough of a draw. Whether or not that was so, pyrotechnics received more attention. Ranelagh's advertisement for the last night of the 1790 season simply said 'The Concert to begin at Eight o'Clock' but then devoted four column inches to a detailed description of fireworks, which opened with twelve half-pound Sky Rockets and included an air balloon, illuminated.³⁹

Seasonal clashes

Gardens sometimes opened in May and carried on into the Autumn if the weather was good. It is not clear how musicians managed the long overlap with winter theatres' seasons. Parke recorded that in 1779, when he was eighteen, the orchestra at Vauxhall promoted him to principal second oboe.⁴⁰ It was a curious choice of words. The orchestra may have doubled its wind parts, though this seems a little unlikely in an orchestra of between thirty and forty. It seems more likely that the 'principal' label indicates that Parke had first refusal of the Vauxhall work and a subordinate second player performed when he was not free. If he really did play his variations on *God Save the King* every night of the 1820 season, Covent Garden theatre must have given him a lot of leeway.

It is probable that as a way of reconciling difficulties in scheduling, gardens employed a mixture of part-time performers and military bandsman, and that the way of working was similar to the way a West End musical operates today, with a core of players for whom the garden was the main seasonal employer and a pool of others combining that work with other engagements. The Vauxhall song, specially composed and sold at the gardens either as sheet music or in a book of words, made up most of the entertainment and was easy to assemble on minimal rehearsal - or none at all. Part-time players are almost impossible to trace, though

³⁹ Ranelagh Scrapbook GB-Lbl 37/840.m.28 p. 39

⁴⁰ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 16

the RSM records one Jacob Neilson, who died on 2 July 1785 aged 'near 80 at Vauxhall Gardens as he was preparing his kettle-drum, on which he had been for 50 Year (sic) esteemed a first-rate performer'.⁴¹

Cost cutting

Proprietors went to great lengths to economise on music. Mr Claggett's short-lived enterprise seems to have avoided paying for musicians by proposing a musical academy or Athenaeum⁴² and charged applicants a 2gn subscription which included the provision of instruments, music and coffee or tea.⁴³ A review dated 8 October 1788 suggests that the artistic dividends may have been limited: 'perhaps from the irregularity of a first night's performance, the subordinaries (sic) did not appear in perfect training'.⁴⁴ The idea of paying to play reappeared in the Panharmonion prospectus of 1829:

All the vocal members of the Royal Academy of Music are hereby declared Free Members of the Dramatic School and the Academic Theatre, and are specially invited to partake of its privileges without reference to any of the regulations affecting the Professor. The orchestras of the Panharmonion, it is intended, shall be composed of the gentlemen students of the Royal Academy of Music, should they be disposed to accept of the proposals of the proprietor.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Members of the Royal Society of Musicians*

⁴² Warwick Wroth Collection. Pleasure Gardens of South London GB-Lml L75.8 vol. 1 p. 8

⁴³ *ibid.* P.7

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ GB-Lbl Crach1.Tab4.b3 pp. 160-162

The enterprise fared little better than Claggett's. Of the fourteen players listed on the poster for the 'first grand dress rehearsal' of *Ataxerxes* on 6 March 1830 only an oboist, Mr H Cook, appears 'by Permission of the Directors of the Royal Musical Academy'.⁴⁶

A more practicable method for keeping costs down was to use players in as many different roles as logistics allowed. The wind band at Raneagh could have played in the main concert; so could the horns who accompanied dinner at Vauxhall. In 1822, Parke complained about a more far-reaching economy:

The concert... was now (with the exception of half a dozen stringed instruments) performed by the military band of the guards, who, at the end of the acts, by doffing their coloured coats and slipping on their regimental ones, were quickly ready to perform their old duties of playing for the rope dancing &c.⁴⁷

The timing of entertainments strongly suggests that the Vauxhall theatre and concert bands were the same people: the premiere on 18 June 1832 of Henry Bishop's new operetta, *The Magic Fan or, A Fillip on the Nose* took place at 9.00, and the concert at 10.45. The music has not survived but the libretto was printed in the programme of events.⁴⁸ It is concise, consisting of twelve numbers, the shortest of which is only four lines long:

Open the door of the cage, I pray;
Open the door, 'tis Fairy White
Quick; thy zeal shall soon repay,
Wealth of gold, and gay delight.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 167

⁴⁷ Parke, *Musical Memoirs*. vol. 2 pp. 174-5

⁴⁸ GB-Lbl 1609/2264 fo. 12

⁴⁹ *ibid.* fo. 4

Decline

Cutting musicians' pay was a natural reaction to falling attendance. In 1788 *The Times* criticised Ranelagh for 'pitifully' cutting the band's wages by 6d.⁵⁰ The next day, the paper printed a rebuttal which, though not entirely a reasoned reply, suggested by its tone a measure of stress over finances:

those managers beg leave to observe to the public, that 6d
saved is 6d got, that two sixpences make one shilling and a
thousand shillings are fifty pounds!!!⁵¹

Cheese-paring economies could not save Ranelagh. It had always sought to attract the upper classes and anybody who aspired to be near them. It was expensive: admission was 2s.6d. rather than the 1s needed to get into Vauxhall. It closed for the Summer, when Parliament was prorogued and the *bon ton* went to the country - just as the other gardens were benefiting from better weather.⁵² On 21 April 1788, a newspaper declared 'The elegant Rotunda is no longer resorted to, the Refreshments are dealt out with a sparing hand and the whole conduct displays a narrow management'.⁵³ The next day it said Ranelagh 'has been voted a Bore with the fashionable circles'⁵⁴ and complained about the band. As it lay dying, Ranelagh made a few gestures towards more interesting entertainment, including a melancholy diversion in 1802, in which a Mr Todd attempted to demonstrate a diving suit. It didn't work properly and when he went down, he became afraid and resurfaced. As the *Morning Post* observed, he made himself ridiculous, but the onlookers had a collection and 'gave him seven shillings for his pains'.⁵⁵ The eighteenth century business model for an *alfresco* entertainment needed to reform if it was to survive. Ranelagh went out of business in 1803 and the band lost their

⁵⁰ *The Times* 5 June 1788 p. 2

⁵¹ Ranelagh scrapbook p. 39.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Morning Post* 24 September 1802 p. 3

guinea a week. No other accounts of musicians' travails appear to have survived, but the first twenty years of the nineteenth century were a time of continuing decline. It would be surprising if Ranelagh's musicians were the only ones to suffer. For the industry to revive, it needed reform.

Reform

Frederick Gye and Thomas Bish took over Vauxhall in 1821. It was barely a going concern: accounts for 1822, their first full season, showed a profit of £79 16s 3d. from a turnover of £22,211 4s 3d.⁵⁶ Their remedy was spectacle. It was announced that 'Juan Bellinck, the King of all the Devils, will fly through a Balloon on Fire'.⁵⁷ Sig. Nestarsi de Verani's one man band played, the French Mechanical Theatre performed, stilt dancers danced, acrobats tumbled or walked on tight ropes and at the climax of it all the splendidly named Heptaplasiesoptron, a display of mirrors, columns and lamps⁵⁸ was unveiled to the sound of an orchestral fanfare. Gye and Bish embraced the craze for ballooning and ascents soon became the biggest attraction; in 1836 the celebrated aeronaut Charles Green signed an exclusive contract with them.⁵⁹ It worked: receipts for 1823 listed 133,279 visitors and Sarah Burney called the fashion for going there 'a fit of the fool'.⁶⁰ The concert was still given but it was shortened to about an hour and was punctuated with rope-dancing, water-works and French theatre. It finished close to midnight and as it ended the fireworks were let off.⁶¹ The musicians found themselves playing for what amounted to a circus.

With the popular audience attending in large numbers, Gye and Bish then tried to attract the 'Highest Classes of the Nobility and Gentry, who propose re-visiting Vauxhall Previous to

⁵⁶ Lambeth Archives IV/162/07 Journal of Receipts and expenditure, with lists of officials and performers engaged 1822-1859

⁵⁷ *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*. 25 August 1822 p. 8

⁵⁸ *Morning Advertiser* 5 August 1822 p. 2

⁵⁹ Richard Holmes, *Falling Upwards: how we took to the air*. (London: Harper Collins, 2013) p. 58

⁶⁰ Coke and Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens* p. 249.

⁶¹ Partington, *Royal Gardens, Vauxhall*. pp. 31-32

leaving town'.⁶² The impact on musical employment was immediate: ballets were put on, operas were commissioned from Henry Bishop and Sir George Smart and Monsieur Hullis of the Paris Conservatoire appeared as conductors.⁶³ In 1826 Bishop was engaged to conduct; he brought Spagnoletti and many of the opera band with him. Parke saw this as 'amende honorable' by the management 'for the paucity of vocal and instrumental talent hitherto displayed by them'⁶⁴ but was disdainful of the new vulgar audiences:

...it is unlikely that this refined species of entertainment will become popular with that part of the public who now visit Vauxhall.⁶⁵

He may have been right; at any rate operatic experiments on this scale seem not to have been repeated. Gye and Bish managed to increase their prices without adverse consequences: there were complaints in the press that in addition to a four shilling admission charge an extra shilling was levied to get into the gallery to hear the concert.⁶⁶ However much Parke and the papers may have grumbled, the public kept coming.

Experimentation

White Conduit House, The Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens, The Eagle Tavern and Cremorne Gardens employed numerous players as well as acrobats, rope dancers and novelty acts. They tended to try new attractions earlier than the theatres, and some impresarios used them to gauge the likely popularity of a new entertainment. The public might come in the first instance to watch feeding time at the zoo or a balloon ascent, but the crowd of between

⁶² *John Bull* Sunday 24 July 1825 p. 1

⁶³ Gary Hicks, *The First Adman: Thomas Bish and the Birth of Modern Advertising* (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2012) p. 121

⁶⁴ Parke, *Musical Memoirs*. vol. 2 pp. 229-30

⁶⁵ *ibid.* pp. 284-5

⁶⁶ *Evening Mail* 10 July 1826 p. 4

16,000 and 17,000 that bought shilling tickets to a gala with bands at Surrey Gardens in 1831⁶⁷ clearly showed the growth of demand. From the 1830s, music was marketed more and more as the main attraction and for some managements it was clearly worth incurring the extra expense of advertising specific popular works. In 1823 White Conduit House and Gardens, a relatively conservative enterprise that hosted private dinners or political and religious meetings, advertised its musical fare in such vague terms as 'a vocal and military concert'⁶⁸ or a 'talented and extensive band' but a decade later particular works were regarded as attractions in their own right and performances became more frequent. By 1830, the house was open every evening and there was a daily Grand Concert of Music:

During the whole of this week, by particular desire, THE OVERTURE TO WILLIAM TELL will be performed. Also Miss Clark on the tightrope, fireworks and Master Spelterini was engaged to exhibit the human frame in most singular and astonishing forms...Should the weather be unfavourable, the Concert will be performed in the Grand Room."⁶⁹

Other gardens followed a similar pattern, and simultaneously with specific works assuming greater significance, instrumentalists - especially bandmen - were more and more promoted as attractions. It was not universal: it would be more accurate to say that two distinct approaches coexisted. Vauxhall vied with its rivals in creating spectacular panoramas - it celebrated the return of Captain Ross's polar expedition in 1843 by creating a panorama 70ft icebergs - but stuck to its old concert formula. Others emphasised accessible music, novelty and noise, and favoured instruments above voices. Military bands, which had been an

⁶⁷ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 26 June 1834 p. 3

⁶⁸ *Morning Advertiser* 15 September 1823 p. 1

⁶⁹ *Morning Advertiser* 20 July 1830 p. 2.

ancillary garden attraction since the eighteenth century, increased in prominence to the point where they became the main attraction. In this they were no doubt helped by the popularity



III. 4.3 'The new orchestra at Surrey Gardens' *Illustrated London News* 13 May 1848 p. 13

of brass instruments, which were sometimes marketed as a separate attraction, with cornopean and military bands listed separately on handbills. There was a practical advantage to using more brass. One review of an outdoor concert conducted by Jullien in 1845, observed that 'the effect of the strings in an open orchestra in the open air was of course not so effective as if the sounds had been confined by walls or a roof...The wind instruments were completely effective'.⁷⁰ To put it more crudely, the louder the music, the more people can hear it and the more tickets you can sell. On 27 May 1839, the Surrey Gardens advertised a band composed entirely of wind instruments and, significantly, announced that

⁷⁰ *The Globe* 21 June 1845 p. 3

this was done 'At the suggestion of many Subscribers to these Gardens and to meet the prevailing taste of the Public'.⁷¹ Advertisements for Covent Garden's promenade concerts in the Winter of 1845 described the Surrey outdoor concerts as an experiment '...moving from a small to a large theatre and of endeavouring to fill so large an area by the attraction of instrumental music alone'.⁷²

The very model of a modern pleasure garden

The Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens, a fifteen-acre site on the east side of Kennington Park Road, close to the Oval, were innovative and profitable in the way they presented music; it is fair to say that their activities reflected musical taste in the first half of the nineteenth century to the same extent that Vauxhall had expressed that of the eighteenth. Surrey happens to be the best documented of the nineteenth century gardens;⁷³ eight large volumes of ephemera and correspondence covering thirty years of operations are held by the British Library, running to more than 1600 pages but not catalogued.⁷⁴ From their foundation in 1831, Surrey Gardens was a subscription entertainment, with annual fees starting at 1gn for one person or 2gn for three.⁷⁵ In the first year, publicity concentrated on animals. On the anniversary of its opening there was a balloon and a juggler but no mention of music but from 1833, it promoted a succession of Fancy Fêtes and Galas, usually on a theme such as Rome, Gibraltar, Arcadia or some military escapade. On 29 and 30 July, a 'fancy fair and rural fete' was advertised with a full military band, Wieppert's Quadrille Band and the Russian Horn Band. This last was a curious ensemble of serfs, each of whom held two horns of different pitches and who operated like a peal of bells. As it built its audience, the Surrey

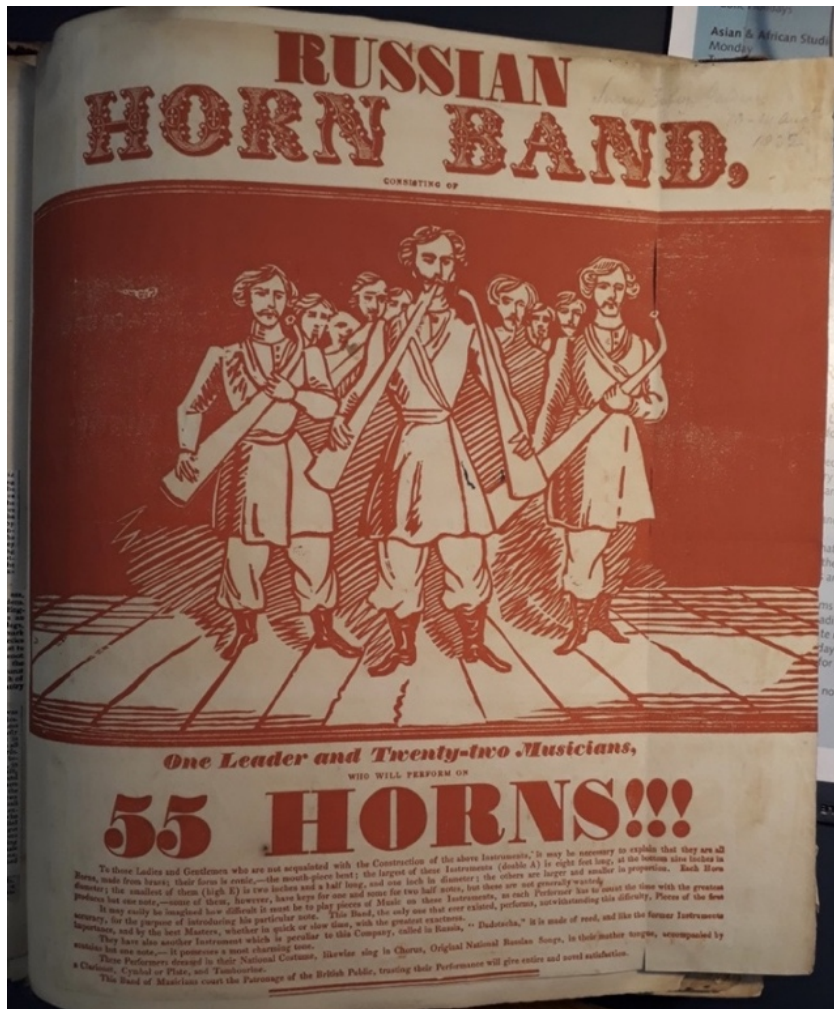
⁷¹ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.53

⁷² *Morning Chronicle* Wednesday 12 November p. 4.

⁷³ Warwick Wroth Collection, Pleasure Gardens of South London GB-Lml L75.8 2 vols.

⁷⁴ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.51-58.

⁷⁵ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.51



III. 4.4 Advertisement for the Russian Horn Band GB-Lbl Th.Cts 53

management balanced music with other attractions, advertising 'Admission 1s. Feeding the Carnivora at half-past five, Pelicans at six, Concerts at half-past six...'⁷⁶ At the 1834 Fete Champêtre and Fancy Sale the main attraction was a pair of giraffes acquired from Schönbrunn Zoo outside Vienna, but there also was a new 'floating orchestra' on the lake, a tethered barge where the Band of the Foot Guards played, the Hungarian Singers sang and Mr Love the celebrated polyphonist displayed 'his astonishing powers of Imitation and Personification of Character, in Two Parts'. A poster for a fête on 10 July 1837, to celebrate

⁷⁶ *Morning Post* 16 June 1845 p. 4

Victoria's accession shows that, for the first time The Cornopean Brass Band played alternately with the Band of the Fusileer Guards.

The Surrey management seem to have grasped the size of audience that now existed for popular music. They also operated a better business model than the one at Vauxhall, which paid a large establishment of performers for six nights a week the season through. Surrey had to feed its animals and water its plants, but it was open all year - on Boxing Day 1836 the lake froze, and visitors were entertained by 'a game called Curling played upon the ice by Scotchmen'⁷⁷ - and if competing attractions looked likely to deter the public, it could reduce outgoings by limiting the entertainment it offered.

As elsewhere, solo wind players were given prominence in the advertising. The announcement of the *Grand Promenades Musicales et Champêtres* (sic) in September 1839 listed all forty-seven members of the band and ten soloists: Lazarus, Egerton and Dean on the clarinet, Beale on the flute and Keating on the Bassoon. There were four trombone soloists: Burton, Beale, Mason and Winterbottom on alto, two tenors and bass respectively, most likely playing as a quartet. Handley was the soloist on *cornet à piston*.⁷⁸ They played an aria, *The Light of Other Days* by Balfe, a glee and chorus called *The Chough and the Crow* from Henry Bishop's opera *Guy Mannering* and a trio called *The Magic Wove Scarf* from the opera *The Mountain Sylph* by John Barnett, which had been premiered at the Lyceum in 1830.⁷⁹ It was not a passing phase; the Whitsun promenade concert in 1845 included a fantasy titled *The River*, featured a trombone solo from Mr Mason in *Steady as She Goes*, *Preparing for Sea* was a cornet duet for Messrs. Handley and Holt, Mr Dean played a clarionet solo called *Cease the Rude Boreas* and *Heaving the Lead* was the title of a bassoon

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Concert Companion* Nos. XXXVI-XXXVII September 1839

⁷⁹ GB-Lbl Northcott 20

solo given to Mr Chisholm.⁸⁰ Most striking of all was the popularity of a work premiered in June 1844, a version of *Macbeth* in which characters in the play were represented by wind instruments; Prospère's ophicleide was Hecate while Winterbottom's trombone took the title role. The music was a mixture of pieces attributed to Matthew Locke and M.P. King, arranged by Mr Hine for solos and band.

The innovations at Surrey Gardens seem to have been the work of the resident musical director Charles Godfrey. Godfrey conducted most of the promenade concerts there and early on settled on a mixture of popular dance tunes and lighter classics that persisted for as long as the gardens were in business. One in May 1847 - which was advertised with a brightly coloured circus-style poster - included extracts from *I Lombardi* by Verdi, Bellini's *Somnambula* overture and quadrilles by Musard and Costa. The performance ended with Herold's popular *Zampa* overture.⁸¹ At the Grand Roman Festival on Whit Monday 1841 Godfrey conducted 'The Unrivalled Band' of sixty wind instruments in Berlioz's *Francs Juges* overture, a pot-pourri on popular Russian airs and the *William Tell* overture. The concert receiving equal billing with an orang outan. It was during Godfrey's stewardship that regimental connections became less important. Advertisements in 1841 referred simply to a 'Splendid Band of Wind Instruments'⁸² and by 1850 posters featured 'the band of this establishment'.⁸³ Discharged army bandsman, players in low theatres and amateur brass players were in increasing supply; no clear documentation has come to light, but the presence of non regimental bands strongly suggests that players of various types were forming themselves into groups to earn extra money.

⁸⁰ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.55

⁸¹ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.56

⁸² *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 20 June 1841 p.8

⁸³ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.57

The working environment

Ranelagh was nearly four miles from the centre of London:

The band are chiefly composed of second-rate performers, who play at other places of diversion of an evening; And then *hey* for Ranelagh - so that, what with the fatigues of their official duty in the day, and the long walk to that place at night, they may be supposed as not in the most enlivened state to scrape the fiddles...⁸⁴

The journey must have entailed some risk as well - assuming a robber thought a musician worth accosting. Spring Gardens in Stepney was '...a dangerous place to come from on an evening, as robberies and murders have been frequently committed in Sun Tavern Fields'⁸⁵ and sometimes the threat of footpads in the surrounding country was bad enough to be a factor in a garden's demise: this happened to Marylebone Gardens, which closed in 1778. A page of cutout advertisements from 1774 in a scrapbook of Ranelagh ephemera promises 'a Horse Patrol (arm'd) to guard the road'⁸⁶ and in 1786 Bermondsey Spa, which was in Grange Road, a mile from London Bridge, advertised that 'for the Security of the Public, the Road is lighted and watched by Patroles (sic) every night at the sole Expence of the Proprietor'.⁸⁷ If he arrived safe at the venue, a musician's discomfort did not necessarily diminish. Partington describes caves excavated at Vauxhall as 'the Musical Bushes, beneath which, there was placed a band of musicians to play invisibly; but this practice was soon discontinued, as the damp of the earth was found to be prejudicial to the instruments'.⁸⁸ The idea that such an arrangement might be prejudicial to the musicians was not mentioned. In 1855, a platform

⁸⁴ *The Times* 5 June 1788 p. 2

⁸⁵ *Sunday Walks Around London* p. 50

⁸⁶ GB-Lbl 37/840.m.28 P.26.

⁸⁷ *Public Advertiser* 2 September 1786 p. 1

⁸⁸ *Royal Gardens, Vauxhall* p.32

with sixty soldiers on it collapsed at Cremorne, dropping them twenty feet and leaving many with bayonet wounds and fractures.⁸⁹ On 19 October 1856, a stampede at the Surrey Gardens music hall killed several people and the Burn scrapbook contains a reference to a cannon bursting at the Cumberland gardens and killing one of the waiters. A piece of the gun, weighing upwards of eight pounds broke through the ceiling of the pavilion at Vauxhall next door and broke the shutters of the Prince's supper-room.⁹⁰

Even considering the normalisation of rowdy audiences, a garden was a distracting place to play. Thackeray's comic description of the company at Vauxhall in chapter 6 of *Vanity fair* was not intended as a piece of reportage but there are plenty of contemporary accounts to confirm that it is broadly accurate. *Sunday Walks Round London and Westminster* refers to the tendency towards riot and debauchery that was common in the garden walks in the evenings. There could be violence: at Bagnigge Wells in 1818 it was reported that '...on a sudden a dreadful riot took place among some infamous characters who had got in, and they were too many for the Constables, who only succeeded in taking one Amazon, who was committed till she can find bail'.⁹¹ Much of the behaviour was fuelled by alcohol. Thackeray complains of the lethal rack punch served at Vauxhall; unlike the cobweb-thin ham slices that are mentioned in just about every description of the place, intoxicants were served liberally. Rack is an aphetic contraction of the Arabic word *arrack* and seems to have been used to describe any cheap spirit: Lord Byron mentions it in *Don Juan*:

I would take refuge in weak punch, but rack

(In each sense of the word), whene'er I fill

⁸⁹ *The Scotsman* 15 August 1855 p. 2

⁹⁰ Burn scrapbook p. 323

⁹¹ *Morning Advertiser* 14 August 1818 p. 4

My mild and midnight beakers to the brim,
Wakes me next morning with its synonym'.⁹²

This dangerous potion was significant enough to be a separate item in Vauxhall's accounts; on the opening night in 1822, Arrack receipts were £17.5s, compared with £34.15s.6d at the bar and £32.7s at the wine cellar.⁹³ One wonders how attentive diners at Vauxhall were to the wind players who attended their meals.⁹⁴ In some cases, all that was needed for a disturbance to start was a cup of tea:

...some young bucks had broken the china and refused to pay the damages; one of whom had drawn his sword on the waiter... after a deal of swearing among the gentlemen, fainting among the ladies, and noise among the waiters, the sword was returned at last to the culprit, on his paying for the broken cups'.⁹⁵

Victorian audiences seem to have been more orderly, but not always docile. By 1857 things were generally so sedate that it was worth a reviewer complaining that the audience for a performance of *Messiah* 'did not follow the Exeter Hall practice of listening in silence' but applauded and loudly called for encores.⁹⁶ In 1859 at a concert in the Surrey Gardens Hall, the tenor John Sims Reeves declined to encore an aria. The audience became restive, were briefly pacified by a performance of the *Wedding March* but when the singer returned, they were still so annoyed with him that they would not let him sing his second song. The crowd divided in to two camps, one for Sims Reeves, one against and eventually the matter was

⁹² Byron, *Don Juan* IV Liii (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995) p. 692

⁹³ Lambeth Archives IV/162/07 Journal of Receipts and expenditure, with lists of officials and performers engaged 1822-1859

⁹⁴ Edwards, *Description of Southwark* p. 23

⁹⁵ *Sunday Walks Around London and Westminster* p. 28

⁹⁶ *Faversham Gazette and Whitstable, Sittingbourne and Milton Journal* Saturday 19 July 1856 p. 11

resolved with the ejection of the ringleaders and the addition of another song from the tenor.⁹⁷

Payment

Pleasure gardens were seldom mentioned in applications for RSM membership. Only thirty-six petitions were recorded, and these were mostly made by men who were active in the eighteenth century or very early in the nineteenth. Four exceptions were Pierre Jacques Piotry (1831-before 1894) Calkin, who played at Vauxhall in 1852, George Horton (1825-1908) and John Henry Maycock (joined 1842), oboist and clarinettist respectively whose membership of the Coldstream Guards band took them to Surrey Zoological Gardens and, in Horton's case, to the Jullien concerts.⁹⁸ This does not prove that the men who played for *alfresco* entertainments were low earners who could not find the subscription, but it seems likely that many were.

We have little information about fees. Thanks to the spat mentioned above, we know that in its later years Ranelagh paid its band 7s 6d an evening.⁹⁹

The retrenchment in the salaries of the poor fellows who compose the band is particularly to be noticed. They used till this year to receive 7s. 6d. per night - but on account of the Guinea per week being *even money*, as the proprietors term it, viz. seven shillings each of the three nights, they pitifully deducted the 6d.¹⁰⁰

As discussed earlier, the individual fee matters less than the time it took to earn. It was 1gn for three half-days, more than a skilled carpenter would expect to make in four twelve-hour

⁹⁷ *Illustrated Times* 30 July 1859 p. 11

⁹⁸ *Members of the Royal Society of Musicians*

⁹⁹ *The Times* 5th June 1788 p. 2

¹⁰⁰ *The Times* 5th June 1788 p. 2

days. 7s 6d might have been the going rate for a garden and it is possible that it was supplemented by gratuities. These are mentioned in a couple of sources: in 1795, James Edwards wrote of the Vauxhall entertainments that 'To invite and detain their customers the longer, the proprietors have two bands of wind music, in small moveable orchestras. They are engaged at a considerable expence, and are not permitted to take money, nor to drink at the tables'.¹⁰¹ The regulation may have been an attempt at stopping a common practice: the cash book for the Second Eagle Benefit on 1 September 1840 included a 5s payment to a waiter for the evening and the same amount to an unspecified number of musicians in the ballroom.¹⁰²

At Surrey Gardens, differentials between band fees and those paid to solo performers were generally smaller than in theatres. On 13 May 1835, the Ungarischen Snger Gesellschaft wrote from Kln agreeing to sing at on two days for £10;¹⁰³ a picture of them on a piece of sheet music in the Museum of London¹⁰⁴ shows ten singers, suggesting a fee of 10s each. The seven-strong European Melodists did better, performing on 5 evenings each week for £30 a week.¹⁰⁵ Real fame commanded more: a March 1844 letter of agreement from Phineas T. Barnum stated that General Tom Thumb was to be paid £48 for four days in Whit week.¹⁰⁶ He made three appearances per day, imitated the Corsican Upstart and made an excursion in a tethered balloon. Though celebrated and received by royalty, he was paid less than Carl Rappo, a strongman whose terms were £30 'for performing feats of strength and juggling' on 23 and 24 June.¹⁰⁷ These costs give a perspective on the exorbitant fees demanded and received by opera stars: the noble lord who paid Angelica Catalani £100 per song at a private

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *Description of Southwark* p. 23

¹⁰² GB-Lbl Add.Ms.57600

¹⁰³ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.51

¹⁰⁴ Warwick Wroth Collection, Pleasure Gardens of South London GB-Lml L75.8 vol. 2 p. 130

¹⁰⁵ GB-Lbl TH.Cts.56

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.51

party might for the same sum have purchased more than a week of General Tom Thumb's company - if he thought he could stand it.

Terminal Decline

As London expanded, the gardens, which had been out in the country when they opened, acquired neighbours who objected to the noise of revelry. This caused difficulties for Vauxhall in 1827; its licence was granted but observations were made from the bench about the noise of the firework displays and the nuisance caused by 'crowds of idle and disorderly persons' dispersing after the display.¹⁰⁸ It may have been this that prevented the managers from pursuing the fashion for larger and louder entertainment:

The entertainments of the ensuing season at the gardens will vary materially from those of the past year: the reign of second-rate singers will be restored, the fire-works will commence earlier, and dramatic proverbs, played by popular actors, are to be introduced.¹⁰⁹

Advertisements in 1803, the year Ranelagh went out of business, mention only Vauxhall, Ranelagh, Astley's and Sadler's Wells.¹¹⁰ By 1858, the year of Vauxhall's last serious attempt at revival, competition which would eventually extinguish Vauxhall paradoxically improved overall prospects for garden musicians. There were grand concerts at the Royal Surrey Gardens, at Royal Cremorne Gardens, Crystal Palace, St Helena Gardens and the Pavilion Gardens in north Woolwich. There was a band playing at Regent's Park Zoo and eleven other theatres were open for business, as well as a pleasure garden in Gravesend and Madame Tussaud's.¹¹¹ Vauxhall experimented with daytime opening, with limited success: Dickens

¹⁰⁸ *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* 18 October 1827 p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Anon., *The Every Night Book or, life after dark*. (London: T. Richardson, 1827) p. 179

¹¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle* 16 June 1803 p. 3

¹¹¹ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 1 August 1858 p. 6

deplored it as 'rudely and harshly disturbing that veil of mystery which had hung about the property' and dwelt on the tattiness of the roughly painted boards and sawdust that daylight revealed.¹¹² By its end it was 'the dullest place of so-called amusement that can be conceived...it was merely a barren and sandy desert, where people walked round and round...or stood in a little crowd under a ghastly orchestra, in front of which a man in evening dress was singing spasmodically comic songs'.¹¹³

Surrey Gardens, like many places of entertainment, was affected by the Great Exhibition, whose popularity attracted the public away. By 1855 the zoo was run down and in poor condition but unlike Ranelagh half a century before it responded with self-reinvention. The menagerie was sold: £500 was paid for a lion and lioness, an elephant fetched £336, and a spotted hyena went for £25. An agouti was sold for 8s.¹¹⁴ In January 1856 the Surrey Gardens Company was launched with a capital of £40,000. Jullien sank a considerable portion of his fortune in the building of a 10,000-seat concert hall,¹¹⁵ with space outside for a further 10,000 to hear the music while sheltered from the weather by balconies and galleries 'and breathing an atmosphere as pure as they would enjoy in an open garden'.¹¹⁶ It was designed by Horace Jones 'on the strictest principles of acoustic science'.¹¹⁷ One press cutting, possibly from the *Illustrated London News* gave the dimensions as 172ft long, 100ft wide and 77ft from floor to roof (95ft to the top of the towers).¹¹⁸ It opened with a performance of *Messiah* given by 1,000 performers on 15 July 1856.¹¹⁹

¹¹² Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* (New York: National Library Edition, 1868) p. 158

¹¹³ *Illustrated Times* 30 July 1859 p. 11

¹¹⁴ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.57

¹¹⁵ Festival programme Warwick Wroth Collection, GB-Lml L75.8.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 7

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 13

¹¹⁸ GB-Lbl Th.Cts.58

¹¹⁹ Festival programme Warwick Wroth Collection, GB-Lml L75.8.

At an evening concert on 12 May 1857, the best seats were moderately priced, with stalls at 3s 6d and private boxes 10s 6d. More distant seats cost less, and the third gallery and area of the hall were free.¹²⁰ The *Illustrated Times* calculated the cost of entertainment at Surrey at between 4d and 6d an hour, making it 'just about the lowest rate at which such excellent music was ever supplied'.¹²¹ It should have worked commercially but something went wrong with its finances. In August 1857 there were meetings of creditors and a hearing in the Court of Bankruptcy. The building had cost £35,000 to put up but was valued by liquidators at only £18,000.¹²² Jullien had invested £6,000 of his own and was owed £3,000 in conducting fees. In 1861, plumbers working on the roof upset a portable kiln. By five o'clock the building was no more but as soon as the fire was out and the engines had departed, the band started playing in another part of the gardens and the price of admission was reduced to 1s. The hall was rebuilt but never again used for concerts: St Thomas' Hospital used it briefly as an extra ward and by 1862 the gardens were closed.

The last Surrey Gardens venture might have succeeded. The fact that it did not matters less than what it reveals about London entertainment in the mid century. Theatre and concert going increased but the appeal of music in the open air had clearly diminished. Noise, pollution and crowding meant that being out of doors in London was less agreeable. This shift in taste may have contributed to the demise of the gardens more than changes in technology, though better transport certainly undermined them. In 1856, the Royal Pavilion Gardens in north Woolwich, which was 'half an hour from Bishopsgate station' advertised the return rail fare and admission to a full programme of entertainments, including fireworks by Mr Brock and Hayward's Celebrated Band, at 1s a person.¹²³ Those wishing to visit

¹²⁰ GB-Lbl. Th.Cts.58

¹²¹ *Illustrated Times* 19 July 1856 p. 11

¹²² *The Times* 24 August 1857, p. 9

¹²³ *Morning Advertiser* 18 June 1856 p. 1

Rosherville Gardens could take the Gravesend steamer. In 1859, St Helena Gardens in Rotherhithe advertised the Sunday attractions of Zeluti's Grand Band, comic and sentimental singing and the Sisters Gifford, but also mentioned that the second-class fare on the Greenwich Line was 6d and the Thames Tunnel was free in both directions for visitors to the gardens.¹²⁴ Cremorne and Vauxhall also advertised transport links: in 1847 a 2d Citizen Steamer plied between the centre of town and Vauxhall bridge while Cremorne could be reached by omnibus for 6d.

In 1859 Vauxhall closed for good. It was swamped by competition, it was tired, unfashionable and too big. Nevertheless, it is hard not to feel sorry for the last proprietors. The gardens were shut in 1857 but in 1858 an attempt was made to put on a season, and the Vauxhall records say they were "open for Sunday afternoon on July 1st for the first time this year."¹²⁵ On 9 August they opened on a Saturday for the first time. Alas, 1858 saw the outbreak of the The Great Stink of London.¹²⁶ At a time when the smell from the river made even the business of Parliament impossible, a sixpenny train ride to a rural setting was an unanswerable point of competition. Vauxhall was moribund by then anyway, but it was an undignified end to almost 200 years of history. Cremorne persisted until 1875 as something closer in style to a funfair than anything a character devised by Jane Austen might have recognised. It became a byword for the seedy: *The Cremorne*, a startlingly explicit pornographic magazine, clumsily illustrated and worse written, began publication in 1851.¹²⁷ The Panharmonion eventually became a successful theatre without outdoor diversions (its facade survives as an office building), succumbing to a trend that affected many gardens: proprietors were offered the chance to sell their land for building or sometimes for

¹²⁴ *Morning Advertiser* 15 August 1859 p. 1

¹²⁵ Lambeth Archives IV/162/07 Journal of Receipts and expenditure, with lists of officials and performers engaged 1822-1859

¹²⁶ See above p. 145

¹²⁷ GB-Lbl P.C.31.k.15

cemeteries, took the money and closed. Surrey Gardens was sold for residential development in 1877. The last survivor of all was St Helena Gardens in Rotherhithe, where 'singers warbled and dancers capered, infant prodigies of six delighted or bored audiences, and orchestras scraped until the year 1881'.¹²⁸

The demise of pleasure garden entertainment is unlikely to have affected the overall employment prospects of competent instrumentalists. More and more theatres and dance halls provided employment and the railways that harmed the inner London gardens also enabled musicians to fulfil more engagements: in 1824, Hackney coaches working within London charged a tariff of 1s a mile¹²⁹ and Charing Cross to Rotherhithe would have cost 9s return. By 1858, the whole Coldstream Guards band could be transported over the same distance for 15s. Musicians were spared the long walks to venues that had been endured by Ranelagh's band.

If the gardens had a musical legacy, it was not so much the vast amount of by then unfashionable dance and vocal music that they generated, but rather a change in the attentiveness with which audiences now listened to a military band. As one journalist put it:

It is fresh in our recollection that at Vauxhall the Military Band was considered as merely filling up a vacuum in the Evening's Entertainments by affording time for the other Artists to recruit exhausted Nature, - few thought of paying the compliment of listening to them, and fewer still that of applauding their performance. We have changed all that...The Audience at the

¹²⁸ *Amusements of Old London*. vol. 1 p. 74

¹²⁹ *Hackney Coach Directory* for 1824.

Surrey Gardens always listens and as a natural consequence
always applaud.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ *Theatrical and Concert Companion* 1 June 1840, p. 1

5. On the road: working in the provinces

In December 1828, during the dispute between the band of the Royal Italian Opera and the King's Theatre management, some of the musicians described their work outside the capital:

To this we may add three or four music meetings; but these, in many instances, yield very slender savings, after travelling expenses are deducted.¹

This was disingenuous. For those who could secure them, engagements in the provinces were lucrative and had been so since the eighteenth century: the Summer of 1828 had been spectacularly so. Touring involved a minority of players, almost exclusively those at the upper end of the profession, but it was a large part of those men's incomes albeit a logistically difficult and exhausting one before the railways appeared. This chapter examines those difficulties in detail and considers the place of out-of-town earnings in a player's portfolio.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the only town outside London that could assemble a complete professional orchestra locally was Bath. It had a subscription series, a Pump Room orchestra that played in the mornings and from 1809 the Theatre Royal provided regular employment. Elsewhere, orchestral concerts depended on imported players, either from London or by combining players from nearby towns; there was an ensemble of some sort at Oxford, which the Salisbury festival imported along with 'the best performers from Bath'.² The Oxford band was smaller than what we now think of as a classical orchestra: in December 1801 a Mr. Hale augmented it with other performers for a performance of Haydn's *Surprise* symphony at Cirencester:³ Concerts in the northern counties used men from York and Liverpool, and if there was a militia or regimental band nearby, some of its musicians

¹ *Explanation of the Differences* p. 24

² *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 20 September 1769 p. 2

³ *Gloucester Journal* 30 November 1801 p. 3

would be engaged. Nevertheless, until the 1830s, and in some places after then, it was common for performances in the regions to employ a core of professionals from London, partly to raise standards but also because their association with the Opera or Antient Concert carried a *cachet* that was attractive to members of those social classes who could afford to attend.

A few London players undertook solo engagements out of town: Christophe Gottfried Kieswetter undertook a subscription series in Liverpool in 1821. He was the principal attraction and played solos, one of them a composition of his own, on what has become known as the Kieswetter Stradivarius.⁴ He and a few wind soloists like the flautist Charles Nicholson seem to have made a good living in this way, playing for a mixture of public concerts and private parties but for most players provincial work meant reinforcing local bands in subscription concerts or, in those towns that could afford it, making up a complete orchestra for the week-long musical festivals that took place around the country during the Summer and the early weeks of Autumn.

Weekly or monthly events were confined to those places where musicians could be picked up locally. Otherwise, it made more sense to organise six or seven performances in a short space of time and pay a single set of travelling expenses. Promotions of this sort were variously called subscription series, 'the oratorios' or 'festivals'. To some extent the terminology was interchangeable, though 'festival' eventually came to mean a more lavish event mounted in support of a charity rather than an entrepreneurial exercise. Festivals were organised on the assumption that the leisured and wealthier middle classes would make up most of the audience; prices were high and many of the performances took place in the mornings. They were underwritten by guarantors rather than being dependent on advance

⁴ *Liverpool Mercury* 20 April 1821 p. 1

subscriptions or the tickets sold at the door. For the players, the difference was one of numbers: a commercial promoter would naturally keep imported performers to a minimum, but at most festivals conspicuous consumption was important. They employed more London players and made a virtue of the cost.

For most of the eighteenth century, festivals were mounted sporadically.⁵ Two were regular: the Three Choirs Festival, which was established by 1719, and the annual festival at Salisbury, which flourished until the 1780s.⁶ It was operating by 1769, the earliest year for which advertisements survive, though references in the press to 'our annual festival' suggest that it was established before that date.⁷ Derby had festivals in 1772, 1778, and 1793; Newcastle held its first in 1778, with others in 1781, 1791 and 1796. The nineteenth century saw a steady increase in the number of towns putting one on: Bath and Somersetshire Grand Musical Festival began in 1813, then was held in 1814, 1818 and 1821. From 1824 it was renamed the Bath Triennial Festival. Bristol Grand Musical Festival was held in 1803, 1814, 1815 and 1821. York's first took place in August 1791; there was a smaller one in 1803⁸ then four Yorkshire Grand Musical Festivals, held in York in 1823, 1825, 1828 and 1835. The Scots overcame their preference for the 'the rude though often expressive airs'⁹ of their native music and Edinburgh had its first festival in 1815, followed by another in 1819. By the 1820s, communities spaced across the industrial north were presenting oratorios, and some had the wealth and confidence to promote week-long events. Wakefield mounted one in 1819, listing several London musicians among its principal performers, and Dewsbury mounted one of its own in 1820. A couple of years later, the nearby village of Horbury, an

⁵ Unless another source is given, data concerning frequency and dates of festivals is taken from the Musical Festivals Database at musicalfestivals.org

⁶ Patrick Driscoll, 'The Salisbury Annual Musical Festival 1770 - 1800; provincial culture in transition' *Cultural and Social History*, 5:1 (2008) 33-53

⁷ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 27 September 1769 p. 2

⁸ *York Herald* Saturday 30 July 1803 p. 1

⁹ George Farquhar Graham, *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival* (Edinburgh: 1816) p. 2

industrialised settlement that had been the scene of a notorious Luddite intervention in the 1790s, followed suit and it is possible to trace a steady increase in the frequency and scale of festivals until the *annus mirabilis* of 1828, the Summer and Autumn of which saw ten of them in quick succession between the 28 June and 14 October. The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*, never a publication to spurn hyperbole, called this abundance *perfectly unprecedented in the annals of music*.¹⁰ From the 1830s, the patterns of out-of-town work for London players changed because of a mixture of economic, social and a few purely musical factors.

Social Motives

Detailed information about early festivals is sparse, particularly when it comes to the quality of the music. From the earliest times journalists wrote more about the appearance and social status of the audience than the performances they attended: a report of the Derby Festival in 1793 noted the 'brilliant audience' at the opening night and the 'numerous and elegant company' that attended the morning performance of *Messiah* on the second day. It made no mention of any brilliance at the concerts themselves.¹¹ In the nineteenth century, the social element dominated. The forty-eight-page history of the second Yorkshire festival spent twenty-three pages on the ball held at the end of the week,¹² *A History of the Liverpool Musical Festival* in 1827 devoted twelve of its twenty pages to the same thing while the 1828 *Account of the Manchester Festival* spent eighty-four of its 120 pages on a description of the ball and a detailed guest list. It even described the materials used in the costumes. Mr Archibald Borron looked most interesting as a Circassian slave, Miss Loxdale from Shropshire employed a great quantity of cerise silk and white ostrich feathers in her Lithuanian outfit, Mr John Brooks, dressed as a native of Chili, (sic) was 'one of the most

¹⁰ QMMR vol. X No XXXVIII - 1828 (published April 1829) p. 136.

¹¹ *Derby Mercury* 5 September 1793 p. 4

¹² *An Account of the Second Yorkshire Festival* (York: John Wolstenholme, 1825)

facetious characters in the room' and Miss Bowman of Broughton Forn near Dundee, in an elegant fancy dress, appeared to engross the whole attention of a gentleman in a fancy sailor's dress.¹³ Guests at the ball paid the artist Arthur Perigal to include them in his painting of the event.¹⁴ As to which of Beethoven's symphonies was played at the Tuesday concert we can only guess, since the *Account* called it 'grand' and left it at that. This was perfectly rational. Most ambitious musical projects in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century needed to involve the upper layers of society, partly for direct financial support and partly because their presence was a powerful draw for the middle classes.¹⁵ At the 1824 Norwich Festival, following 'an application by a number of respectable individuals', it was decided to allow them to sit on the orchestra stage and watch aristocratic company at the ball. A charge of 5s per spectator was levied.¹⁶

Finance: costs, subscriptions and guarantees

Commercial concert series like Willson's in Liverpool made no mention of patronage and did what they could to reduce risk. Messrs. White and Willis, who gave four subscription concerts in Leeds in 1825, encouraged purchase of subscriptions by limiting who could use a ticket: a 1gn ticket was transferable only to ladies or to sons under 21. They stipulated that, 'no gentleman resident in, or within Five Miles of, the Town of Leeds, can be admitted without a subscription.'¹⁷ Willson's Liverpool concerts were a little more relaxed, probably because they were serving a larger local population. They invited the purchase of season tickets to avoid disappointment since tickets on the day were limited.

¹³ GB-Lbl 7895aaa16 *An Account of the Manchester Music Festival with a description of the characters who attended the fancy-dress ball* (Manchester: 1828) p. 79

¹⁴ Salford Museum and Art Gallery <https://salfordonline.com/1511-unseen-salford-treasures-arthur-perigals-a-fancy-dress-ball.html#jp-carousel-1516>

¹⁵ See Driscoll, *The Salisbury Annual Musical Festival* pp. 33-53.

¹⁶ GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

¹⁷ *Leeds Intelligencer* 13 January 1825 p. 2

Risks were sometimes spread by repeating programmes nearby. The Newcastle oratorios were held on 5, 7, 8 and 9 October 1778, opening with *Alexander's Feast*. This work was given on the following day at Mr. Eldon's rooms in Durham as part of a subscription series.¹⁸

A similar pattern can be seen in the subscription concerts that George Smart organised in 1822-3 at Bath, Gloucester and Bristol. These combined Bath-based players with a few from London, notably the flautist Nicholson and Norton, a trumpeter who played at the London oratorios.¹⁹ Bath's concert on New Year's Eve 1822 was preceded by a similar programme at Cheltenham the previous evening, and other concerts seem to have been timed to keep expensive long-distance coach travel to a minimum.

Guarantors were necessary in most places. Even a small festival like the one at Cambridge in 1828 cost £2827 19s 0d. The 1819 Edinburgh festival spent £3,113, 18s and fivepence halfpenny on 'the musical department'.²⁰ That was more than the 3017 16s 0d.²¹ ballet orchestra budget at the King's Theatre for the whole of the 1821 season. In 1828, the grandest festival of all, York, expended £14,135 12s 0d in a week, the figure partly inflated by Angelica Catalani's fee of £600 and by the unusually large band. The most detailed account that we have of festival finances and the engineering required to establish a festival is a description of the preparations for the 1828 Manchester festival. A meeting in January alerted local church wardens to the parlous state of local charity finances; a guarantee fund committee was formed the following month and it invited public subscriptions to indemnify the festival against loss. Subscriptions were limited to £100 each and £20,000 in guarantees was raised quickly. The next stage was to solicit patronage from the upper classes and this,

¹⁸ *Newcastle Chronicle* 3 October 1778 p. 3

¹⁹ GB-Lbl C 61.g.1

²⁰ GB-Lbl C.61.g.9.

²¹ Ayrton Papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 vol. II fo. 78.

too, was done easily; Sir Robert Peel agreed to be patron and donated £500 to the festival fund.²²

This system was not universally admired since it gave influence to guarantors whose wealth might not be matched by their judgement - and whose decisions affected the musicians. As the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* put it:

...the interposition of patrons, who may not with safety be offended, the interests and friendships of some, the ignorance of others, together with the arrogant claims of performers - all co-operate to distract and weaken the general authority so indispensable to the nearest possible approach to perfect performance...patronage exalts their character for intellect and taste, and insofar confirms the respect that they ought to inherit, but which mere station does not confer...²³

It described the tactics used by the wealthy to get their own way over artistic policy. The most effective was to withhold permission to use performing spaces in buildings that they controlled.

How much this affected the travelling orchestral musician is hard to say - though the QMMR blamed the acoustically disastrous siting of the orchestra under the tower at York in 1823 to interference from the upper classes or clergy. At a more practical level, musicians would have been wise to bear in mind the uncertain nature of festival or oratorio promotion. A man making a commitment to play at a subscription concert, and perhaps obtaining leave of absence from a less lucrative but confirmed London engagement in order to do so, had to be

²² *An Account of the Manchester Music Festival* (Manchester: 1828) p. 2

²³ QMMR vol. VIII (1827) pp. 422-4

mindful of the fact that provincial promotions were confirmed only when a minimum number of advance subscriptions had been sold; Smart's 1822-3 series nearly failed to materialise when too few takers came forward at the opening of the subscription lists.²⁴ It is likely that Kieswetter only requested leave of absence from the Philharmonic Society two weeks before his Liverpool engagement because he did not trust it to take place.²⁵

Charity

The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review reminded its readers:

. . .the foundation of these assemblages of art is charity - the advancement of science, of pleasure, and of local interests, are all collateral to the first stimulant...²⁶

It is not clear when musical festivals started to act as fundraisers for charity. It may always have been the motivation but if it was, eighteenth century newspaper descriptions did not mention it. By the nineteenth century, conspicuous giving and the social events that went with it were an important reason for a festival to happen. Cambridge festival supported Addenbrooke's Hospital; Salisbury's benefitted, amongst others, the charitable works of the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral. Hereford gave its festival in support of the widows and orphans of deceased clergymen; York, always the largest, divided its donations between five infirmaries²⁷ and Nottingham and Edinburgh supported, amongst other causes, their local lunatic asylums. In 1824, Elizabeth Bentley, a gentlewoman from Norfolk, published verses in celebration of the Norwich Festival which, whatever their poetic merits might be, do not quite manage to avoid an air of self-congratulation:

Lest Poverty should hopeless pine
Beneath Affliction's hand,

²⁴ GB-Lbl C 61.g.1

²⁵ GB-Lbl RPS.Ms.279 p. 163

²⁶ QMMR vol. 10 No. 28 (1829)

²⁷ *ibid.*

The pow'r's of Harmony combine
At Charity's command.
Music her strength and sweetness blends
Her spells the erst were known
While Britain's Monarch condescends,
The heavenly cause to own...²⁸

Charity sometimes came with strings attached: in the event of a festival making a loss, the prospective recipient of funds was sometimes liable for the shortfall. In 1828 the Quarterly Court of the President and Governors at Addenbrooke's Hospital gave a vote of thanks to:

...the Noblemen and Gentlemen who so kindly volunteered
their assistance to secure the Hospital against any risk at the
late Grand Musical Festival, under the management of the
Governors...²⁹

The guarantee fund had not been required that year, and the hospital received £484 13s 3d but in 1833 mismanagement brought about a loss costing the guarantors 7s in the pound. Dublin, which in 1831 had secured the services of Niccolò Paganini for its festival, failed to meet its obligations to the Charity for the Relief of Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers and for weeks afterwards the papers published their lamentations:

...their only hope for the last two months has been the proceeds
arising from the MUSICAL FESTIVAL and of this they can
only say that they are apprehensive that their expectations will
not be realised...³⁰

²⁸ *Norwich Mercury* 25 September 1824 p. 3

²⁹ *Cambridge Chronicle and Huntingdonshire Gazette*, 11 July 1828 p. 3

³⁰ *Dublin Morning Register* 24 September 1831 p. 1

Commerce and diversion

During the nineteenth century, festivals evolved into large social and mercantile occasions. They were effectively city fairs. They became more spectacular and more vulgar, to the point where in some cases the concerts became a side show, though the range of diversion probably increased the amount of musical employment. In 1823 the *Liverpool Mercury* slipped into almost a full column of doggerel in celebration of the 'general holiday' but devoted relatively few lines to music:

A festival; and nodding plumes
And ladies gay, and crowded rooms,
And splendid show and glittering dress,
And Stephens, Salmon, Camporese!
And Nicholson and magic flute,
Harp, sackbut, psaltery and lute;
Drums, clarionets and loud bassoons
Plays, fancy balls and air balloons...³¹

The balloon was important enough to supplant a concert. For the less adventurous there were exhibitions; in Liverpool there was one at the Royal Institution on Colquitt-Street³² and in Norwich the 20th annual exhibition of the Norwich Society of Artists was staged at Sir Benjamin Wrench's court.³³ As the festival approached, the local paper warned that it had no space for late advertisements.³⁴

George Farquhar Graham described the 'concourse of strangers towards Edinburgh' and the

³¹ *Liverpool Mercury* 3 October 1823 p. 6

³² *Liverpool Mercury* 5 October 1827 p. 8

³³ *Norwich Mercury* 18 September 1824 p. 2

³⁴ *Ibid.*

difficulty of getting lodgings.³⁵ The *Liverpool Mercury* marvelled at the transformation of the town by painters, plasterers and white-washers and the influx of people, not just from the surrounding towns but also from Wales and even Ireland. The start of the Liverpool festival was marked with a display of flags on parish churches and ringing of bells of St Peter's. Thereafter it became a spectacle as much for the streets as for the concert hall:

During the day-time our streets, particularly Church-street and Bold-street, presented every appearance of the fashionable streets of London, whilst the *natives*...might be seen congregated at the several corners of the streets, conversing on the different entertainments...³⁶

Some form of ticket scalping seems to have gone on:

Some idea may be formed of the public anxiety to be present at the ball when we state that, in the course of Monday, eight and ten guineas were paid for a single ticket.³⁷

The problem was not confined to Merseyside: in Edinburgh 15s concert tickets changed hands for two or three guineas³⁸

Orchestral Management

Engagement of performers was done by an outside contractor. Charles Ashley³⁹ was the London organiser for Edinburgh in 1815.⁴⁰ Edward Taylor, a middle ranking vocal soloist, booked the September 1833 Norwich festival and George Smart seems to have found the London players for many of the places where he conducted. He had a blank *pro forma* letter

³⁵ *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival* p. 14

³⁶ *Liverpool Mercury* 5 October 1827 p. 7

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *Caledonian Mercury* 30 October 1824 p. 3

³⁹ For a description of Charles Ashley's later professional misfortunes, see above p. 43

⁴⁰ *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival 1815* p. 12

printed which left both the festival name and year blank for filling in by hand.⁴¹ We know nothing of Ashley's terms of engagement. Taylor acted as an intermediary under instructions from the Norwich committee, but Smart was paid a lump sum and contracted players directly. In 1833 the Cambridge festival paid him £616 to engage the London instrumentalists and chorus.

Players from the Philharmonic Society, Ancient Concert and King's Theatre were favoured. From the use of their names in advertising it seems that they were a draw in their own right: the 1828 Manchester festival published a full band list on the front page of the *Manchester Mercury* and emphasised the players' London connections.⁴² It is likely that players petitioned on each other's behalf for festival engagements as they did for other work, and family connections sometimes came into play: the Lindleys, father and son, frequently played together in the cello section and the trombone players Mariotti and Schoengen were gradually displaced first by John Smithies, then by his sons John and James, making a complete section from one family. We may also suspect the presence of a north Italian mafia; Dragonetti and Anfossi played together or alternated; Dragonetti was Venetian and Anfossi is as characteristically Piemontese a name as Ramsbottom is Lancastrian.

Festivals generally printed a full list of choir and orchestra in at least one of the sixpenny books of words that were sold for each concert. It was common, too, to put a player's town of origin against his name, even in festivals that only used local performers. These lists reveal that the opera band was always heavily represented. The names on William Ayrton's orchestra list for the 1825 season at the King's Theatre,⁴³ include nineteen men who had taken part in the Wakefield Festival the previous year. Mori, who later succeeded Lacey as

⁴¹ GB-Lbl C.61.g.7, fo. 7.

⁴² *Manchester Mercury* 2 September 1828 p. 1

⁴³ Ayrton Papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 vol. II fo. 51

Ayrton's leader for the ballets, led the Wakefield orchestra.; the principal seconds were W. Griesbach, who sat at the back of the seconds in the Haymarket (A. Griesbach, one of Ayrton's other violinists, was absent), and Mr Gledhill, who played in the firsts. Nicks and Litolff also played, and Litolff provided the quadrille band for the ball. The principal viola was Mr Challoner, possibly the same Challoner who was the also harpist at the opera, and his desk partner was Wilcox, who played at the King's Theatre. Robert Lindley led the cellos; his son William and Mr Crouch, also played. Anfossi and Taylor were in the Wakefield bass section and all but one of the wind principals - Nicholson, Willman, Mackintosh, P. Petrides, Harper and Marriotti - were opera players. The exception was Erskine, an oboist from York. There were variations from time to time, but for the most part the names changed little throughout the first third of the century, even in the busiest year, 1828.

Festivals were organised so that they would not clash. When Derby tried to change its dates, the orchestra seems to have demurred. On 11 June 1831 George Smart sent a printed letter to performers:

I am desired by the *Committee* of Management to acquaint you, that, in consequence of a great *Fair* in *Derby* during the week first proposed for the *Festival*, it has been decided that the *General Rehearsal* is to take place on *Monday Morning*, at ten o'clock, September 19th next, in *All Saints' Church*; and that the *Festival* will terminate on the following *Friday*; as there will be sufficient time to get from the *Festival* at *Hereford* to *Derby*, it is hoped this unavoidable change will not be inconvenient to you.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ GB-Lbl C.61.g.7

It appears that it was inconvenient to enough players not to happen. The festival opened with a Grand Concert on 27 September, as originally planned⁴⁵ and the Cheese Fair began on the same day⁴⁶ though with rather less success than the concert; the supply was poor 'owing to a deficiency in the make' and trade was not brisk.⁴⁷

On The Road

On tour, travel and other practicalities generally take up more of a musician's time and energy than performing does. Communications had improved throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century, first with the introduction of fast, light stagecoaches in the 1770s then with John Palmer's creation of a network of rapid mail coaches. In 1740, sixty miles a day was considered a good rate of progress⁴⁸ but by 1811 there were more than two hundred mail coaches in operation which, in good conditions, could average 10 mph. That did not mean travel was easy. The London to Bristol mail left Piccadilly at 8.00 pm and reached its destination at 11.00 the next morning.⁴⁹ Norwich, to which there were two coaches a day, could be reached in less than twelve hours, with the 111-mile journey timetabled to end at 7:38 in the evening. Thomas de Quincey found a musical metaphor for the Post Office transport network:

...recalled some mighty orchestra, where a thousand instruments, all disregarding each other, and so far in danger of discord, yet all obedient as slaves to the supreme baton of some great leader, terminate in a perfection of harmony like that of

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Derby Mercury* 21 September 1831 p. 1

⁴⁷ *Derby Mercury* 28 September 1831 p. 3.

⁴⁸ Brian Austen, 'British Mail Coach Services 1784-1850' (Ph.d thesis, University of London 1979) p.73

⁴⁹ Vale, Edmund *The Mail Coach Men of the Eighteenth Century* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1967) pp. 233-4.

heart, veins, and arteries, in a healthy animal organization.⁵⁰

The priority was speed of postal delivery, not passenger comfort; coaches stopped only to change horses, taking some pride in the rapidity with which this was done, and could cover the 400-odd miles from London to Edinburgh in a little over forty-two hours. A musician who elected to make the journey without stopping would have arrived in a very depleted state. For the few destinations where it was practicable, there was a network of coastal steam packets that charged a little under 2d a mile; seventy-five miles from London to Margate could be covered for 1s.⁵¹ A man who was not in a hurry might use a rivers or canal boat. John Ella did this in 1836, travelling the forty-four miles from Manchester to Bingley for a fare of only ninepence.⁵²

Coach travel might have exhilarating for those who were young and fit, but it must have been exhausting for an older man with a week of concerts at the end of his journey. In 1827 the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* lamented the effect of touring conditions on musical standards:

All the intermediate time between the close of one meeting and the other must be spent upon the road, and in some cases it will hardly suffice to transport those who are engaged at them from the one to the other...it is not too much to predicate that the performance at Liverpool will be far inferior to that at Leicester, Worcester or Norwich, from this very circumstance alone...⁵³

⁵⁰ Thomas de Quincey, *The English Mail Coach* in the collected works vol. 4. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1862).

⁵¹ *Morning Examiner* 25 May 1822 p. 1

⁵² GB-Ob EllaC 106 (John Ella's 1836 diary) p.149 Entry for 17 September

⁵³ QMMR vol. VIII (1826) p. 426.

An Edinburgh critic agreed:

There was a general langour and heaviness in this Concert, probably arising partly from its length and partly from the exhaustion of the performers, occasioned by the fatigues of recent travelling...⁵⁴

The festival experience

However they made their way there, the musicians arrived in an overcrowded town.

'Strangers' arrived for the festival weeks beforehand and lodgings were hard to find. In Edinburgh in 1815, '...from England, and the remotest parts of Scotland, individuals and whole families poured into the city. Every house and every room that could be obtained was occupied...'⁵⁵ Festivals acted as accommodation agencies:⁵⁶ the organisers of the 1823 Liverpool Festival placed advertisements directed at 'Persons who are desirous to Let Their Lodgings for the Festival Week' asking them to send their terms to the festival committee.⁵⁷ It would have been logical for the organisers to help performers find accommodation, but if they did so, no documentation relating to the practice has survived.

The week's work nearly always began on a Monday. Performers were issued with admission tickets (Derby's were given out at County Hall at nine in the morning)⁵⁸ and then went to the ten o'clock General Rehearsal. Changes of schedule could not be notified with notices in the daily press, as was done in London theatres, because provincial newspapers were usually published weekly. Instead, alterations were communicated through handbills, which were also used to announce advance details of rehearsals and performances. Smart's collection

⁵⁴ *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival* p. 66

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 27

⁵⁶ GB-Lbl C.61.g.11

⁵⁷ *Liverpool Mercury* 25 July 1823 p. 1

⁵⁸ GB-Lbl C.61.g.7

from the 1824 Bath festival preserves one marked 'for the orchestre only'(sic) and gives the running order for the performance, says which books and which pages the numbers are to be found and ends with a reminder that there is a concert in the Theatre-Royal that evening, for which the chorus will not be required. The instrumentalists are instructed to be in the orchestra no later than a quarter past seven.⁵⁹ On 8 October 1830, a notice stated:

The PERFORMERS Are requested to call upon the
TREASURERS at the Savings' Bank (sic), in Bold Street,
immediately after this Morning's Performance.⁶⁰

Working conditions

Hours were long. At the 1823 York festival, which began on Tuesday 23 September, there was a general rehearsal on the Monday, then on the mornings of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday there were concerts of sacred music in the Minster. The repertoire consisted of extracts from the Dettingen *Te Deum*, selections from *Judas Maccabeus* and the Mozart *Requiem* together with the first part of Haydn's *Creation*, a large part of *The Seasons*, the principal choruses from *Israel in Egypt* and a selection of other works, not specified. Wednesday's concert was a complete *Messiah*. On the Tuesday and Thursday evenings there were Grand Miscellaneous Concerts. Most of the band were spared the usual concert on the Wednesday night because two balls were held. Collinet and Musard's quadrille band provided the music and employed some of the visiting players.⁶¹

Sometimes the demand for tickets was so great that extra performances were added at short notice. This happened in Edinburgh in 1815, where a morning concert was put on: 'given on account of many persons from the country having been disappointed of tickets for the other

⁵⁹ GB-Lbl C.61.g.2 fo. 4.

⁶⁰ GB-Lbl C.61.g.14 item not numbered

⁶¹ *York Herald* 30 August 1823 p. 1

performances.' An extra fee was paid to the performers, and the high cost of the concert, £243 1s, suggests that it might have been a generous one - though it still returned a profit of £32 12s 6d.⁶² Other opportunities arose for players to increase their earnings. At one of the 1830 Liverpool sermons, Smart added two trumpets (Harper and Hyde) three trombones (Smithies, Woodham and Edgar) and drums (Mr Chipp) to a couple of the anthems. He kept no record of an additional fee, but it is highly likely that some arrangement was made. A Mr. Moore lent a set of parts to another anthem and mentioned that the trombone players must play from alto, tenor and bass parts: Smart was surprised that they were able to do so.⁶³ The exercise was so successful that it was repeated in the 1833 festival, though on that occasion the effect was spoiled by the organ ciphering. In Norwich, the illuminated orchestra was an attraction in its own right and tickets were sold for the public to view it in the evenings 'lighted with festoons'. Some entertainment was provided; one evening in 1836 a little concert was given by a brass band and a military band; a Mr. Gattey played variations on *God Save The King* and a trio of unnamed trombone players performed *Breathe Soft, Ye Winds*.⁶⁴

Encores and mishaps could significantly extend the running time of individual concerts. One in Norwich on the evening of 23 September 1830, (which, the ever-precise Smart notes, began at 2 minutes before 8) had eight encores and two extra pieces introduced on the day, making a total of twenty-nine: that morning the band had already performed *Messiah* in its entirety. The second concert in the 1827 Liverpool festival had seven encores; the second miscellaneous concert in the following festival, 1833, was delayed because more tickets were sold than the gallery could hold, and the overflow had to be transferred to the upper boxes. Despite the efforts of the stewards, the religious morning performances sometimes included

⁶² *Caledonian Mercury* 20 November 1815 p. 1

⁶³ GB-Lbl C.61.g.14

⁶⁴ GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

encores. A handwritten note in the programme for the 1827 *Messiah* in Liverpool indicates that a steward engineered an encore of the *Hallelujah* chorus by passing a scribbled note to Smart: 'The Hallelujah chorus will be encored. Look the signal. CL'.⁶⁵ The most prodigious sacred performance was at Newbury on 9 October 1831. The programme included selections from *Messiah*, *The Creation*, *Judas Maccabeus*, *Jeptha*, *The Mount of Olives*, William Crotch's *Palestine*, Spohr's celebrated oratorio *The Last Judgement* together with Luther's Hymn, Handel's fourth organ concerto and for good measure a coronation anthem by Attwood. This *embarras d'excès* concluded at six minutes to four. At the bottom of the last page in his programmes Smart wrote: 'The whole performance with stops was 4h and 24m. Much too long!!' (sic)⁶⁶

There was often an *ad hoc* quality to festival organisation; the sermon in the 1836 Liverpool festival was supposed to be given in St Michael's church, but the evening before it was discovered that the organ was 'nearly a half note flat'. Since the trumpets could not accommodate the difference, the sermon was moved to St Luke's. Players mostly responded to change and mishap in a good natured manner: when the roof started to leak at Norwich in 1830, they hoisted umbrellas rather than stop the rehearsal.⁶⁷ When Lindley refused to play a concerto, Cramer delivered one on the violin and at the start of the third part of *The Creation* - which for one number out of the whole work uses three flutes - the clarinettist Willman played the third part on the flute. Mr E. Taylor (the Norwich orchestral contractor) performed a song of his own composition entitled *The Warrior When in Peace Reposing*. Smart noted:

⁶⁵ GB-Lbl C.61.g.14 item not numbered

⁶⁶ GB-Lbl C.61.g.3

⁶⁷ GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

Mr Goodwin play'd the Drums in above Song that Mr. Chipp
might get his harp ready for the next song.⁶⁸

William Card, a native of Salisbury, performed regularly at the provincial festivals on second flute but when one was mounted in his hometown, Charles Nicholson rather touchingly relinquished the principal seat so that his friend might shine in front of his local supporters.⁶⁹

The Physical Environment

The musicians were treated as part of a visual spectacle and, partly to this end, significant changes were often made to concert venues. In Manchester the Patrons' Gallery was erected 'in a most scientific manner' and secure enough 'not to give the smallest ground for alarm' (something Liverpool might have emulated, since theirs collapsed during a concert in 1827). The seating in the church was rebuilt and all the pews were lined with crimson cloth. To make room for all this they moved the organ of the Collegiate Church from one end of the building to the other.⁷⁰ It was the custom to erect a raised platform for the performers, called the 'orchestra' in the ancient Greek theatrical sense of a performing space: groups of performers, whether vocal or instrumental, were invariably called 'the band'. Illustrations of these constructions are scarce, but the *Account of the Manchester Musical Festival* provides a picture of the orchestra that was erected for the sacred concerts in the Collegiate Church. In 1824 an Edinburgh journalist described the arrangement for festival concerts in the Theatre Royal:

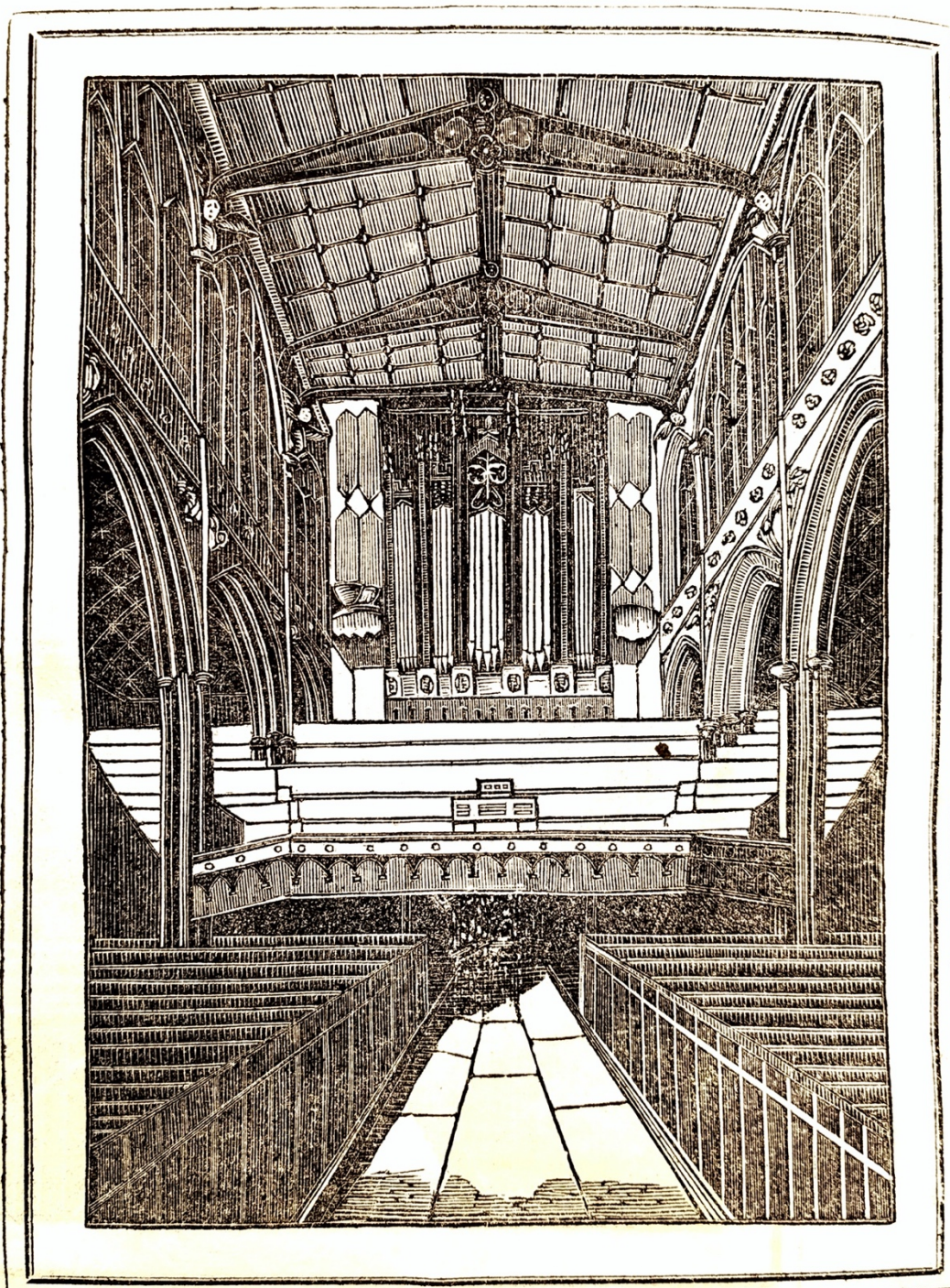
The orchestra is tastefully arranged, and shut in on all sides so as to
throw out the sound, and give full effect to the powers of the band.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ QMMR vol. X No XXXVIII (1828 published April 1829)

⁷⁰ *An Account of the Manchester Music Festival* pp. 12-13

⁷¹ *Caledonian Mercury* 30 October 1824 p. 3



A VIEW OF THE ORCHESTRA.

III. 5.1 The orchestra erected in the Collegiate Church for the 1828 Manchester Festival
An Account of the Manchester Music Festival
 (Manchester: 1828)

The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* was scathing about the one at Cambridge in 1828, where in the evening 'scarce any of them could see the leader and those of the stringed



Ill. 5.2 Handbill for members of the orchestra at the Norwich Festival.
From the Sir George Smart collection. GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

instruments (though far from innumerable) (sic) had not sufficient room'.⁷² Orchestras may have existed partly to keep players and instruments safe; festival audiences could be as unruly as those in London theatres. The regulations for the Dublin festival in 1831 warned that: 'the most effective measures will be taken for the preservation of order, both at the Rotunda and throughout all the principal squares and streets'⁷³ and George Graham described the anxiety among Edinburgh audience members: '...terrified by anticipations of demolished dresses and personal injuries.'⁷⁴ It appears that those fears were justified. At the second sacred concert, a performance of *Messiah*:

...the struggle for admission was considerable, and occasioned a

⁷² QMMR April 1829 vol. X no. XXXVI pp. 138-9.

⁷³ GB-Lbl C.61.g.8 Dublin Festival, regulations at the Theatre Royal 1831

⁷⁴ *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival* p. 27

good deal of inconvenience to the female part of the company, some of whom fainted in consequence of fright and pressure.⁷⁵

An audience that crushed and jostled its female members would cheerfully crash into performers as well. The rails of orchestra pits in London often bore spikes to deter incursions by the public; for Grand Musical Festivals the problem seems to have been solved by elevation. In Norwich, at least, instruments were stored at the hall for safety, and seem to have been the responsibility of porters:

THE PERFORMERS Are requested to put their INSTRUMENTS in the cases, and leave the ORCHESTRA as quickly as possible; the cases will be placed in the left-hand room of the Principal Entrance till they are sent for. - Five minutes only will be allowed for clearing the Orchestra.⁷⁶

Whatever their practical demerits, these orchestras were considered an attraction in their own right; in Norwich the decorations to St Andrew's Hall were so much admired that it became the custom to admit the public on evenings when there was no concert, at 1s a visitor.⁷⁷

Musical direction

The musical director was very often a London import. Thomas Greateorex, the conductor of the Ancient Concerts, presided at Derby, Newcastle and for the Manchester and Yorkshire festivals. Dr Whitfield, the Professor of Music at Cambridge, conducted at the city's festival in 1828 (he attracted opprobrium for his excessive fees) and in smaller places the job fell to

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

the local organist. The most prolific festival director was Sir George Smart, who conducted regularly at Bath, Bury St Edmunds, Cambridge, Derby, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Norwich. Ehrlich is not complimentary about Smart, seeing him - not without cause - as a social climbing opportunist who was 'probably not particularly skilled in any one branch of music'.⁷⁸ Skilled or not, Smart was a hoarder of ephemera and handbills and a prodigious annotator of concert programmes and much of what we know about the details of these provincial events is preserved in the commentaries that he wrote into almost every programme. He recorded which works were rehearsed, which were not, whether a concert began on time (one minute late was enough to elicit a comment) and how well or badly the performers behaved.⁷⁹

Repertoire and performance practice

Early festivals, such as Newcastle in 1791, confined themselves to Handel with a few works from whichever Vauxhall Gardens composers were in vogue at the time.⁸⁰ There was little variety except in the matter of individual songs. *Christ on the Mount of Olives* became a favourite, *The Creation* was almost always played (though it was seldom given complete), there would be selected parts of the Mozart *Requiem* and extracts from *Judas Maccabeus* and *Israel in Egypt*. There was always a *Messiah*, uncut, in the Mozart orchestration, though the particularities of scoring were of no great concern; serpani, trombones and other extras were often added. Later in the century, *Elijah* was popular and there would be occasional forays into repertoire by local composers: on the morning of 30 June 1833, the Cambridge festival orchestra performed Mr Walmsley's exercise for the degree of Bachelor of Music.⁸¹ The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* published a table of the works performed at

⁷⁸ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 38.

⁷⁹ GB-Lbl C.61.g.1-16

⁸⁰ GB-Lbl 1560/2240 and 1560/2238..

⁸¹ *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal* 28 June 1833 p. 3.

festivals in 1828⁸² and explained the narrowness of the repertoire:

Now it happens that those works, which have brought immortality to the writers and which give present fame to the singer, are comparatively few, and certainly very little exceed the quantity necessary to be used at a series of concerts, which require not fewer than one hundred pieces for the sacred morning performances, and sixty for the evening. And though the range of the latter affords abundantly more opportunities for choice, yet a limit is imposed by the fashion of the times... From this cause...and from the little leisure which is allowed for study, the selections must necessarily be much the same in all places.⁸³

The *Norwich Mercury* raised a more practical reason:

It has been justly considered that so splendid a concentration of talent as the orchestra contained, ought not to be solely employed upon standard works, with which every amateur is acquainted, while much of modern date remains unknown. At the same time, the execution of new compositions, by so immense a band, presented infinite difficulties under the imperfect knowledge to be gained by one rehearsal. Such risk imposes a degree of responsibility on the chiefs of the orchestra, that calls for a command of nerve, and knowledge of resources to be relied on, that appertains to very few.⁸⁴

⁸² QMMR vol. X No XXXVIII 1828 (published April 1829)

⁸³ *ibid.* pp. 136-7

⁸⁴ *Norwich Mercury*, 25 September 1830 p. 5.

John Carnelley's assertion that 'Smart's insistence on proper preparation and rehearsal was characteristic of him'⁸⁵ is incorrect. Smart's own records indicate that a 'top and tail' rehearsal with no playthrough was the rule rather than the exception. It could hardly have been otherwise; at most festivals, the Monday general rehearsal was the only one. Smart sometimes noted with an 'R' in the margin of his programme those works which received any rehearsal time at all; usually that meant unfamiliar songs or a major work for the orchestra alone. Even when a choral piece was unfamiliar enough to need a run-through, the orchestral passages, such as the long prelude to *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, went unrehearsed. At Edinburgh on 28 October 1824, *Messiah* was not rehearsed at all, though this did not prevent it receiving a panegyric review, which considered it 'performed in a masterly style, with a richness and brilliancy of execution and an animation that reflects the highest credit...on all those who compose this well disciplined and admirably selected band....'.⁸⁶

The choirs were prepared in the weeks preceding the festival, and perhaps they had one of Burney's 'drilling' rehearsals the week before.⁸⁷ Sacred concerts were not usually rehearsed with choir and orchestra together, even if a work was completely unknown. A concert at the Bath festival in 1824 included a selection from an oratorio called *The Ark*, composed by a certain W.C. Manners to a text by The Rev. W. Lisle Bowles. Smart's description of the proceedings is uncharacteristically scathing:

A most disgraceful performance of this Ark owing to the
incorrect state of the Parts - and apparent want of knowledge to

⁸⁵ John Carnelley, *George Smart and Nineteenth-Century London Concert Life* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015) p. 214

⁸⁶ *Caledonian Mercury* 30 oct 1824 p. 3

⁸⁷ Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon in Commemoration of Handel* (London: 1785) Part B pp. 17-19

correct the wind instruments etc.⁸⁸

The trouble began early on, in an air called *Never oh never from this heart*. The parts were incorrectly written. First Lindley left off playing, next Mr Loder who, as he was leading, must have caused the rest of the strings to stall. Smart complained: '...therefore I went on alone, receiving not the least assistance from W. Manners who stood at my right hand'. It is not clear exactly what happened; it seems likely that W.C. Manners was unfamiliar with wind instrument transpositions. Smart adds that 'Mr Rae rehearsed this song on the 14th on the corno Inglese, which was non effective' (James Rae was the first French horn player; it is not clear what Smart means by a corno inglese). The air was succeeded by a chorus of pagans which seems to have passed without incident, but then the quartetto *Go Gentle Dove*, accompanied on the harp by Mr Viner, 'Went very badly from the difficulty of the tune etc'. The unhappy *Ark's* voyage lasted 42 minutes. The manuscript appears to be lost.

Forces

A fashion for gargantuan ensembles was evident in the eighteenth century: Burney gave 267 as the number of singers for *Messiah* at the Handel commemoration in 1784 but, presumably for reasons of social propriety, only printed the names of male chorus members; it is reasonable to assume that the full choir amounted to twice that number.⁸⁹ There were 255 instrumentalists.⁹⁰ Anna Seward's diary describes a band of 750 at a *Messiah* in 1786;⁹¹ the performance at St Paul's Cathedral in 1791 which was attended by Haydn involved 1,067.⁹² Provincial taste was much the same: the York 1828 festival mustered 250 players and 618 singers. At Norwich the numbers grew each year: the 1824 mustered 300, in 1830 there were

⁸⁸ GB-Lbl C.61.g.2

⁸⁹ Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey* Part B p. 12

⁹⁰ Ibid. pp. 17-19

⁹¹ H. Wickham (ed.), *Journals of Thomas Sedgwick Whalley* (London: 1863) pp. 489-90.

⁹² William Gardiner, *Music and Friends* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown and Longman, 1838) vol. 1 p. 150

350, despite the downturn in the local economy. In 1833 there were 360, a modest increase but still progress. At the Birmingham Festival of 1829 a performance of Handel's *Joshua* included eight trombones who, in the chorus *Glory to God* 'produced an effect terribly sublime in this magnificent production.'⁹³

In 1816 George Farquhar Graham observed that throughout the country there were '...always to be found a sufficient number of professional performers and amateurs capable of giving weight and effect to musical performances upon a moderate scale'.⁹⁴ Professional performers in this context does not mean full-time players but rather, as Stephen Banfield has convincingly argued, general practitioners, men piecing a living together from multiple sources, one of which was instrumental performance but of which the most important was teaching.⁹⁵ This may have been so in the forty-six piece orchestra at the Berkshire festival in 1825.⁹⁶ Eleven players were listed as being from the King's Theatre and the rest of the band included six gentlemen by the name of Binfield as well as Miss Binfield at the organ and Miss Maria Binfield, the harpist.⁹⁷ They may have been an unusually diligent family of musical amateurs, and it is certain that amateurs often played; the Bury St Edmunds festival in 1828 listed two clergymen in its violin section, the Rev E. Millard from Lowestoff (sic) and the Rev. C. Millard from Norwich.⁹⁸

In some places, the bulk of a large orchestra could be found locally, using military musicians, and amateurs. In June 1829, Wakefield was able to assemble an orchestra of eighty-three from Huddersfield, Ossett, Sheffield, Kirkheaton, Haifax, Doncaster and elsewhere for a grand concert of sacred music. The players 'gave their services gratuitously' (sic) and

⁹³ *The Harmonicon* July 1829 p. 275.

⁹⁴ *An Account of the First Edinburgh Musical Festival* p. 10.

⁹⁵ Stephen Banfield, *Music in the West Country* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018)

⁹⁶ Ayrton Papers GB-Lbl Add MS 52335 vol. II fo. 51

⁹⁷ GB-Lbl C.61.g.3

⁹⁸ GB-Lbl C.61.g.5

although we cannot be sure which of them were amateur and which professional - the programme listed only their hometowns - Messrs Barnett, Pratt, Porteus, Wellandt, Shepherd and Shepherd L., Willoughby, Saynor, Webb and Percival, all came from York and had the word 'theatre' against their names.⁹⁹ It was usual for a military bandsman's regiment to be entered in the programme against his name. Army musicians were a significant presence in festival bands, but not an overwhelming one. At the first Norwich festival, the SATB trombones (Messrs Turner, Gilbert, Behrens and Albrecht) were borrowed from His Majesty's Household and a Mr Longhi from the Queen's Bays Band played clarinet.¹⁰⁰ Longhi was in the enormous orchestra at York in 1825, listed as a member of the 2nd Dragoon Guards and the wind and brass section included five other military men; Leggatt, a clarinettist from the 7th Lancers, Mr Onion a bassoonist from the 7th Hussars and from the same regiment there was the horn player Matthews and a Mr. Bailey who played the serpent. The York programme credited those players who were Leaders of Bands; presumably the latter category were civilian bandmasters attached to regiments.

In his description of the 1825 York festival, William Parke hit upon a curious choice of vocabulary:

The band, which was very numerous, consisted chiefly of provincial performers collected from all parts of the surrounding country, who being fortunately blended with several principal musicians from London (who had the effect of *fuglemen*) headed by Cramer, the excellent leader, produced an admirable effect.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ GB-Lbl RB.23.b.7834 fo. 24.

¹⁰⁰ GB-Lbl C.16.g.16, vol. for 1824. .

¹⁰¹ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 2 p. 218

The word 'fugleman' along with its derivative 'to fogle' meaning to sign with the hands, appeared first at the start of the nineteenth century and was in use for about fifty years. It denoted a skilled soldier placed at the head of a file to demonstrate drill movements to recruits.¹⁰² Given the close relationship between the military and the music profession, Parke's choice of word is unsurprising, and he was not alone in using martial terminology; Burney referred to preliminary rehearsals for choirs in the Handel celebrations as 'drilling.'¹⁰³ Neither Parke nor any other source mentioned the use of subconductors - called 'Lieutenants-general' by Burney - in the manner that was employed at the Handel celebrations.

The *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* commented:

...professors and amateurs seldom work well together...professors despise amateurs for want of technical knowledge while amateurs return the contempt of professors by depreciating their narrow and imperfect views of art.¹⁰⁴

That may or may not have been true, but it does appear that the professors' 'narrow and imperfect views' drove the orchestras and held them together.

Musicians' finances

The growing number of festivals caused the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* to marvel at the 'opulence and liberality of the country, and the advancement of the love and practice of the art.'¹⁰⁵ The players' loyalty to out of town engagements can be explained more prosaically: they paid well. Some individuals negotiated their own fees. A handwritten draft of a contracting letter prepared by George Smart for the Liverpool Festival in 1827 gives

¹⁰² OED

¹⁰³ Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey* Part B p. 14

¹⁰⁴ QMMR vol. VIII 1826 Published Jan 1827 p. 428.

¹⁰⁵ QMMR vol. X no XXXVIII, 1828, (published April 1829) p. 136.

dates and states that 'I am directed by the Committee of Management for this Festival to propose an engagement to you'. A spare copy of the printed reply simply says that the player's terms are accepted.¹⁰⁶ Not all festivals negotiated. Edward Taylor's engagement letter for the 1830 Norwich festival gave the dates and offered terms.¹⁰⁷ The 1833 festival was nearly cancelled because of a downturn in the local economy. It went ahead, but the Hon. Sec. of the committee wrote to Taylor saying:

...it will not be regarded as an unreasonable proposal that some reduction should take place in the terms which the vocal and instrumental performers have been accustomed to receive here, especially when the large number of London professors usually engaged (which at the last Festival was nearly Seventy) is taken into account.¹⁰⁸

We do not know what the reduced terms were, but forty-four London players attended, including Cramer, Lindley, Denman, Tully, Card, and two members of the trombone playing Smithies family. Mr Distin replaced Harper on first trumpet and Dragonetti, who must either have negotiated his own terms or suspended his customary rapaciousness, also played.¹⁰⁹

Most festivals accounted for non-solo performers as a single item, very often lumping chorus and players together as 'the band'. For some reason the Wakefield Grand Musical Festival of 1824 printed a list of every vocal and instrumental performer at the festival, '*with the terms of their engagements*'.¹¹⁰ Of the eighty-seven musicians listed, eight were paid £30 or more, six received between £20 and £30 and 12 had between £10 and £20. The other sixty-one

¹⁰⁶ GB-Lbl C.61.g.12

¹⁰⁷ GB-Lbl C.61.g.16

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ GB-Lbl RB.23.b.7834 fo. 17.

were paid less than £10, the lowest of them a guinea. Wakefield's budget of £853 10s 6d was on the high side, but close enough to the 1828 costs for Cambridge, which were £715 19s 11d¹¹¹ and Bury St. Edmunds, which cost £778 11s 0d,¹¹² to suggest that there was something like a 'going rate' for this sort of work, with Wakefield's higher costs accounted for by its greater distance from London.

Most of the high earners were from London; the cello playing Lindleys (father and son) received £63 for the festival - the same rate as the two 'conductors' Mr Mori and Mr White but more than Dr Camidge, who only had to come from York, where he was organist.¹¹³ The Petride brothers (who played their horns, corresponded and were accounted for as a single item) were paid £36 15s. All but one of the wind and brass principals - Nicholson, Erskine, Willman, Mackintosh and Harper - were given £30; the exception being the Royal Italian Opera trombonist Marriotti (sic) who only managed £21. Even among London players, there was a sharp difference between principal and sub principal fees. W Griesbach, the principal second violin was paid £18 which was a pound more than Tully the second bassoon; Nicks, a tutti violinist from London had £15, The Royal Italian Opera players did not account for all the high earners. The oboist Erskine came from York while Farrer and Hyde, trumpet players based in Sheffield and Manchester were paid 15 15s and £12 respectively. Fees paid to locals seem to have hovered around the going rate of 1gn; a Mr Sugden, who played the horn¹¹⁴ had 4gn, Mr Wigfield (a violinist from Sheffield who was also the organist there)¹¹⁵ had £2 12s 6d, Widdop a horn player from Wakefield received £1 10s and a second Mr Farrer (whose instrument is not recorded) had to be content with 1gn, though the record is too incomplete for us to be able to deduce whether this was because he played in a single concert

¹¹¹ QMMR vol. X No XXXVIII April 1829 p. 167

¹¹² *ibid.* p. 139

¹¹³ Grove entry for Camidge family.

¹¹⁴ GB-Lbl RB.23.b.7834 item 17. .

¹¹⁵ GB-Lbl 10347.ee.13.(8.) p. 6

or was content to receive the same fee as Samuel Pritchard at Covent Garden for each of four performances.

Musicians were paid a lump sum for a festival and met their touring expenses out of it; the residue was their fee for the week. When it came to travel, they had to strike a balance between speed, cost and comfort. Mail and stagecoach fares were based on distance and on whether a passenger sat inside or outside. The post chaise behaved more like a taxi and charged a rate per carriage, irrespective of the number of occupants. Timothy Leunig's exhaustive comparative analysis of travel costs in Britain gives 4d a mile as the coach fare for an inside seat and twopence halfpenny as the outside charge. The post chaise fare was 2s a mile but this was the rate for the whole carriage, which could accommodate three or four passengers.¹¹⁶ Leunig's study concentrates on the year 1865 and it would be reasonable to speculate that competition from railways might have affected fares, but it appears that this was not so: George Smart's accounts for 1822-3 itemised the cost of a mail coach from London to Cheltenham - just under 100 miles - as £2.10s¹¹⁷ but by 'mail coach' he probably meant, in this instance, the post chaise. Using Leunig's 1865 figures, 100 miles as one of four passengers in the chaise would cost exactly the sum in Smart's 1822 accounts.¹¹⁸ Wakefield is 185 miles from London so the single post chaise fare would have been around £4.12s.

We cannot say exactly how orchestral players travelled. Parke mentions taking a post chaise to Birmingham¹¹⁹ but he was working as a soloist on, presumably, a larger budget. It was certainly the quickest and most comfortable form of travel. Three or four violinists or woodwind players might comfortably travel at the stagecoach or post chaise individual rate,

¹¹⁶ Timothy Leunig, 'Time Is Money: A Re-Assessment of the Passenger Social Savings from Victorian British Railways', *The Journal of Economic History*, 66:3 (S2006), 635-673 p. 652

¹¹⁷ GB-Lbl C.61.g.1

¹¹⁸ Leunig, *Time Is Money* p. 652

¹¹⁹ Parke, *Musical memoirs* vol. 1 p. 280

but a cellist would have fallen foul of the mail coach baggage restrictions: three items only, no baskets or bundles and nothing 'too large'.¹²⁰ Like a modern player buying an extra airline seat for his instrument, it may be that the Georgian cellist had to pay double on the coach. Anfossi the bass player received £36 15s for Wakefield but this fee, higher than all the other individual players, may well have been inflated because of the cost of transporting a bass. We know from George Smart's accounts for the Bath and west country subscription concerts in 1823 that portage for a harp from London to Cheltenham cost 15 shillings¹²¹ so it is a fair guess that a bass over double the distance would have set Anfossi back at least £3. His desk partner, Taylor, was also an opera player and only received £16. Most likely Anfossi arranged transport for a pair of basses and the £6 15s 6d is what a modern session player would call portage.

Incidental expenses are harder to quantify. Parke was delighted when, while fulfilling an engagement at Birmingham in 1794, he found a congenial tavern where 'I was elegantly lodged and boarded (wine excepted) for fourteen shillings a week!'¹²² At the 1836 Manchester Festival John Ella and Henry Blagrove found, 'Good Beds at 2/- Dinners at 2/- and breakfasts at 1/6'.¹²³ Their bill of £1 13s each for the for the week was probably closer to the average and if other expenses are added then then £2 - £2 10s seems a reasonable guess at a player's outgoings. Harper's fee for the four Wakefield concerts was, as we have seen, £30. After paying travel expenses of either £3 17s (for an outside seat on the coach) £6 3s (sitting inside) or, if he preferred the post chaise, £9 5s and £2 10s board and lodging, he might have cleared, at the upper end, more than £21 for the week, though as by 1824 he was well into middle age he probably preferred comfort when he travelled. A middling figure for the

¹²⁰ Rider Bevan, *A More Expeditious Conveyance* (London: J.A. Allen, 1984) p. 87

¹²¹ GB-Lbl C.61.g.1

¹²² Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 191

¹²³ John Ella's 1836 diary Entry for 12 September 1836 GB-Ob EllaC 106 p. 141.

highest paid would be around £20. By this reckoning, assuming no major fluctuations in payment, Harper's participation in the ten 1828 festivals would have netted him appreciably more than the £120 that he made from the King's Theatre that year. 1828 was an exceptional year, but even so we can safely say that the 'very slender savings' of which the dissenting opera band complained were nothing of the sort - and Deborah Rohr's notion of players attempting to provide a subsistence is, once again, wide of the mark.

Change, expansion and diversification

Demographic and socioeconomic changes in the first half of the nineteenth century affected concert going and promotion, but it is not certain that they made any great difference to the provincial work of London orchestral musicians. The week-long festivals continued, though the 1828 peak was never again matched. Derby managed one more in 1831, Yorkshire discontinued after 1835 but Manchester proved more robust, holding festivals in 1828, 1836, 1843 and 1844. Newcastle, where they had never been frequent, held them in 1814, 1824 and 1842; after that there were none until 1909. Bath had no festival between 1824 and 1938 but, as Ehrlich says, its status was fundamentally dependent on a temporary fashion and its days as an important centre were numbered by the late eighteenth century.¹²⁴ Edinburgh had none between 1824 and 1843 and Oxford, which held seventeen festivals between 1749 and 1793, managed two in the nineteenth century - 1810 and 1813 - after which there were no more. A few flourished; the Three Choirs Festival continued without interruption and Norwich and Birmingham were put on at three-year intervals throughout the century. Sometimes the term 'festival' came to mean a concert or two, like the one put on by a Mr W. Howard in Edinburgh in 1857: it consisted just of a *Messiah* and another concert a few days later.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 25

¹²⁵ *Edinburgh Evening Courant* 12 November 1857 p. 2

It is likely that there were problems finding people willing to expend the effort needed to mount a festival; certainly Norwich attributed much of its festival's durability to the efforts of a single clergyman, R.F. Elwin who ran it from its inception until 1848.¹²⁶ Festival concerts were exclusive, if only because of high ticket prices, but from the 1830s the trend was towards cheap, unsophisticated concerts for a mass market. The populations of Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham grew by 40% between 1820 and 1830.¹²⁷ For most people life in the new industrial towns was drab; as late as 1844, Preston was the only town in Lancashire with a public park and Llewellyn Woodward quotes from the report of a committee formed to report on public walks and open spaces in the manufacturing towns, which said that 'no provision has been made to afford them the means of healthy exercise or cheerful amusement with their families.'¹²⁸ Woodward states that:

...serious theatre, in the towns where it existed, was out of the reach of the labouring poor...music was more popular but there were no chances of hearing good concerts at cheap prices.¹²⁹

In this he is not altogether correct. Asa Briggs argues that alongside fear of the mob there was also pride in a perceived freedom from aristocratic influence and 'unprecedented range and vitality of voluntary organisation'.¹³⁰ As well as the mechanics' institutes and public reading rooms, there were voluntary organisations trying to improve the musical tastes of working people. Organisations like the Committee for Promoting Rational Amusements among the Industrious classes in Preston, put on concerts¹³¹ and the major choral works were regularly presented in provincial towns for a much broader audience than had listened to

¹²⁶ *Norfolk Chronicle* 16 September 1848 p. 6

¹²⁷ Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983) p. 215

¹²⁸ Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962) pp. 13-15

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.* p. 214

¹³¹ *Preston Chronicle* 21 February 1846 p. 2

them at festivals in the 1820s. In 1845, under the heading 'Oratorio for the Working Classes' a performance of *Messiah* at Halifax was announced, at which 'prices are to be kept so low that members of the working classes may be the exclusive partakers in this musical enjoyment'. Demand for tickets was so great that a second was planned, and it was felt that such an undertaking 'is worth of our time and of good and generous men'.¹³²

There is no record of the names of the players in the oratorio for the working classes project, but from the amount of musical activity advertised from the 1830s onwards it is clear that Bath and London were no longer the only cities with a significant number of professional players. In 1835 it was possible to perform an apocalypse oratorio, *The Seven Trumpets* by Signor Panormo, in the Liverpool Ampitheatre using 'some of the best local vocal and instrumental talent'¹³³ and whatever its deficiencies as a composition may have been, the performers were good enough for it to suffer no calamity comparable to the ill-fated *Ark* in Bath. The same year, a performance of *Messiah* was mounted in Bristol with a band of 100; the advertisements made no mention of London players¹³⁴ and a selection from *Messiah* and the Haydn *Seasons* at Billericay had a full orchestra, again with no mention of players being imported.¹³⁵ The advertisement for a selection from *Messiah* and the *Creation* at Winchester announced singers from London but though it named some orchestral players, it did not refer to London.¹³⁶ By 1850, Leicester had a series of Monthly Concerts with a chorus and orchestra of a hundred.¹³⁷ It is possible that Leicester imported a few players from the capital; the railway link was by then in place. For the most part, proliferation of musicians probably made this unnecessary. This seems particularly likely when we consider the drop in

¹³² *Bradford Observer* 13 March 1845 p. 5

¹³³ *Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser* 14 April 1835 p. 3

¹³⁴ *Bristol Mirror* 7 March 1835 p. 3

¹³⁵ *The Essex Standard* 1 May 1835 p. 4

¹³⁶ *Hampshire Chronicle* 4 January 1845 p. 1

¹³⁷ *Leicester Chronicle* 5 January 1850 p. 2

ticket prices. Admission to Leicester's monthly concerts in 1850 cost between 5s and 1s,¹³⁸ those for Jullien's Newcastle concerts in October 1846 ranged from 3s 6d to 1s.¹³⁹ Lower still were those for the Dublin Musard concerts in 1840, the most expensive of which were 2s.¹⁴⁰ Even in Cheltenham, where the concert audience was better-heeled than in most places, Jullien made a point of advertising the cheapness of his tickets.¹⁴¹

There was also a growth in the number of amateur musicians. There had been enough of them at the end of the eighteenth century for the publishers Goulding, Phipps and D'Almaine, music sellers to the Prince of Wales, to issue a subscription series of orchestral works 'for the use of country concerts. No.25 in the series survives: *A Favourite Overture In Parts For Large or Small Band* by Richardson was published in 1799.¹⁴² It is a very simple work, modestly priced at 4s. and is in short movements that could easily be played by an ensemble of amateur fiddlers and wind players of the sort that might have been found in the west gallery of a parish church. As the number of such musicians increased, the practice that was followed in the festivals of combining them with professionals extended to single concerts. For a *Messiah* in 1835 it was noted that 'The amateur and professional talent of Dublin have, in the kindest manner, offered their valuable assistance.'¹⁴³ In November 1840, the new music hall in Shrewsbury opened with a miscellaneous concert that involved an orchestra that was announced as comprising 'upwards of one hundred and fifty performers'¹⁴⁴ and though the town was not then served by a railway link, no doubt some of the London players made part of their journey by train. Blagrove led, and he played a duet with Lindley, who was principal cello. A Mr. Harper, probably Mr Harper jun. who played at the Lyceum proms the same

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Newcastle Journal* 19 September 1846 p. 1

¹⁴⁰ *Dublin Morning Register* 12 October 1840 p. 1

¹⁴¹ *Cheltenham Chronicle* 25 December 1855 p. 3

¹⁴² Richardson, *A Favourite Overture* (London: Goulding, Phipps and D'Almaine, 1799)

¹⁴³ *Saunders's News-Letter* 7 April 1835 p. 4

¹⁴⁴ *Shrewsbury Chronicle* 6 November 1840 p.1

year, played a fantasia. Most of the items on the programme¹⁴⁵ were vocal; only Winter's *Zaira* overture and the overture to *Zauberflöte* were for orchestra alone, which suggests most of the players were either local amateurs or bandsmen from the Shropshire militia stationed in the town. The system of *fuglemen* system described by Parke persisted around the country; but discipline was often provided by army musicians who were local and a good deal cheaper than using imports from London. Using military men was common: a New Year's ball at Canterbury was enhanced by a flute solo from Mr. Range of the Blues, and the amateur orchestra received assistance in the overtures and quadrilles from several performers of the Horse-Guards' band.¹⁴⁶ A *Messiah* in Edinburgh in 1835 employed 'the most celebrated vocal and instrumental professors at present in the city, who together with the excellent band of the Scots Greys 'lent their services gratuitously'.¹⁴⁷

A review of the orchestra of the Belfast Anacreontic Society in 1846 said that the overture was played in a manner 'not unworthy of Jullien's band'.¹⁴⁸ The choice of comparison is telling, because alongside the increase in general musical activity came a shift in repertoire towards popular quadrilles and waltzes by Musard, Jullien and others. Advertisements across the country show the popularity of a formula broadly similar to the Musard concert in Dublin in 1840, which comprised two Rossini overtures - *La Cenerentola* and *La Gazza Ladra*, some quadrilles by Musard and others and ended with *Le Cheval de Bronze* by Auber.¹⁴⁹ There were regional variations: Beethoven overtures were included in an 1840 concert at which 'all the available instrumental talent of Bristol'¹⁵⁰ took part, and Cheltenham's 'Montpelier Musical Promenades' featured more vocal music than was usual elsewhere.¹⁵¹ The quadrille

¹⁴⁵ Concert programme GB-SHRsha 1037/22/43

¹⁴⁶ *Kentish Gazette* 1 January 1850 p. 2

¹⁴⁷ *The Scotsman* 15 April 1835 p. 3

¹⁴⁸ *The Vindicator* 14 February 1846 p. 2

¹⁴⁹ *Dublin Morning Register* 12 October 1840 p. 1

¹⁵⁰ *Bristol Times and Mirror* 14 November 1840 p. 4

¹⁵¹ *The Cheltenham Looker-On* 29 July 1843 p. 5

fashion extended to purely recreational bands; Newbury Amateur Musical Society's concert in August 1850 consisted mostly of repertoire of the Jullien and Musard variety.¹⁵² Norwich partly funded its 1848 festival - which consisted of repertoire similar to that of its 1820s festivals - with 3 concerts *à la Musard* for which Messrs Howlett and Trory's full concert band was engaged, assisted by the festival chorus. The number of amateurs must have been high; otherwise, it is unlikely that much profit would have been realised with a band that was advertised as numbering 112.¹⁵³

The change in musical taste aided the spread of orchestral concerts but did not increase demand for London players: hackneyed though they might have become, *Messiah* and the *Creation* are substantial works that require stamina and a measure of finesse from the orchestra. Musard quadrilles do not. It is conceivable that the Leicester monthly concerts could have imported London players, since by then the rail link was well established, but with competent local players and simple repertoire, there may have been no need to do so. It is difficult to be certain, because as the repertoire changed, the fact that an orchestral musician had travelled to perform it was less often mentioned in publicity.

For London players, the one source of regional employment that exploited these changes in public taste was the series of national tours undertaken by Louis Jullien, who repeated his popular Winter concerts '... in all the principal towns of England Scotland and Ireland.'¹⁵⁴ These were long tours which included Ireland and Scotland as well as industrial towns like Manchester, Liverpool and Preston, and their itineraries made provision for the insertion of extra performances where demand justified it.¹⁵⁵ These were popularised versions of the

¹⁵² *Reading Mercury* 10 August 1850 p. 2

¹⁵³ *Norfolk News, Eastern Counties Herald, and Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn Commercial Gazette* 6 September 1845 p. 1

¹⁵⁴ *The Atlas* 3 April 1841 p. 16

¹⁵⁵ *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette* 7 March 1851 p. 6

Grand Miscellaneous Concerts that were given on festival evenings. Repertoire was similar in character to that in the Musard concerts, and emphasis was placed on the solo activities of a few principal players who, on early tours, were not London based. The 1841 tour included Faivre, the first trombone at the Paris Opera, Frisch, the first flute in Strauss's orchestra and Delabarre, principal oboe at the Academie Royale in Paris.¹⁵⁶ Later, Jullien used British players, particularly Lazarus the clarinet player.

Though Jullien advertised his 'complete and powerful Orchestra'¹⁵⁷ in the London papers at the start of a tour, it seems that he travelled with a core of musicians and picked up locals as the size of event demanded. No doubt the touring players acted as *fuglemen*. For a ball in the Manchester Free Trade Hall he made up his band of 100 from his own people plus the bands of the 5th Dragoon Guards and the 70th Regiment of Foot, as well as 'a very large number of resident and other instrumental performers'.¹⁵⁸ There were no concerts *À la Jullien* given by freelance artists: a Jullien concert required the presence of the man himself and one review of a concert in Leicester reflected the common - and carefully promoted - idea that it was he alone as conductor who created the performance:

...a compact by which an absolute despotism is established - a mode of government by which alone musical society should be ruled; and many a clever youth, fiddler or flute player, whose talents are put in requisition in our Choral Society *and who likes to be heard* might have taken a valuable lesson from such men...¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Preston Chronicle* 8 May 1841 p. 3

¹⁵⁷ *The Atlas* 3 April 1841 p. 16

¹⁵⁸ *Bolton Chronicle* 25 January 1845 p. 2

¹⁵⁹ *Leicester Journal* 16 April 1841 p. 3

These changes might by themselves account for some of the decline in festivals. It is possible that an audience that might have dozed through *Messiah* in the 1820s discovered that Musard's quadrilles were more to its taste. This was the opinion of the organisers of the 1860 Glasgow festival, who lamented that for years '...the performance of a single Oratorio in a suitable manner generally resulted in pecuniary loss...' but noted that '...in recent years a gratifying improvement has been perceptible in the public taste...' ¹⁶⁰ In 1821, a Liverpool journalist had observed that in a year which had no music festival, Mr. Willson's eight concerts at the Bold Street Music Hall (the ones at which Kieswetter played) almost amounted to the same thing. ¹⁶¹ Such a point was worth making when opportunities to hear music were few, but against a background of so much musical activity, it must in many places have been difficult to make a case for the expense of importing a high-status orchestra from London.

Those regional festivals that did continue were numerous enough to be important in the portfolios of a few musicians, and the steady improvement in communications that occurred throughout the century made them more comfortable engagements to fulfil. Nevertheless, there is a certain irony in the fact that the greater ease in travel that the railways brought coincided with a reduction in the need for musicians to leave London. It is unlikely that the players suffered very much because of this; demand in London was by then so great that it was easy to make a living without straying too far from home.

¹⁶⁰ Programme for 1860 Glasgow Festival GB-Lbl DRT Digital Store 11781.d.23.(4.) p. 9

¹⁶¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 April 1821 p. 1

6. A sense of the music: training for the profession

Though there were sometimes severe problems, the supply of players more or less kept up with demand. Foreigners seem to have made up a smaller proportion of the orchestral workforce than was the case with solo instrumentalists and singers; many must have migrated to London, especially after 1848, but the almost complete absence of band lists from minor theatres makes it impossible to do more than guess at their numbers. They made little impression at the top: the eighty-five strong orchestra for Costa's 1850 opera season at Covent Garden¹ contained sixty-nine men who, with names such as Thirlwall and Westlake, were obviously native. British dominance of the violin section - where conservatoire-trained foreign players might have been expected to have an advantage - was particularly strong. Of the thirty-two members, only Goffrié, Griesbach, Mori and Zerbini were of foreign extraction, and apart from Goffrié, all were from families long-established in Britain. That, added to the decreasing number of foreign names in the Philharmonic Society accounts, suggests that training of British players accounted for most of the increased supply. This chapter examines ways in which that was achieved. The role of the military was significant enough to merit a separate chapter; our concern here is with civilian forms of training, the ways in which they evolved and, so far as is possible, the role of unstructured, vernacular forms of musical training in supplying a growing market. A distinction is made here between instruction, as might happen in an apprenticeship, and the informal acquisition of a musical sense which might only blossom if a suitable environment for it to do so happened to appear. This entails a challenge to the commonly expressed idea that exposure to music was rare or non-existent for most people outside the capital and explores ways in which recreational activities might have sparked a sense of music in men who were uneducated but who possessed some innate ability.

¹ Programme for Covent Garden 1850 opera season GB-Lbl RB.23.b.3725

Ehrlich makes the important point that specialisation is dependent upon the extent of the market² but gives insufficient weight to the idea that that when the musical market grew with the ferocity that it did in the nineteenth century, it accommodated not only capable specialists but also those who, for reasons of limited skill, were obliged to concentrate on less challenging repertoire. A man who had attained basic competence on an instrument through informal tuition, or even an autodidact, stood a chance of finding musical employment. His ability to do so - his sense of the music - would have depended on how much musical stimulation he had received before learning to play, and for this reason music-making outside London is relevant. London's growth was driven by migration; musical skills, or at least aptitudes, fostered in the country were probably monetised in the city. They were certainly a factor in recruitment to army bands. The fragmented nature of records makes it necessary to examine sources from earlier in the eighteenth century than has been the case elsewhere in this study. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the failure of the Royal Academy, which opened in 1822 and achieved almost nothing, and of the confusion between practical needs and theories as to the role of music in society that contributed to its ineffectiveness.

Family apprenticeship

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, membership of a family already established in the music profession was the most direct route into work. It is not an exaggeration to talk in terms of musical dynasties. Seven members of the Griesbach family joined the RSM between 1794 and 1827; four of them played in the Queen's private band and two at the Opera. Three generations of Cramers were prominent in London: Wilhelm Cramer had two sons, François and John Baptist, who also were musicians. François's son William played the

² Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 28

violin at the Antient Concert in the 1830s and was a member of the Queen's private band. His son, William Oliver, born in 1837, was a cellist who studied in Leipzig for three years under Moscheles. John Ashley, who in 1765 was listed as a hautboy and bassoon player in the Guards, had four sons who all became RSM members and worked as performers, contractors and entrepreneurs; a sixth member of the family, Josiah, settled in Bath where he worked as an oboist and flute player.³ John Smithies, a trombonist at the King's Theatre, had two sons, John and James, both trombone players. From 1832 to 1835 the Philharmonic Society employed Smithies and Smithies j^{nr} but they never managed a complete family section.⁴

The most detailed account of training within a family is to be found in William Parke's memoirs. From the age of ten, he studied the flute with his brother John, who was sixteen years older and principal oboe at Drury Lane. In 1772, after a year of study, William experienced an epiphany:

...a hautboy and reeds lying accidentally in my way, I took them up, and made my first untaught essay on that instrument by playing a popular dancing tune; so much to my satisfaction, that I felt an indescribable desire to learn that expressive instrument. My wish was shortly afterwards fully gratified by receiving regular instructions on it from my brother...⁵

Two years later, he started the piano with occasional help from 'Mr Burney, pianist to Drury Lane Theatre and nephew to the celebrated musical historian.' William learned the tenor, 'an instrument which, owing to the admirable instruction of Mr. William Dance, I became qualified to perform on after rather more than three months' practice.'⁶ Young Parke's

³ Doane, *A Musical Directory* p. 3

⁴ Ledger of Philharmonic Society performers' names and fees GB-Lbl RPS MS 299

⁵ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 2

⁶ *ibid.* p.11

working life began early; at the age of thirteen or fourteen, he was on stage at Drury Lane as a soprano chorus singer. His first production was a new play by David Garrick, a friend of his brother's. The following year he was engaged as a 'tenor violin' player at Vauxhall Gardens and in September played second oboe to John at the Three Choirs Festival.⁷ In the middle of the same month, when Drury Lane reopened under new proprietors, he was employed in the orchestra, again on the tenor; presumably his voice had broken. In 1779, when he was eighteen, the orchestra at Vauxhall Gardens promoted him to principal second oboe alongside John.⁸

By modern standards, his rate of progress was rapid. There may have been financial reasons for putting him to work so young, but John Parke was an exceptionally successful musician; as well as his engagements at Drury Lane and Vauxhall, he was a member of the King's Band and the Duke of Cumberland's band. He also earned £100 a year as chamber musician to the Prince of Wales. Thomas Hickey painted his portrait, which shows him with an oboe and a score of Handel's *Ombra Mai Fu*.⁹ He could have supported his younger brother but would have known that the rigours of apprenticeship would shape William into an orchestral player more effectively. The process was similar to the experience of Wilhelm Cramer, who led the Opera orchestra in London at the end of the eighteenth century. He had trained at Mannheim, under Stamitz and Cannabich¹⁰ and from the age of eleven had been required to play in the court orchestra. His terms of engagement may have been different from those of a London apprentice, but the educational model of private study coupled with exposure to the practicalities of performance was the same - though the calmer conditions at court no doubt allowed a youngster to develop at a more natural pace. Both methods exposed the pupil to

⁷ *ibid.* p.10

⁸ *ibid.* p.16

⁹ DNB

¹⁰ Christopher Hogwood, *Music at Court* (London: The Folio Society, 1977) p. 99

experienced players from whom he could learn by example, and both placed a sense of the music at the centre of the apprentice's training.

Indentured Apprenticeship

In August 1776, at the age of fifteen, William was articed to his brother.¹¹ He did not record why they went to the trouble of a legal 'binding' which, apart from anything else, would have been liable for Stamp Duty. They may have been prompted by a 1752 RSM rule stipulating that a candidate for membership should have 'served a legal Apprenticeship to the Profession or studied and practised Musick for a livelihood, for the space of at least seven Years';¹² William joined 1783 at the age of twenty-two.

Apprenticeship was a training in music as a general skill, not primarily in a particular instrument. Specialisms grew later according to individual inclination. The term 'regular apprenticeship' was widely used in applications to the RSM; in 1783 John Hindmarsh, a clarinettist and violinist, was said to have served one, and John Danby served 'a Regular Apprenticeship' with Samuel Webbe senior, a distinguished singing teacher. It is not always clear from records whether a formal set of indentures was entered into, or a pupil simply contracted for a series of lessons. William Fletcher, who joined the RSM in 1818, was a violinist and flautist engaged at the Opera and Philharmonic Society. He simply said he had 'studied under Mr. Barthelemon', the leader at Vauxhall, without mentioning the legal status of the relationship.

Articles drawn up for Richard Stevens, who in 1767 was bound to William Savage at St. Paul's Cathedral, emphasised the 'general practitioner' nature of the training:

That he the said William Savage shall and will according to the
best and utmost of his skill and knowledge teach and instruct

¹¹ Parke, *Musical Memoirs* vol. 1 p. 10

¹² Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 28

the said Richard Stevens in the Science of Musick in general
and particularly in the several Arts and Methods of singing and
playing or performing on the Harpsichord and in all things
incident thereto for and during the Term or Space of seven
years...¹³

In many cases there was no direct connection between a master's main area of expertise and his apprentice's subsequent career. William Slapp was articled to Mazzinghi, a violinist at Marylebone Gardens, but earned his living as a pianist and piano teacher. Henry Craggs was apprenticed to John Ashley but was also taught by two of his sons; John, a singer who played the organ and violin, and Richard who played organ, violin, viola and kettledrums at Covent Garden. Craggs played forte-piano, violin and tenor and by 1810 was working as a music master. Church choristers often moved into the orchestral sphere; Richard Griffiths, who in 1812 was a bass and keyboard player at Sadler's Wells and Vauxhall, had been educated as a chorister at Westminster Abbey. William Wilson, a cellist and bass player at Sadler's Wells had been at St Paul's and William Hawes, a violinist at Covent Garden, began his musical training at the Chapel Royal.¹⁴

The eighteenth-century profession was small. It made sense to train a man so that if an engagement did not need a trumpet or oboe, he might play violin or viola, or perform two unrelated musical functions for the same employer. This was done by Joel Bowden, who in 1818 and 1819 was engaged by Covent Garden as a violinist and repetiteur.¹⁵ More importantly, a training in 'Science of Musick' and 'all things incident thereto' would have tended to inculcate a harmonic sense, the habit of listening and an idea of how music fitted

¹³ Charles Cudworth, 'An Eighteenth-Century Musical Apprenticeship', *The Musical Times*, 108:1493 (1967), 602-604

¹⁴ All dates in this paragraph are taken from Matthews *Members of the Royal Society of Musicians*.

¹⁵ Musicians' contracts for Covent Garden Theatre GB-Lbl ADD. MS 29,365 p.10

together. An apprentice who could form a clear idea of a desired musical result would naturally develop more quickly than one who had to be taught the mechanics of an instrument while simultaneously trying to acquire a sense of the music. In an orchestra that gathered around a conductor seated at the piano and in which players took their cues from the leader, a sense of ensemble was essential, and the broader a man's musical education happened to be, the more likely those qualities were to develop.

The cost of training varied. Cudworth calls the ten pounds a year that Richard Stevens's father paid to William Savage 'a token sum'.¹⁶ Savage was Master of the Children at the cathedral and this bargain price - if that is what it was - may have been possible because he had a houseful of boys to teach and benefited from economies of scale. Individual instruction as an apprentice was more expensive: Stevens recalled that John Jones, the cathedral organist, demanded terms 'so exorbitant that my Father declined that matter altogether.' 1792, Muzio Clementi charged the family of John Field £100 for his apprenticeship¹⁷ and in 1808, £150 was paid to 'a reputable lady' as an apprenticeship fee for a young woman to learn music. These figures are close to the £100-£200 that an apothecary's apprentice usually paid for his training.¹⁸

Once he was competent, an indentured apprentice in any trade was required to work for his master.¹⁹ If a musical apprentice's master took him on engagements and retained some or all of his earnings, he accrued in cash the benefit that a master in another trade might obtain in kind. This practice was made explicit in articles of apprenticeship with a Camden Town musician called Wallerstein, obtained in 1860 by Mary Williams for her son Edward. This is

¹⁶ Cudworth, *Musical Apprenticeship* pp. 602-604

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Ruth K. McClure, *Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) p. 128

¹⁹ Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy* p. 120

a late - and rare - example of such a document: in most respects its stipulations resemble those imposed by William Savage in 1767 and it is a reasonable guess that even across a century, stipulations such as these were normal:

And that the clear residue or remainder of the profits gains or emoluments to arise or be received therefrom or made thereby after payment and deduction thereout by the said Ferdinand Wallerstein of all such travelling expenses and charges as aforesaid shall be shared and divided by and between the said Ferdinand Wallerstein and the said Mary Williams in equal moieties shares and proportions.²⁰

During the early nineteenth century, references to apprenticeship in RSM applications became scarce, then disappeared. In other trades, the guilds had largely lost control over admission²¹ and in music, a rapid increase in the amount of work available would have been an incentive for a competent young man to abandon his training and start making money. Mokyr suggests that by the start of the century most apprentices, irrespective of craft, were failing to complete their terms because the seven-year period had become too restrictive and irrelevant in a rapidly changing economy.²² Even so, as the articles between Williams and Wallerstein indicate, apprenticeship did not die out until quite late in the century. It is easy to imagine that parents whose son was contemplating an unstable trade might have been reassured by the legal formalities. Whether they had much practical value was, by the end of the century, doubtful.

²⁰ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 240

²¹ Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy* pp. 118-121.

²² *ibid.* pp. 118-121.

Private study

Private study without the legal apparatus of an apprenticeship, was an important contributor to the profession, and would have been so even if the Royal Academy had been a viable institution. The development of any instrumentalist can succeed or fail depending on his relationship with the teacher but the strings, having more complex techniques, are generally more susceptible to this. In the late 1820s, Edward Thomas spent some time at the Royal Academy under Oury, Cramer, Mori and Spagnoletti:

The results of which multiplication of masters was, that he no sooner began to feel the good effects of the endeavours of *one*, than he lost them under the different system pursued by *another*. To remedy this, he became a resident pupil in the House of the kind-hearted Spagnoletti.²³

Thomas was technically enrolled in an institution but his relationship with Spagnoletti was effectively that between a private student and teacher. It was effective: after studying, he played at the Italian opera until 1850, when he became leader of the Liverpool Philharmonic. Antonio James Oury was taught by his father from the age of three and later by Mori, Spagnoletti and Kieswetter. From 1820 on, he studied in Paris with Baillot, Kreutzer and Lafont.²⁴ This mixture worked for him and at the age of twenty-five he was on the front desk of first violins in William Ayrton's orchestra at the King's Theatre.²⁵

Picking it up and having a go

Wind and brass instruments are more tolerant of unorthodox technique than the strings, and nothing resembling an orthopraxis for brass playing existed before the second half of the

²³ George Dubourg, *The Violin* (London: Cocks & Co., 1852) pp. 302-303

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 306

²⁵ Ayrton Papers Royal Italian Opera orchestra list for the 1825 season GB.Lbl Add MS 52335 fo.51,

twentieth century. Parke's first encounter with the oboe was not unusual: he picked it up and played a dance tune, no doubt fingering it as though he were playing a flute. Others were equally quick. George Macfarren enrolled as a pianist at the Royal Academy in 1829. He was told to learn the trombone as a second study.²⁶ His teacher was John Smithies and by the following December, Macfarren was able to tackle the simple but extensive trombone part of *L'Italiana in Algeri* in a student performance at the King's Theatre. Jules Rivière essayed the bassoon with limited success, abandoned it and taught himself the French horn in a month. Recognising the value of playing an unusual instrument, he mastered the alto ophicleide in a few weeks.²⁷ Rivière and Macfarren were capable musicians before essaying brass instruments and a well-grounded musical sense would have saved them a lot of practice time. Parke's competence on the tenor (it was probably no more than that) was acquired in three months. Like Rivière and Macfarren, he was already to some extent a trained musician before he picked the instrument up for the first time.

Costs

There are few sources for the costs of individual lessons, which is surprising given the regularity with which applications to join the RSM used a phrase like 'I have as much teaching as I can attend to.' Most newspaper advertisements were clearly aimed at a casual clientele, and they almost never included a scale of charges. One in 1809 was unusual in mentioning a fee of 2gn per quarter for piano lessons (harp lessons cost 2gn for twelve)²⁸ and while it is a fair guess that this reflects the going rate, it remains a guess. At a more advanced level, private lessons were expensive. John Ella believed this damaged playing standards:

²⁶ Minute book quoted in Frederick Corder, *A History of the Royal Academy of Music* (London: F. Corder, 1922) p.36

²⁷ Jules Rivière, *My Musical Life and Recollections* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1893) pp. 51-53

²⁸ *London Courier and Evening Gazette* 13 December 1809 p. 1.

The truth is, that in England the expense of obtaining a thorough course of musical instruction is so large, that the greater number of those that devote themselves to the art must necessarily dispense with their instructors when they are but half educated...²⁹

Ella was much exercised by the prevailing rate of 1 gn per lesson.³⁰ His suggestion to Michael Costa that members of the opera orchestra should be dismissed for lateness was prompted by his notion that they were regularly earning this amount when not playing. Assuming Ella's figure to be accurate, private teaching was attractive to the point where an orchestral player might regard a position at the opera as being worth more for establishing his credentials as a teacher than as a source of income in itself.

An aspiring musician who possessed the resources for a £100 - £150 apprenticeship could have studied abroad. John Carrodus's father, an amateur violinist, taught him in childhood before sending him to Zerbini; from 1848 he was a protégé of Bernhard Molique and was trained in Germany and London.³¹ The costs were substantial but not grievously so. Ella's comparisons between London and the continent were, for some reason, based on piano rather than violin tuition, but he gave figures for 1827:

Pianoforte lessons by the best masters cost in Paris 18s.; Brussels, 8s. 4d.; Vienna, 6s.; Prague, 4s.; Stuttgard (sic), 4s.; and Milan, 4s. 2d. Singing masters charge a trifle more to foreigners in general, and English in particular.³²

²⁹ Ella, *Musical Sketches* p. 142

³⁰ *ibid.* p.106

³¹ DNB

³² Ella, *Musical Sketches* p. 106

The importance of teaching to just about every musician's portfolio meant that many, if not most, could be exposed to continental ideas through the teaching of men like Carrodus and Oury. Their pupils in turn taught others. How far down the profession it went is impossible to say but we may be certain but there was widespread dissemination of continental ideas.

Raw materials: amateurs, stray fiddlers and psalmody

Though this is a study of the London orchestral profession, musical training - or at least exposure - in the provinces is relevant because of the high probability that amateur musicians, or latent musicians who later became part-time professionals or military bandsmen in London found their way there from the provinces. The rapid growth in London's population was more the result of migration than natural increase, and analysis of 1851 census data shows that a quarter of those who made their way into London had come from other towns.³³ They were attracted by much higher wages and the fact that urban unemployment was low, at 6.6% for the unskilled. Among the skilled it was only 3.9%.³⁴ Williamson makes the point that whatever middle class commentators at the time might have said, among workers the attraction of higher wages far outweighed any disamenity in the city³⁵ and Mokyr makes an observation about migrants' motives that has particular relevance for music:

...migration to the cities had, as Michael Todaro and others have argued, a lottery component to it. Some of the new urban dwellers did land good factory jobs and ended up doing well, whereas others suffered bouts of unemployment or ended up as part of a semi-employed lumpenproletariat.³⁶

³³ Jeffrey Williamson, *Coping with city growth during the British industrial revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 15

³⁴ *ibid.* pp. 114-117

³⁵ *ibid.* p. 233

³⁶ Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*. 456

Older people were less likely to move. The resultant bias towards youth³⁷ and particularly those young people who were willing to embrace the gamble of migration, naturally increased energy levels and, very likely, a willingness to try new things. It is not possible to demonstrate a causal relationship between these economic factors and an urban musical culture with the potential to professionalise, but these societal changes created an environment where such a thing could develop. Given the well-documented growth in instrumental employment and the absence of accessible or competent institutional training, any attempt to answer Ehrlich's vital question, 'where did they come from?' must take account of anything that fostered musical ability at the lower levels of society. Ehrlich is pessimistic about prospects for an embryo musician in the regions: 'few people, especially outside the larger towns, were exposed to enough music to awaken interest and latent talent.'³⁸ Linda Colley imagines a form of aural deprivation in the countryside:

Music lessons, concerts and assembly-room orchestras were confined to the affluent few, and most men and women had to make do with the human voice, church bells and perhaps a stray fiddler at fairs and weddings...³⁹

Both positions are, at best, questionable. There was enough musical activity in small towns and villages to develop a young ear. It would not be accurate, in most cases, to talk of musical skills: aptitude or inclination is probably closer to the mark. Given the rudimentary skills needed to accompany melo-drama or play in low theatre, aptitude and some casual instruction, allied to a degree of diligence, might have been all that were needed.

³⁷ Williamson, *Coping with city growth* p.39

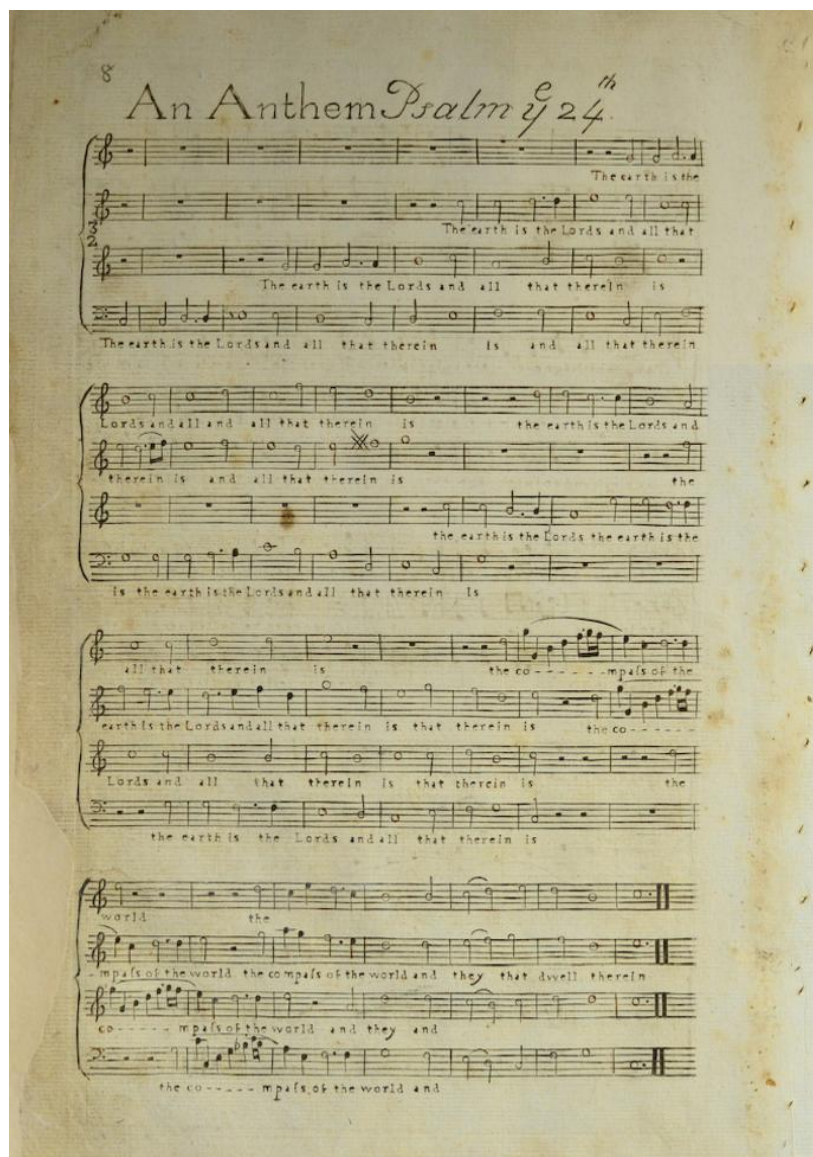
³⁸ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 6

³⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) p. 307

Developing the ear

There was in the eighteenth century a widespread desire to improve the standard of psalmody. Elias Hall, a singing teacher, had a vested interest in decrying the singing in parish churches, but his doggerel description of a church choir has the ring of truth about it:

Then out the People yawl an hundred Parts
Some roar, some whine, some creak like Wheels of
Carts⁴⁰



Ex. 6.1 'Psalm Ye 24th' from John Smith's *Book the Third Containing Twelve Anthems and Twelve Psalm Tunes for Country Choirs* (Market Lavenham: John Smith 1755)

⁴⁰ Elias Hall, *The Psalm-Singer's Compleat Companion* (London: 1708) p. 2

Even the poorest in society seem to have been prepared to pay for improvement. Abraham Hurst, an itinerant psalmody teacher in Oldham at the start of the eighteenth century, had sixty pupils who paid 1s each to register and thereafter 1d for each of the twice-weekly practices; a considerable outlay for people in a small and generally poor village.⁴¹ Many churches have preserved their eighteenth century music books: R.G. Woods has discovered sixteen manuscripts and three printed hymn and psalm books in one Devon church alone⁴² and the music that survives is not confined to unison melody. John Smith's 1755 publication of three volumes of music 'for country choirs' contain pieces of some polyphonic sophistication. His *Anthem Psalm Ye 24th* is in four parts with voice-leading imitation.⁴³ It is a simple enough piece to have been taught by rote, almost after the manner of a round, but the experience of singing harmony might as easily spark a talent as the training in a cathedral.

The church band

'West gallery' music, played and sung from a structure erected above the west door of many churches, frequently included instruments. Thomas Hardy's humorous account of a church band being dismissed and replaced with an organ for playing a dance tune during a service is fictional; nevertheless, his description of the band consisting of fiddle, tenor fiddle, bass-viol, serpent, clarionet and oboe was probably taken from life.⁴⁴ The tidy village folk in Thomas Webster's 1847 painting *A Village Choir*⁴⁵ are idealised; participants even in the church band were not always from the educated or prosperous classes. In 1782, at Swalcliffe in north Oxfordshire, a weaver, a wool comber and two labourers raised a subscription of £7 14s. 3d.

⁴¹ Sally Drage, 'Elias Hall, "The Faithful Chronicler" of Oldham Psalmody' *Early Music*, 28:4 (2000) pp. 621-628+630-634

⁴² R.G. Woods, 'Church Bands and Thomas Hardy', *Early Music*, 10:1 (1982) pp. 67-69

⁴³ John Smith, *Book the Third Containing Twelve Anthems and Twelve Psalm Tunes for Country Choirs* (Market Lavenham: John Smith, 1755) .

⁴⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Life's Little Ironies, a set of tales with some colloquial sketches entitled A Few Crusted Characters* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894) p. 238

⁴⁵ Victoria and Albert Museum FA.222[O]
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O18124/a-village-choir-oil-painting-webster-thomas-ra/>

from sixty-six subscribers, an average of just over 2s.4d. per contributor, (though it is likely that the local squire provided a sizeable part of the fund) and this was used to buy instruments for the parish church: two hautboys, a vox humana, and a bassoon with 'an adishennal spring' (sic) for one of the keys. The budget included 3s 9d. for 'a Fat Goose & sent it to Mr. Jo^h Tett for purchaseing (sic) & proving the Instruments.'⁴⁶ The men who raised the money also played the instruments, and though they themselves never migrated or joined the military, they belonged to the social class whose younger members were likely to do so and from there might easily have made their way into the civilian profession.



Ill. 6.1 Thomas Webster. *A Village Choir*.
Victoria and Albert Museum collection FA.222[O]
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O18124/a-village-choir-oil-painting-webster-thomas-ra/>

Away from the church, at least in southern England, small amateur wind bands were numerous. Michael Lomas makes a strong case for the members of these groups having been of a similar social status to the members of the Swalcliffe church band. The Horsham band

⁴⁶ Maurice Byrne, 'The Church Band at Swalcliffe', *Galpin Society Journal*, 17 (1964) 89-98

in the late 1830s included two bricklayers, two sweeps, a basket maker, a chair maker and a plasterer. Another band, that was depicted in a picture of a royal visit to Lewes in 1830 had among its members two shoemakers, a gaslighter and two gardeners.⁴⁷ This social distinction is important: a boy who became fascinated by the bassoon with its 'adishennal spring' might have been emboldened to ask to try it if the player had been from his own class, much less so if the player were one of the squire's family. From that experience he might have acquired an idea of the way a wind instrument works, much as the young William Parke had done during his year of flute playing. If subsequently he was one of those impoverished by the effects of the Inclosure Acts or by the bad harvests and high prices of the early years of the nineteenth century,⁴⁸ he might have been tempted to seek his fortune in London or been attracted by the extra pay and privileges given to an army bandsman.

Later in the century, an increase in amateur music created opportunities for a church band player to experience wider repertoire. In 1845, the Norwich Glee Club essayed Mozart's 'Sinfonia in D' and other works, though 'the band were unequal to Rossini's difficult music in the overture to *Semiramide*⁴⁹ (which is, admittedly, one of the more technically challenging of the Rossini overtures). The Norwich Glee Club probably maintained a degree of social exclusivity but not necessarily to the extent of keeping out a player of lower social class if his instrument was needed. The increase in music was not confined to cities; a review of a concert given in 1845 at the village of Sturminster, near Shaftesbury, concluded that it 'would have reflected credit upon any body of professional men in the kingdom'⁵⁰ and an encouraging review of *Messiah* given in 1850 in the tiny Devon village of Buckland Brewer

⁴⁷ Michael Lomas, 'Secular Civilian Amateur Wind Bands in Southern England in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *The Galpin Society Journal*, 45 (1992), 78-98

⁴⁸ Woodward, *The Age of Reform* p. 9

⁴⁹ *Norfolk News, Eastern Counties Herald, and Norwich, Yarmouth and Lynn Commercial Gazette* 25 January 1845 p. 3

⁵⁰ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* 22 March 1845 p. 4

hoped that the village band might soon reach the same standard as 'larger orchestras in towns of the neighbourhood'.⁵¹ However clumsy or incomplete those performances might have been, they would nevertheless have provided stimulus for a young gaslighter or labourer with his eye on migration or the military.

The uses of fiddling

We should not dismiss Colley's 'stray fiddler' out of hand. The violin was a primary instrument in folk music and Anne Gilchrist argues convincingly that far from being strays or drunks, many of the lone fiddlers were musicians of some sophistication who created or compiled their own repertoire. One early twentieth century collector, Frank Kidson, managed to accumulate more than sixty manuscript fiddlers' tune books dating from the Georgian period.⁵² Gilchrist quotes a melody called *Paternelly*:



Ex. 6.2 *Paternelly*. Quoted in Gilchrist, Anne G. 'Old Fiddlers' Tune Books of the Georgian Period' *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 4:1 (1940), 15-22

The technical demands that this melody makes are typical of dance tunes found in the fiddle books. The player must cross strings with some agility - and a fiddler at a dance must be able to play in time, a discipline that is also fundamental to orchestral work. The bowing techniques demanded by *Paternelly* and, to take one example, the finale of Haydn's 96th Symphony are essentially the same:

⁵¹ *North Devon Journal* 25 April 1850 p. 8

⁵² Anne G. Gilchrist, 'Old Fiddlers' Tune Books of the Georgian Period', *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 4:1 (1940), 15-22



Ex. 6.3 First violin part of Haydn Symphony no.96 *The Miracle*. Finale

Again, we cannot establish causal relationships between a given folk fiddler and a particular London theatre. Nevertheless, we can say that to function as a vernacular musician, a man had to acquire technical capacities that, in the right circumstances, could have been marketable. If a stray fiddler did make his way to London, a realistic prospect for him might have been something like the work of Mr Teazer in Pearse Egan's *Life of an Actor* or playing in a free-and-easy.⁵³ But a few may have risen further: there is, after all, nothing so demanding as *Paternally* in the second violin part of *The Dillosk Gatherer*.⁵⁴

'No use to mend an old coat': the Royal Academy of Music

The Royal Academy had some success with pianists and composers: Macfarren, Sterndale Bennet and Sullivan studied there - but in the fifteen years following its foundation, only six of its alumni entered the London orchestral profession.⁵⁵ J.S. Bowley, who graduated in 1836, was engaged as a clarinet player at the Italian Opera, a violinist called Dunsford also joined the opera band and played in the Lyceum cooperative in 1839/40;⁵⁶ so did T. Harper, the trumpet-playing son of Thomas Harper, who graduated in 1836. Edward Card, son of

⁵³ See below, p. 292

⁵⁴ See below, p. 84

⁵⁵ GB-Lam Royal Academy library, database of alumni 1822-37.

⁵⁶ *The Theatrical and Concert Companion* 3 November 1839 et seq.

William Card the ottavino player at the King's Theatre, was engaged by the Queen's Private Band, as was Henry Gamble Blagrove, who also worked as a private teacher.⁵⁷ J. Witton graduated on oboe in 1829; the RAM record states that he became master of the Artillery Band at Woolwich, but Farmer makes no mention of him. This is a modest enough total, made less impressive when we consider that, thanks to family connections, Card and Harper would most likely have made their way without studying the Academy at all.

That failure occurred despite a teaching faculty that, when the institution opened, included Spagnoletti, Cramer, Loder and Dragonetti as string professors while Nicholson, Griesbach and Puzzi were among those teaching wind.⁵⁸ However, in the first two years of the Academy's existence, its finances were in such a parlous state that professors were asked to teach without payment.⁵⁹ An attempt was then made to balance the books 'by the admission of a mob of students, whose sole qualification seems to have been the ability to pay for their instruction.'⁶⁰ This was hardly calculated to foster loyalty in a teaching faculty: it is difficult to imagine Dragonetti giving lessons *gratis*. A monitor system was in operation by 1826, the year that William Sterndale Bennett enrolled: Charles Lucas was head boy that year and already teaching.⁶¹ He had the title of 'sub professor' but though he was a talented cellist studying with Lindley, he was still a boy. The practice continued, and in the 1850s it was bitterly complained about by the *Athenaeum's* music critic, Henry Chorley:

...the raw and crude student has been too often allowed to take charge of the education of the pupil only a stage more raw and crude than himself, who has entered the school in good faith

⁵⁷ *Members of the Royal Society of Musicians*

⁵⁸ W. W. Cazalet, *The History of the Royal Academy of Music* (London: T. Bosworth, 1854) p.23

⁵⁹ *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 14:700 (1866), 386

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ James Robert Sterndale Bennett, *The Life of William Sterndale Bennett* (Cambridge: University Press, 1907) p. 15

and hope of a first-class education, yet whose education costs him more than it would have done at Leipsic, (sic) or Paris, or Milan, or Brussels.⁶²

Teaching was subject to interference from aristocratic amateurs, particularly Lord Burgersh, who believed that students should all practise in the same room so that the sound of their own playing should not distract them from the technique of reading:

...so far from being prejudicial, it is universally allowed to be highly beneficial...it prevents the student from trusting to his ear and obliges him to attend to his notes.⁶³

One wonders if Spagnoletti took Edward Thomas into his home in order to shield him from Lord Burgersh's theories.

Some of the Academy's practices were effective. Every male student, irrespective of his principal study, was required to learn an orchestral instrument. There seems to have been a generally competent level of orchestral playing in the early years; in 1829, *L'Italiana in Algeri* was presented alongside *Così fan Tutte* with a substantial band, amounting to 3.2.2.1./2.2.1.0./ with ten violins, four violas, two cellos, a bass and a drum.⁶⁴ The reviews were kind: one went so far as to say 'of the orchestra we must speak with unmixed praise'.⁶⁵ Advertisements claimed that this orchestra was 'composed entirely by (sic) Pupils'⁶⁶ but the leader, Henry Blagrove, was an alumnus then aged twenty-eight, who had by then spent two years in Kassel with Spohr. The programme⁶⁷ named several other professors in the band.

⁶² *Journal of the Society of Arts* (May 1859) 448

⁶³ Corder *History of the Royal Academy* p. 12

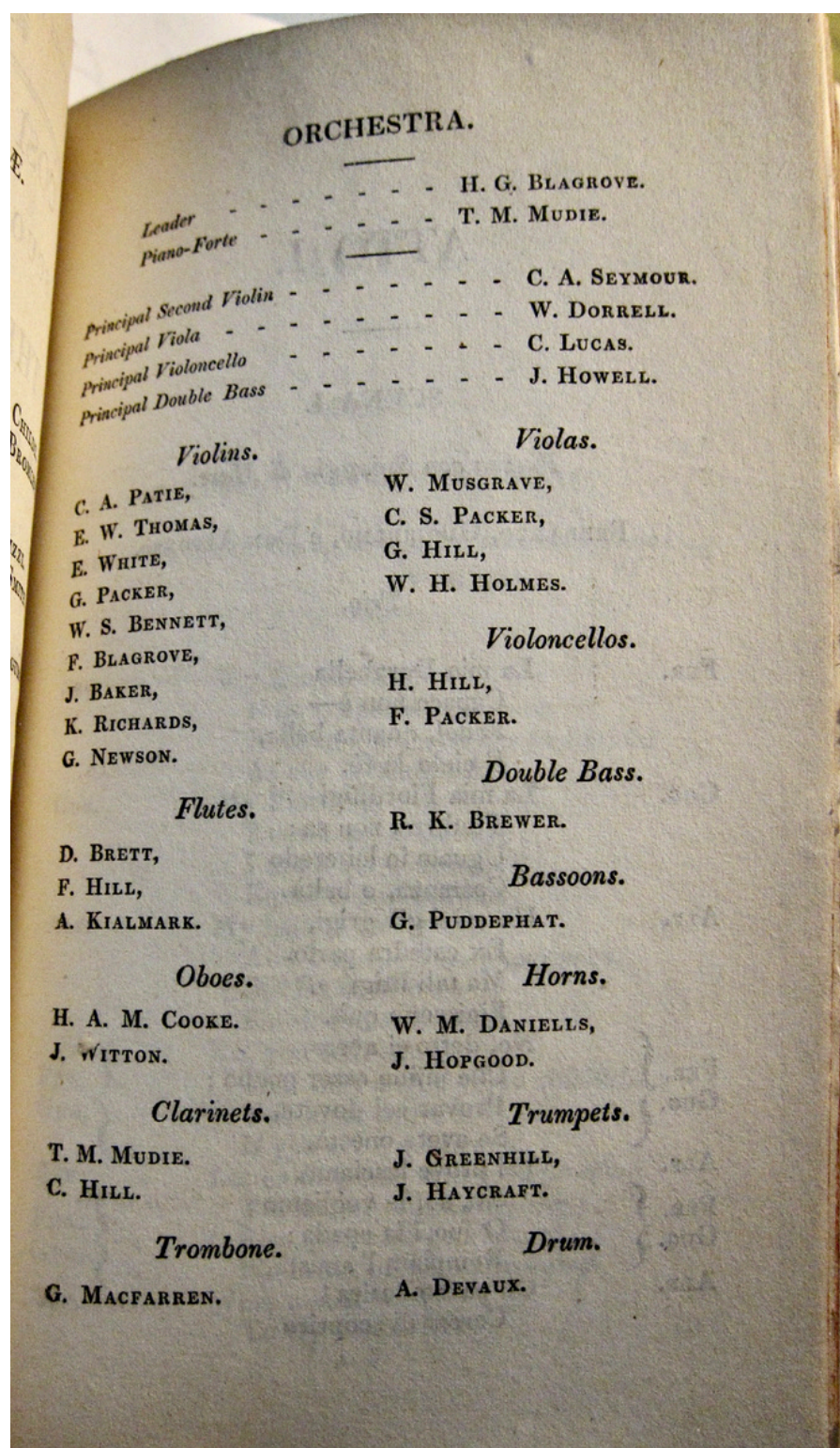
⁶⁴ *Così fan Tutte, or They All Do So* Programme and book of words (London: Seguin, 1829)

⁶⁵ *London Evening Standard* 25 December 1829 p. 1

⁶⁶ *Morning Post* 5 December 1829 p. 1

⁶⁷ *Così fan Tutte, or They All Do So* Programme and book of words (London: Seguin, 1829)

Many of the students were playing their imposed second instruments and probably had no intention of working as orchestral players. G. Puddephat, the bassoonist, had originally been



III. 6.2 Orchestra list for the Royal Academy of Music's student production of *Cosi fan Tutte* at the King's Theatre in 1829 GB-Lbl 907.k.17.(6.) Note the addition of a trombone to the orchestra, probably to reinforce weak lower strings

enrolled as a pianist and on graduation in 1831 was reported to be 'settled at Dunstable'⁶⁸ where, presumably, the piano rather than the bassoon was his means of support. Many of these students came from a more prosperous social class than most orchestral musicians at the time. They had to: Charles Lucas, the Principal, said that in addition to the £33 fees 'no pupil...can remain at the Academy under an expense of £80 to £100 per annum.'⁶⁹ For a single student, £47-£67 for board and lodging would provide a fair degree of comfort, and to a young man with such resources, the prospect of orchestral life, with its insecurity, and sometimes rough working environment may have been unattractive.

The Academy's problems were not solely operational; there was a gulf between its philosophy and the reality of the music industry. It was concerned with developing skills that would have been appropriate for the Musical Union or the Philharmonic society. It took little account of the arenas where most musicians were employed. Ella's views on musical education were in some ways laudable. He believed that instrumentalists should be thoroughly educated:

...a knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, composition, instrumentations, musical history, structure and nature of instruments, and the elements of acoustics, requiring, at least, six years studious application.⁷⁰

However desirable those things might have been, their presence could no more guarantee excellence in an orchestral instrumentalist than their absence prevented it. The craft aspect of musical performance was seldom if ever considered and ideas of art and 'genius' overshadowed the need to supply a growing demand for men who could play. Of course, the

⁶⁸ RAM library, database of alumni 1822-37.

⁶⁹ *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 13: 661 (1865) 570

⁷⁰ *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 8:658 (1865) 538

Academy had concerns beyond orchestral playing, but most professional musicians worked in orchestras or other ensembles. The institution was unwilling or unable to acknowledge that, to a large degree, an orchestral player's job remains the same whether his skills are applied to a great work or a pot-boiler. If a man could make a decent job of playing a complex work without knowing any counterpoint, history or acoustics, he was employable and need not concern himself with those things unless they interested him for their own sakes. Sir Arthur Sullivan understood this:

It is only by this practical personal knowledge of each individual instrument, and each individual voice, that a man can qualify himself to become either a composer or a conductor. There are many men who, because they have learnt something about counterpoint, think that they are justified in sitting in front of an orchestra and waving a *baton*, but who know no more about the real inner meaning of music than I know about astronomy.⁷¹

Michael Costa was being characteristically unkind when he observed of the Academy: 'it is no use to mend an old coat'⁷² but he had a point.

⁷¹ Arthur Sullivan, *In the Days of my Youth* (London: C Arthur Pearson 1901) p. 88

⁷² *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 8: 338 (1859) 451

7. Identity and social mobility: military musicians and the London profession

It is not possible to understand the London orchestral profession fully without examining its relationship to the military. For reasons largely unconnected with the civilian sphere, there was parallel growth in the number of military musicians and the army became a prolific trainer. Many of the men who learned to play in their regiments found their way into civilian employment and it is inconceivable that the increase in demand outside the army could have been met without them. For them, music was often an engine of social mobility. Many had enlisted because they were destitute and some were traumatised while serving. The profession's social composition inevitably altered as they joined it. The mixture of curiosity about music and enthusiasm for it that might have led a civilian into a musical apprenticeship did not necessarily play any part in that process. Men in the ranks were often chosen for instrumental training by the regimental bandmaster, perhaps for no more reason than that they sang well on the march. Most had enlisted as fighting soldiers with no thought of being anything else, but those few in whom an aptitude for music was discovered progressed from the ranks into bands and, in some cases, from there to civilian theatres, concert halls or pleasure gardens. For men who, in many cases, had joined the army to escape poverty and indigence, this was an almost unimaginable advance in prosperity. Military music was a powerful engine of social mobility, and the musicians that it supplied to the civilian sphere exerted an influence that went beyond their competence on an instrument. The sheer number of them changed the social composition of the orchestral profession and their approach to music probably influenced the way orchestras played: at the very least, their presence reinforced tendencies that were already present. This chapter examines the relationship between these factors.

Military music as a side line

At the end of the eighteenth century, ceremonial music, as opposed to signalling or regulating marching, was played by civilians. In 1783, the Honourable Artillery Company band had four clarinets, two horns, one trumpet and two bassoons,¹ who were paid 5gn per annum and were provided with a complete set of clothes every three years. For this, they practised once a fortnight and attended drills when required to do so.² A military engagement was often mentioned in RSM applications. Robert Green, who joined in 1780, was a trumpeter, violinist and tenor player employed by the First Regiment of Guards and at Drury Lane theatre. William Jenkinson, a 'very Sober and industrious' bassoon player, belonged to the Third regiment of Guards and was 'employed at Ranelagh, the Circus and other musical business'.³ Thomas Willman, a clarinettist at the Opera and the Philharmonic Society, was bandmaster of the Coldstream Guards. The master of the Second Life Guards band, Henry 'Grattan' Cooke, was first oboe at the Philharmonic Society and Professor at the Royal Academy. He was also editor of the Royal Military Musical Journal under the patronage of the Duke of Cambridge.⁴ When Henry Pope Hardy, a member of George IV's band, joined the RSM in 1841 he listed one of his appointments as bandmaster of the Scots Fusileer Guards. He played the violin and cello and was a good enough horn player to replace James Rae as principal at the Philharmonic Society at short notice in 1839: the directors resolved that a ticket for the concert should be presented to the Colonel of his Regiment.⁵

These men are interesting but for the purposes of this chapter, they are less significant than those who were turned into musicians by the army. Unlike members of the musical dynasties

¹ Capt. G.A. Raikes, *The History of the Honourable Artillery Company* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1878) vol. 2 p. 97

² *ibid.* p. 370.

³ *Members of the Royal Society of Musicians*

⁴ *Royal Military Musical Journal* (London: J.J. Ewer, 1854) GB-Lbl H.1545

⁵ GB-Lbl RPS MS 281 p. 21

described earlier, these men usually had no family history of music making. One such was John Sims Reeves, an enlisted soldier in the Artillery with no musical background. His singing was noticed by Dr. Kenning, the regiment's Medical Officer, himself an excellent violinist, and as a result Sims Reeves was taught the bassoon and the violin and later became the regiment's solo bass vocalist. His son was a celebrated tenor, also called John, who sang principal roles at Milan and Vienna.⁶

Some of the capital's best orchestral players trained in the first instance as bandsmen. Henry Lazarus, who played at the Philharmonic Society and Royal Opera, learned the clarinet in a military orphanage and was for many years an enlisted musician in the Coldstream Guards. Thomas Harper, who was principal trumpet at the Royal Italian Opera and Philharmonic Society, trained in the twenty-five strong band of the Royal East India Volunteers.⁷ Most celebrated of all - and an excellent example of social mobility through army music - was Charles Godfrey, who joined the Coldstreamers as a boy drummer then, in 1813, entered the regimental band as a bassoonist.⁸ In 1820, while still listed as a private in Thomas Gore's company,⁹ he was recruited by Covent Garden theatre to replace John Mackintosh on a 5-year contract which initially paid him 8s.2d per performance, rising to 10s a night after two years.¹⁰ He was promoted to regimental bandmaster in 1825 and left military service in 1831, remaining at the head of the band as a civilian. He served as musician-in-ordinary to the King and founded a dynasty of bandmasters that included Sir Dan Godfrey, the founder of the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra.

⁶ Henry Farmer, *The History of the Royal Artillery Band* (London: Royal Artillery Institution, 1954) p. 74

⁷ Muster roll, Royal East India Volunteers GB-Lbl ORB.99/12

⁸ Sir Dan Godfrey, *Memories and Music* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924)

⁹ Coldstream Guards Muster Rolls GB-Lna WO 12/1714

¹⁰ Covent Garden musicians' contracts GB-Lbl ADD. MS 29,365 p. 62

The band fund

It is absolutely necessary to the dignity of yourself and your corps that you should have a band of music. You will contrive to raise it by subscription amongst your captains; but when it is raised, you will consider it entirely as your own, and not let them have a tune without your express leave...By this stroke you will have at once obtained a band of music for yourself, to the no small astonishment of your visiting strangers, who will wonder at what an amazing expence his Lordship must live.¹¹

Advice to the Lord Lieutenants of Counties is satirical, but neatly summarises the relationship between an eighteenth-century regiment and its music. The expansion in military music coincided with the civilian boom, but the reasons for it were not commercial. Army regulations acknowledged that a band of music was 'essential to the credit and appearance of a regiment' and an 1823 order from Horseguards required officers to contribute to a band fund. The drums, trumpets and fifes needed for signalling and regulating march steps were funded by the War Office; the officers paid the rest. The subscription was set at twenty days' pay on joining the regiment and twelve days' pay per annum thereafter.¹²

We should not underestimate the fashionable component in regimental life, or its potential impact on soldiers and bandsmen. In 1826, George Bingham bought command of the 17th Lancers for £25,000, displacing Anthony Bacon, a Waterloo veteran widely regarded as the best cavalry officer of his generation. Bingham was a poor leader, but his men looked magnificent: they wore uniforms from fashionable tailors and rode blood horses. They were

¹¹ *The Times* 9 May 1786 p. 4

¹² Henry Farmer, *The Rise and Development of Military Music* (London: William Reeves, 1912) p. 94

known as 'Bingham's Dandies'.¹³ Bingham was not unique: Lord Cardigan's 11th Hussars were just as well turned out, and on the eve of the Crimean campaign, the *Times* published a letter about them:

The brevity of their jackets, the irrationality of their head-gear, the incredible tightness of their cherry-red pants, altogether defy description...for war service it is as utterly unfit as would be the garb of the female Hussars in the ballet of *Gustavus* which it very nearly resembles.¹⁴

The ensuing public ridicule reflected Cardigan's personal unpopularity, but missed the point that extravagant uniforms served a serious purpose:

Military spectacle simultaneously presented a cautionary threat and an attraction to the civilian population- it helped the military in its role of maintaining public order by conveying the idea of strength and military coherence.¹⁵

For the ordinary soldiers, those cherry-red pants and other elements of display, including the music they marched to, were important for morale, discipline and a sense of identity. Joseph Donaldson, who fought in the Peninsular War with the 94th Scots Brigade felt his regimental pride keenly:

...I must confess that when I heard the crowd cheering, and our music playing before us, I felt at least a foot higher, and strutted with as much dignity as if I had been a general.¹⁶

¹³ Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why: the story of the fatal charge of the Light Brigade*. (London: Constable 1953) p. 33.

¹⁴ *The Times* 22 April 1854 p. 12

¹⁵ Trevor Herbert and Helen Barlow, *Music and the British Military in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 218

¹⁶ Joseph Donaldson, *Recollections of the Eventful Life of a Soldier* (Philadelphia: G.B Zieber and Co, 1845) pp. 54-55.

His commanding officer once punished drunkenness in the ranks by forbidding the band to play as the regiment passed through a town.

If the music mattered so much to the men, increasing its sound and spectacle made military sense. Early bands were small and not especially martial in sound:

...some or other of them play for half an hour every morning in the great court of the palace, to awaken the Maids of Honour...though the music may not have a very military sound, it is the band belonging to the King's Guard that is returning from duty...¹⁷

Charles Griesbach's 1802 set of *Military Divertimentos* were arranged so that they could be performed using only six players, but the ambition or larger forces was strong. Some commanders appear to have lost their sense of proportion in their zeal to expand:

One circumstance that certainly greatly disturbed and vexed the King...was the return of the Duke of York from Hanover, without permission, and the unceasing endeavours of his Royal Highness to persuade the King to allow him to introduce into the Guards' bands the Turkish musical instruments, with the ornamental tails, crescents, &c.¹⁸

In 1801, the Royal Artillery had a band of sixteen, by 1806 the number had risen to twenty-six, and in 1810 it was thirty-eight.¹⁹ In 1856, the Duke of Cambridge conducted a survey of military music and concluded that 160 units were supporting bands. His figure took no

¹⁷ *The Times* 22 August 1787 p. 2

¹⁸ Delves Broughton, *Court and Private Life* vol. 2 p.9

¹⁹ Figures not cited individually in this section are taken from Herbert and Barlow, *Military Music* pp.126-153

The officers' mess

Military musicians entertained officers and their families in the mess and at social events.

Because of this, many were encouraged to become 'double handed' - proficient on a second instrument, generally one from the string family - and to expand their repertoire away from the martial. This was widespread enough to influence publishers; in the 1840s, *Jullien's Journal for Military Bands*, edited by Charles Godfrey, contained band arrangements, versions for 'Grand Orchestra' and reductions of the same pieces for 'Septuor', a string quintet with flute, clarinet and cornet, and for piano 'with accompaniments of Violin, Flute and Cornet'.²¹

The opportunities for study created by these social needs amounted in some cases to an apprenticeship like those in the civilian sphere. Lessons, private study and exposure to the best players in a performing situation were common to both. Royal Artillery regulations indicate that regimental and battalion matters had to be arranged in such a way that they did not interfere with band practice.²² One bandsman, who joined in the late eighteenth century, wrote that musicians had ample time to practise together and were 'brought up on Haydn, Pleyel, Corelli and Abel. We also played Handel and Bach (John Christian)'.²³ The regiment's musicians had one mess night and a concert per week²⁴ and sometimes took part in more ambitious concerts. In 1831, a *Messiah* was given, with the regimental players assisted by local amateurs. Several eminent players were engaged, including Charles Ashley on the cello and James Howell, a bass player from the Opera and the Ancient Concert.²⁵ There is no written record of any informal teaching taking place at these events, but a

²¹ *Jullien's Journal for Military Bands*. The music is not dated but the British Library catalogue gives the date of acquisition as 1844 GB-Lbl h.1543

²² Henry Farmer, *History of the Royal Artillery Band* (London: Royal Artillery Institution, 1954) p. 452

²³ *ibid.* p. 60

²⁴ Farmer, *Memoirs of the Royal Artillery Band* p. 88

²⁵ *ibid.* pp. 73-74

regimental musician would have had every incentive to ask questions or at least to observe the professionals closely.

Band evolution

The evolution from signalling to something more musically complex can be traced through the records of the band fund in the Westminster Regiment of the Middlesex Militia. In 1801, the nineteen musicians were listed either as 'fifer' or 'drummer'.²⁶ A bill from Köhler and Percival to the regiment dated 4 February 1807 listed a clarinet mouthpiece, a bassoon reed, a horn mouthpiece, repairs and cleaning for a bassoon and a dozen tambourine jingles; possibly a jingling Johnny needed repair.²⁷ Clearly the band had evolved over the intervening six years, and had functioned long enough in its new form for the bassoon and the jingling Johnnie to wear out. Payments to musicians indicate a shift in priorities. For the 30 days from 25 June to 24 July 1813, the band Serjeant, Charles Weyde, received regimental pay of 1s 6d three farthings a day plus 3s 5d and a farthing 'extra pay' - his band allowance - giving him £5 10s. for the month. For the same period, the fife major, George Clements, received £8 16s 3d. All band pay went up in 1814. Between 25 Feb and 24 March that year, Weyde was paid £7 but Clements seems to have had his role reduced, though not his daily rate of pay: he had 11s 8d a day but was only employed for 5 days.²⁸

It is not always easy to discern which musicians were soldiers who happened to play, and which were musicians who, for convenience, were written down as enlisted. This was partly because officers obscured men's roles in order to find ways round attempts at the top of the army to limit the size of a band. Men from the ranks were regularly labelled 'acting

²⁶ Clitherow family papers GB-Llma Acc 1360/750/4

²⁷ Clitherow family papers GB-Llma Acc 1360/740/190

²⁸ Clitherow family papers GB-Llma Acc 1360/740/121

bandsman'. Difficulties in tracing are exacerbated by the fact that no military players joined the RSM after 1804, when the directors passed a motion barring them from membership:

'...in future no person shall be eligible to be proposed as a member of this society, who is enlisted, attested, engaged for life, or any term; in any regiment of the line, fencible, militia or Navy'.²⁹

As a friendly society, the RSM was no doubt concerned that, given the Napoleonic threat, it could be overwhelmed by claims from members with battle injuries. Its circumspection was wise. King's Regulations the previous year had made it clear that bandsmen were expected to be 'effective' soldiers - men trained and equipped to fight:

These men are to be drilled and instructed in their exercise, and in case of actual service, are to fall in with their respective troops or companies completely armed and accoutred.³⁰

These regulations were routinely ignored, especially by the more prestigious London regiments, who hired professional musicians at least until the start of Victoria's reign.³¹ Their bands were private enterprises, and idea that good professional players would remain with a regiment if required to do any soldiering was, at best, fanciful. King's Regulations repeatedly tried to limit musician numbers and emphasised the requirement for bandsmen to be soldiers 'and liable to serve in the ranks on any emergency'.³² Regiments seem to have taken a pragmatic view of this order. The Middlesex Militia band returns singled out one John East,

²⁹ Royal Society of Musicians, minutes of governors' meeting 1 July 1804, ratified at a general meeting 2nd September 1804. Quoted in Herbert and Barlow *Military Music* p. 128

³⁰ *General Orders relative to Soldiers acting as Musicians* (London: Horse Guards, 5 August 1803)

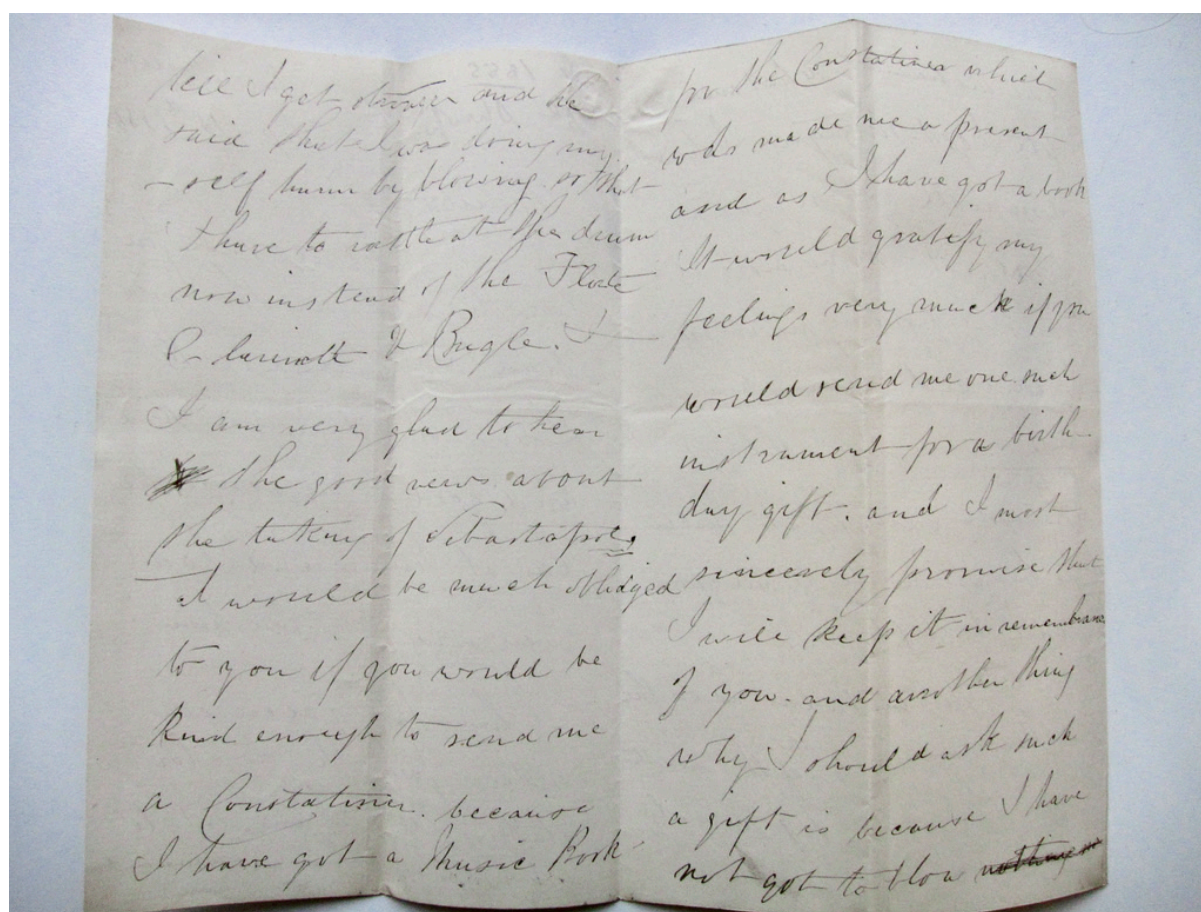
³¹ Herbert and Barlow, *Military Music* p. 66

³² *General Regulations and Orders for the Army* (London: War Office, 1804) pp. 48-49

as 'Fifer, carries arms'³³ but no other player was thus described. The Light Division were pessimistic as to the usefulness of their own musicians:

Whenever there is an expectation of meeting the enemy, the baggage will be entrusted solely to weakly men, musicians etc....And the batmen being effective soldiers will be put into the ranks.³⁴

Recruitment



III. 6.4 Letter from Daniel Sharpe complaining of ill health and asking for a 'Constatiner'. (sic)
GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/113/S

There was competition across the army for men who could already play, and sometimes a man's medical unfitness was overlooked if he was a good musician. In 1853, a boy from the Foundling Hospital band called Charles Jackson was medically approved for the 17th

³³ GB-Llma Acc 360/750/5 Clitherow family papers

³⁴ *Standing orders of the Light Division*, quoted in Herbert and Barlow *Military Music* p. 57

Lancers but Daniel Sharpe, a clarinettist who suffered from recurring health problems, was not. Nevertheless, the regimental bandmaster had hopes of persuading the Colonel to accept him.³⁵ How much long-term benefit was gained by such corner-cutting is questionable.

Sharpe was eventually found a place in the band of the 38th Regiment of Foot, but not long after joining he wrote from Walmer Barracks that he was ill and not allowed to play any of his wind instruments: 'I have to rattle at the drum now instead of the Flute Clarinet and Bugle'. He asked for a Constatiner (sic) to play in his spare time.³⁶

Raw materials

A band was an effective recruiting tool:

...with the bogey of Bonaparte hanging over them,
Britons...were drawn into military service not just by
apprehension but by the excitement of it all, by a pleasurable
sense of risk and imminent drama, by the lure of a free and
brightly coloured uniform, and by the powerful seduction
exerted by martial music.³⁷

This worked on Joseph Mayett, a farm worker from Quainton in Buckinghamshire, who joined the Royal Buckinghamshire King's Own Militia in 1803 and remained in it until 1815.³⁸ He was not unusual; the Royal Horse Artillery recorded weavers and grooms among its recruits, but also labourers. Some were apparently so enfeebled that 'none' was entered in the space designated for their calling.³⁹ Burnett calculates that by 1815 somewhere between one in nine and one in ten men of military age had entered the armed forces.⁴⁰ Numbers were

³⁵ GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/111/17 Letter from James Twiddy to John Brownlow, 1853.

³⁶ GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/113/S Letter from Daniel Sharpe to John Brownlow

³⁷ Colley, *Britons* pp. 306-7

³⁸ Anne Kussmaul (ed.), *The Autobiography of Joseph Mayett of Quainton 1783-1839*, Buckinghamshire Record Society No.23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983) p. 23

³⁹ GB-Lna WO 69/9 p.309

⁴⁰ John Burnett, *Idle Hands: the experience of unemployment 1790-1990* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 20

swollen by the Napoleonic threat, but for many, anxieties over national security probably mattered less than the attraction of regular meals, clothing, shelter and, in a few cases like the Honourable Artillery Company, free medical care as well.⁴¹ For many, these benefits offset the obvious risks that went with being a soldier.

Training

There was no centralised training until the Royal Military School of Music opened in 1857. Regimental bandmasters taught all the instruments, arranged the music and selected likely candidates for training. We have little information about individual teaching strategies, but suggestions made in 1848 by Charles Godfrey to the band committee of the Foundling Hospital are probably good indicator. The committee felt that their bandmaster, David Byford, was doing a poor job and invited Godfrey to listen. He was unimpressed:

I did not expect a faultless performance but I must confess that I was not prepared for anything so inharmonious...the music is either badly arranged or incorrectly played...⁴²

His first suggestion concerned the selection of likely bandsmen:

The boys to whom a brass instrument is committed should be selected from those whom the Singing-master finds to have the most correct ear, since so much depends on the ear in the proper playing of those instruments.⁴³

He might have added that a good singer is more likely to possess an instinct for breathing deeply. Godfrey made an interesting suggestion about repertoire, one calculated to

⁴¹ G. Goold Walker, *The Honourable Artillery Company* (London: John Lane, 1926) pp. 369-70

⁴² GB-Llma A/FH/A/3/20/1 Minute book of the Foundling Hospital band committee, entry for 9 February 1848

⁴³ *ibid.*

encourage the boys to listen while they played, as well as fostering better control of the instruments:

In order also to lead the Boys to play more correctly in time, I would suggest that they should sometimes practice (sic) slow harmonious movements, where they would have the opportunity to perceive & correct their wrong notes or false intonation: instead of quicker pieces where the harmonies are more transient, the performance of the band would be much improved by a greater attention to the pianos & fortes - or what is known as the light and shade of music; this is more essential when playing in a room.⁴⁴

Byford was replaced by James Twiddy, a singing master at the hospital. The Foundling archive contains no correspondence between Twiddy and Godfrey, but it is likely that they communicated; Twiddy's training of the band reflected Godfrey's suggestions. Under him, they frequently played what he called 'the higher glees'. *Life's a Bumper*, by Richard Wainwright seems to have been a particular favourite, for good educational reasons if nothing else. It is harmonically and rhythmically straightforward, with tentative forays into imitative writing and independent lines, and its harmonic rhythm is slow. It might almost have been composed to implement Godfrey's suggestions. Twiddy arranged a new piece every week 'of moderate difficulty'. His approach to arranging was didactically sound:

...to give them all a fair chance of improvement, I have so arranged the music that no Instrument shall have a merely subordinate part capable of omission.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

Every player had to be fully engaged and play strongly if the piece was to work. The impossibility of assuming a passive role in the band would have accelerated the progress of all the boys in it, including those lacking confidence or strong innate ability. Twiddy's weekly additions to the seem to have reflected military practice: Edward Luard, a clarinettist in the North Downs Rifles Militia wrote from Belfast that the bandmaster was a nice man but very strict, adding that 'the band has only been formed nine weeks so it is very young but they can play six or seven tunes...'⁴⁶

Signaller to bandsman

Signallers probably had little ability or inclination to progress musically,⁴⁷ since theirs was already a role with status and additional pay. They had to be musically capable, with an accurate ear and an excellent memory: Artillery regulations listed twenty-one bugle calls and sixty-seven for trumpet, the longest of which, Reveille, was notated in thirty-three bars of 4/4 time.⁴⁸ There were others that had to be learned but were not written down for reasons of secrecy. There is limited musical evidence for at least some involvement of signallers in ceremonial or social music. A book of handwritten fife and flute tunes made by John Shepherd in August 1787 (it is incomplete and cannot be attributed to any particular regiment) gives an insight into the way players of signalling instruments might have broadened their musical scope.⁴⁹ It is not certain what rank Shepherd held, though it is likely that he was a fife major. Of the twenty-nine pieces in his book, several - *Count Saxe's March* or *The Lowland Lads*, for example - are marches, or melodies in duple time that could be used as such. These are mostly written as unison lines. Others are in two parts and two of

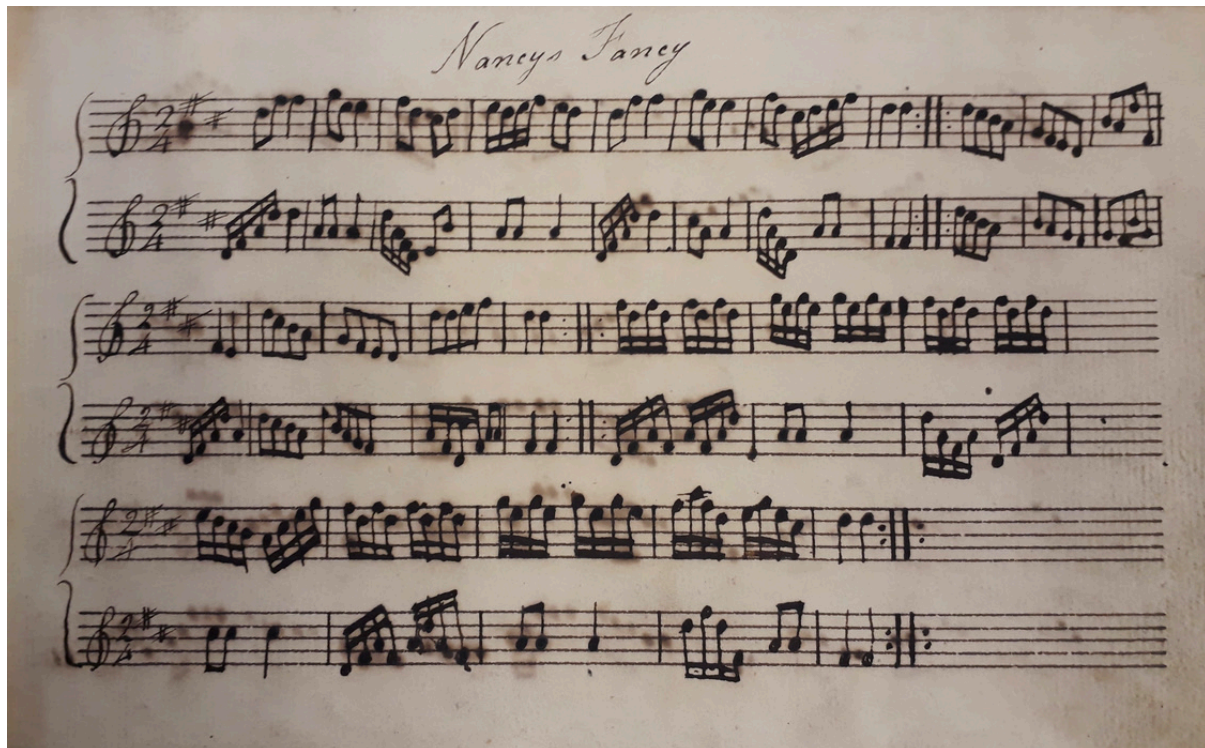
⁴⁶ Letter from Edward Luard to John Brownlow 5 September 1855 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/113/L

⁴⁷ Herbert and Barlow, *Military Music* p. 29

⁴⁸ *Orders, Dress Regulations, and Trumpet and Bugle Sounds, for the Royal Regiment of Artillery* (London, HMSO 1864) pp. 118-154

⁴⁹ GB-Lnam 7809-48

them, a fanfare called *Le Mount* and *A Parade* are in three. Shepherd marked certain pieces as being for German flute and one, quite Handelian in style, is titled *The Clarinet. Forest*



Ex. 6.1 *Nancy's Fancy* in John Shepherd's 1787 book of fife and flute tunes GB-Lnam 7809-48

Harmony makes tentative attempts at imitating birdsong. There are also a couple of sonatinas and even a *Vauxhall Minuet*. It might not be too fanciful to suppose that *Miss Bigby's Minuet* was composed for the daughter of one of the officers.

Two volumes of military band pieces by C.F. Eley and others, advertised as being performed by the band of the Coldstream Guards and published around 1789,⁵⁰ suggest a process by which a signal trumpeter's abilities might have been channelled into something more ambitious. They are scored for two clarinets, two horns, two bassoons in unison and a single trumpet. The trumpet part is, for much of the time, not so very different from what one might

⁵⁰ C. F. Eley, *Twelve Select Military Pieces for Two Clarinettes, two French Horns and a Bassoon, with a Trumpet ad Libitum. Perform'd by the Band of the Coldstream Guards* GB-Lbl b.80 There is no date printed on the music, but the library catalogue gives the year of acquisition as 1789

expect to see in a Haydn symphony, but in places it seems in places to be referring to parade ground calls. This is particularly so in a *Marcia Fonebre* (sic) and *New Short Troop* by W. Elrington. As well as crooking instructions, the part contains several soft dynamics. The



Ex. 6.2 Trumpet part of *The New Short Troop* by W. Elrington GB-Lbl b.80

need to play these might have excluded an unambitious signaller - who would have had little use for pianissimo on the battlefield - but for someone with musical aspirations, playing music of this sort might have provided a bridge to something more sophisticated.

The 4th (Irish) Dragoon Guards employed all its signallers in the regimental band. It was not a London regiment, but the way it used its musicians may indicate the way a small body of players was used in other parts of the army. An informal record of the regiment, compiled in 1823 but with additions up to 1828 and apparently made for private use, named seven

BAND,		
Instruments		
Names	Full Band	Brass Band
Sergt Bull, Master,	1 st Clarinet	Tenor Horn
" Donegan, F. etc.	do & Key Bugle	1 st Bugle
Trumpt M'Dermott Senr	2 nd Clarinet	Trumpet
Donegan Geo ^{sr}	" do "	2 nd Bugle
Reely Thomas	" do "	Trumpet
L. C. Hull William	E.C. Clarinet	E.C. Bugle
Drake Joseph	2 nd Clarinet	
Millman Jantn	1 st Flute	
Trumpt Cody John	1 st Bassoon	2 nd Bugle
Capt Reely John	2 nd ditto	Trumpet
Bull Charles	1 st Horn	1 st Horn
Lyable John	2 nd do	2 nd do
Trumpt Croker Pat	1 st Trumpet	Trumpet
" Dockrill Henry	Bass Trumpet	Bass Trumpet
Croker John	2 nd Trumpet	Trumpet
Mewyn Henry	Serpent	Bass Horn
Ellist Robert	Bass Horn	
Paulick Robert	1 st Trombone	1 st Trombone
Trumpt Sowden Thomas	2 nd do	2 nd do
King James	Kettle Drum	
Scott Joseph	Bass Drum	Kettle Drum
L. C. Billing John	Basso	Basso

Ill. 6.5 List of the band of the Royal Irish Dragoons 1823 GB-Lnam 6807-206 p. 52

trumpeters: Lonegan, Dockrill, Dermott, Croker, Cody, Sowden and Hull,⁵¹ all of whom also played in the twenty-two man regimental band. It had two configurations, a mixed ensemble called the 'military band' and a brass band which used the same players.⁵² Though some doublings essayed by the signallers were unremarkable (Lonegan, for example, played keyed bugle in the military band and bugle in the brass band), some carried the notion of 'double handedness' to surprising lengths. Dermott doubled on clarinet and trumpet and Cody was

⁵¹ GB-Lnam 6807-206 p. 52

⁵² *ibid.* p. 106

both first bassoon and a bugler. The bandmaster, Sgt. Eusebius Hull, was both first clarinet and a tenor horn player in the brass band (there were two men with this surname in the band

TRUMPETERS,

Serials	Names	Size at				Date of attestation	Country	Occupation	Condition	Chapel	Soldiers	Age at Enlistment	
		Enlist-ment	24 years of age	Feet	Inches							Years	Months
FM	Donegan Joseph	4	9 1/2	5	0	3 Oct 1809	E	C	cc	"	1	15	"
B	Dockrill Henry	4	2 1/2	5	0	18 March 1812	I	P	13	"	"	14	"
EC	Deemott Dan	5	4 1/2	5	3 1/2	12 May 1810	"	C	"	"	"	16	"
E	Croker Pat	4	1	5	5	7 do 1813	"	"	"	"	"	14	"
A	Gady John	5	5	5	9	1 June 1817	"	"	"	"	"	19	"
F	Sowden Thos	4	1 1/2	5	0 1/2	18 March 1812	E	P	"	"	"	14	"
C	Hull William	4	7	5	0 1/2	2 Aug 1817	I	"	"	"	"	14	"

Ill. 6.6 Royal Irish Dragoons trumpeters 1823 GB-Lnam 6807-206 p. 53

and it is not clear which of them was a signal trumpeter). How the two groups were deployed is not recorded: possibly one was for the parade ground, the other for social use.

Orphans and foundlings

Orphan asylums contributed players to the military, though it would not be accurate to call the musicians they provided 'raw materials'; they could already play when they enlisted.

Four London children's homes maintained 'juvenile' or 'miniature' military bands: the Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea, the Royal Naval Asylum at Greenwich, the Caledonian Asylum

in Islington and the Foundling Hospital. The bands were generally between twenty-five and thirty-five in number out of a population of roughly 1000 at Chelsea⁵³ and Greenwich⁵⁴ and 400 at the Foundling Hospital. The Caledonian Asylum held only 100-150 children, but its band was of a similar size to those at Chelsea and Greenwich. According to John Brownlow, the secretary of the Foundling Hospital, 100 boys were trained there as bandsmen between 1847 and 1858.⁵⁵ The commanding officer at Chelsea, Colonel Williamson, stated 'those boys instructed in music here, are received into Regimental bands, where they receive additional pay and advantages...' ⁵⁶ and the Illustrated London News noted in 1842 that many of the Coldstream Guards band had originally been trained there.⁵⁷ At Greenwich most of the band boys were sent into men o'war.⁵⁸

Literacy

When the twelve bandsmen of the Royal Westminster Regiment of the Middlesex Militia signed for their new uniforms in May 1802, four of them used their mark.⁵⁹ From 1811, regiments were required to educate soldiers' children and such of the men as were illiterate.⁶⁰ In 1817, when Charles Godfrey was still a bassoon player in the Coldstream band, one Samuel Manners was listed on the muster roll as 'Serjeant Schoolmaster'⁶¹ and in the Royal Artillery, the trumpet major's duties included making sure the bandsmen attended Sunday school and the regimental school.⁶² Success across the army seems to have been uneven: in

⁵³ Royal Military Asylum morning reports for 1829-39 GB-Lnam 2003-07-131

⁵⁴ J. Cooke and A.M. Maule, *A Description of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, with a short account of the Chest at Greenwich and the Royal Naval Asylum*. (London: 1811)

⁵⁵ John Brownlow, *The History and Design of the Foundling Hospital*. (London: W& HS Warr, 1858) p.91

⁵⁶ Letter from John Brownlow to Charles Pott, 5 February 1847 GB-Llma A/FH/MO1/041 p. 8

⁵⁷ *Illustrated London News* 20 August 1842 p. 6

⁵⁸ Letter from John Brownlow to Charles Pott, 5 February 1847 pp. 11-12

⁵⁹ Clitherow family papers. GB-Llma Acc/1360/750/16

⁶⁰ N.T. St.John Williams, *Tommy Atkins' Children: The Story of the Education of the Army's Children 1675- 1970*. (London: HMSO, 1971) pp. 14-15

⁶¹ GB-Lna WO 12/1714

⁶² *Orders, Dress Regulations, and Trumpet and Bugle Sounds, for the Royal Regiment of Artillery* (London: HMSO, 1864). p. 26

1854 Augustus Browne, a trombone player in the band of the 38th Regiment of Foot, wrote that he went to the regimental school every afternoon to keep up his education:

Believe me, Ma'am, I have seen many Soldiers who cannot spell or write their own name, therefore I value a great deal more, the education that I received at the Foundling...⁶³

The word 'literacy' was not in use before 1883.⁶⁴ David Cressey warns against regarding literacy or its absence as a reliable indicator of social deprivation because in those parts of society where written knowledge mattered less than practical ability, it was often seen as irrelevant. He quotes Cobbett:

Who needed to be able to read or write if he had standing enough with his neighbours, was possessed of an adequate mind and memory and had learned and could pass on his knowledge of animals, the land and the weather through observation and practice?⁶⁵

Literacy and illiteracy are best seen as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy, with print-literates separate from those who can decipher handwriting. In particular, the step from being able only to read to being able to write as well is significant.⁶⁶ These ideas may be transferred easily to music. An enlisted bandsman who was musically literate to the point of being able to read a full score would have been extremely unusual, if one ever existed, but by Cobbett's reasoning this would have been of no particular significance. It is possible to form a relationship in the mind between a notation and certain physical actions: a man could be a perfectly effective operator of his instrument even if he could not get a sense of the melody in

⁶³ Letter from Augustus Browne to H. Soley 7 March 1854 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/112/B

⁶⁴ OED

⁶⁵ David Cressey, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003) p. 310

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 313

front of him without playing it. This idea lies at the root of brass band notation, which puts all instruments (except the bass trombone) into the treble clef and relies on transposition, which in the case of bass instruments can be over a range of more than two octaves. A given written note will always be obtained with the same fingering, irrespective of the pitch that ensues. It enables a man to play from music even if his grasp of the notation is sketchy.

This raises the interesting possibility that men who were not fully literate either in words or music were able to use the notation at least partly as a mnemonic. It may be that the four Middlesex bandsmen who signed with their mark were not drummers, but players of other instruments who had become adept at joining in without recourse to the notes. It is conceivable also that some bandmasters simply drilled the music into the men, who learned it by rote. A similar process is still in use among the steel pan band leaders of Trinidad and Tobago. Players are almost universally word-literate but although the arrangements they play are often highly sophisticated and lengthy, playing from musical notation is unknown:

An arranger begins by teaching musical phrases to the top players in each section...These players in turn teach the phrases to others...Next the phrases are drilled over and over again, both by sections independently and by the whole band, until they are committed to memory...There is no improvisation.⁶⁷

If some bandsmen were working in this way, they would have been helped by the simplicity of much of the music. Herbert and Barlow cite a slow march by H. B. Schroeder 'for military band, harp or pianoforte' published in 1800 with the full score and piano part printed together.⁶⁸ The accompaniment is simple and apart from the melody there is little in the way

⁶⁷ Stephen Stuempfle, *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) p. 197

⁶⁸ Herbert and Barlow, *Military Music* p. 95

of independent part writing other than an occasional run in the bass. It would have been easy for a pianist with basic skills to play, and an alert bandsman would have found it easy to pick up even if he had a low level of musical literacy.

Repertoire and growing virtuosity

Farmer writes about competitive seeking out of new repertoire in the 1830s, with some bandmasters exchanging arrangements and occasional recourse to theft; one of bandsmen in the 4th King's Own Regiment was skilled at taking music down from dictation, and by this method stole a march from another regiment.⁶⁹ Printed sets of band parts were issued by a firm called Wessel in the 1830s, but they were of inferior quality and military band publishing only gained momentum after 1845, when Boosey & Co. issued a set of parts to selections from Verdi's *Ernani*. Godfrey's arrangements for *Jullien's Journal for Military Bands* are almost entirely written as *tuttis*, though the cornet parts in the *English Quadrille* contain one high-speed variation somewhat in the style of Arban.⁷⁰ *Jullien's Journal* was a commercial enterprise serving bands in outlying parts of the Empire; nevertheless, from the way scoring was usually done it is reasonable to infer a certain conservatism in British-based bands as well. This changed with time; *Jones's Military Band Journal*, which started in 1851, included a technically advanced arrangement of Rossini's *Tancredi* overture which included fast articulation in clarinets, especially the Eb. *The Royal Military Musical Journal* of 1854 expected the ophicleide and bombardon to be as agile as the bassoons.⁷¹ It includes an arrangement of *The Ruins of Athens* by Beethoven and another of the *Son and Stranger* overture by Mendelssohn. This last is ambitious and attempts to reproduce the string textures with very rapid passages in some of the woodwind. All the parts are demanding, though it is

⁶⁹ Farmer, *Memoirs of the Royal Artillery Band* p. 89

⁷⁰ *Jullien's Journal for Military Bands*

⁷¹ *Royal Military Musical Journal* (London: J.J. Ewer, 1854)

surprising that even ten years after the Distin family achieved celebrity, there is no provision for saxhorns apart from the bombardon.

Civilian work

Military players were not anonymous creatures - the army was a good maker of lists - but tracing them in the civilian sphere is not always straightforward. It is conceivable, for example, that some of the groups like Zeluti's Grand Band, an attraction at the St Helena Gardens,⁷² were military men in mufti. It is sometimes possible to trace individuals moving between military and civilian employment, but the large number of men on muster rolls means that one is limited to pursuing unusual names - Röst and Lazarus rather than Smith and Jones. Coldstream Guards muster rolls for 1839 list one George Rae,⁷³ who might have been the son of either James or John Rae, horn-playing RSM members born in 1792 and 1787 respectively. Thomas Sowerby's company lists a Christopher Rost (sic) as on duty between December 1817 and July 1818.⁷⁴ He was very likely one of the two known sons of John Röst, a brass player and piano tuner who worked at Covent Garden. John had a son, also called John, who was organist at Berkeley Chapel and a member of the RSM, but Christopher would have been excluded from membership because he was a soldier. Of others we can be a little more certain: in 1838 Colonel Broadhead's Company, also of the Coldstream Guards, included James Horn⁷⁵ who, appropriately enough, played fourth horn in the Lyceum Promenade concerts the following year.⁷⁶

The fact that a man remained in the army rather than freelancing as a civilian did not indicate how good or bad a musician he was. The *Musical Times* called Henry Lazarus 'the greatest

⁷² *Morning Advertiser* 15 August 1859 p. 1

⁷³ Coldstream Guards muster rolls GB-Lna WO 12/1732.

⁷⁴ Coldstream Guards muster rolls GB-Lna WO 12/1714.

⁷⁵ Coldstream Guards muster rolls GB-Lna WO 12/1732

⁷⁶ *Theatrical and Concert Companion* 3 November 1839 et seq.

clarinet player of his time'.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, he stayed in the Coldstream Guards for some time after his reputation outside the regiment was established. In 1837, aged twenty-two, he wrote to the Philharmonic Society about a vacancy for 2nd clarinet. His letter shows how much outside work a talented military player might expect to add to his portfolio:

I have had much experience in the Orchestral business, having held the position of principal clarinet in the Orchestra of the English Opera, Olympic and Haymarket Theatres; and was engaged last season by Mr T. Cooke at the Vocal Concerts...I am at present in the Coldstream Guards but have sent in an application for my discharge, which I shall obtain in a short time...⁷⁸

The application to the Philharmonic Society was unsuccessful (Thomas Willman was appointed) but despite his widespread activities outside the regiment, Lazarus remained a soldier. In November 1839 he was still listed as a private 'on duty' in Henry Armitage's company.⁷⁹ It was a good strategy. As the *Times* noted:

...these scrapers of catgut will earn a good deal of money by fiddling at balls and wakes, and perhaps not inquire very critically after their shilling a day.⁸⁰

The shilling a day was a man's regimental pay, to which were added wages out of the band fund: for the period 25 February to 24 March 1814, the Middlesex Militia paid its ordinary bandsmen £1 8s regimental allowance and £1 3s 3d band pay.⁸¹ The regiment paid for instruments and maintained them. This returns us to a point made in the introduction. A

⁷⁷ *Musical Times* 1 July 1892 p. 411

⁷⁸ GB-Lbl RPS Ms 321 fo. 46

⁷⁹ GB-Lna WO 12/1731 Coldstream Guards Muster Rolls

⁸⁰ *The Times* 9 May 1786 p. 4

⁸¹ Clitherow family papers GB-Llma Acc 1360/740/121

theatre salary taken in isolation was little better than Rohr's 'subsistence'. The £30 15s paid annually to the lowliest bandsman in the Middlesex Militia was equivalent to a farm worker's wage, but it was secure. If we add to it the £38 17s that a player received for a season at Sadler's Wells or another minor theatre, it works out at around 26s a week the year round, only a little less than the wage for a master carpenter.

12th Oct: 1842
46

To the Directors of the
Philharmonic Society -
Gentlemen

I beg respectfully to offer
myself to your consideration, to fill the situation
of second Clarinet, now vacant in your Orchestra
owing to the departure of Mr. Powell for America.

I have had much experience in Orchestral
business, having held the situation of principal
Clarinet in the Orchestres of the English Opera,
Olympic and Haymarket Theatres; and was
engaged last season by Mr. J. Cooke at the
Vocal Concerts.

For your further satisfaction as to my

III. 6.6 Letter from Henry Lazarus to the directors of the Philharmonic Society.
GB-Lbl RPS Ms 321 fo. 46 Continued on next page

capability of filling the situation, and my general
attention to business, I beg to refer you to the
following eminent Proposers — Messrs. Morris
T. Cooke, C. Potter, Kearns — Wagstaff and
Mountain — who will give you every information

I am (at present) in the Coldstream Guards
but have sent in an application for my discharge
which I shall obtain in a short time — Should
I fortunately meet your approval, no exertion
shall be wanting, to render myself deserving
your selection —

I have the honor to subscribe myself
Gentleman — your very humble servant —

Henry Lazarus

2 Upper Colerhill St
Baton Square

BCL

III. 6.7 The second page of Lazarus's letter

Aug: 16. 1834

Mr. Croft to Godfrey for attendance of
the Band Scots Light Guards on the 13th inst.
and the Band of Coldstream Guards
on the 14th inst. thirty performers each day
thirty pounds to each Band - £60.0-0

Received by Cash — £60-0-0
Godfrey Master of Band Coldstream Guards

Ill. 6.8 Receipt for military bands at Surrey Gardens, 16 August 1834, signed by Charles Godfrey
GB-Lbl Th.Cts 52

A bandsman's calculation

It is conceivable that engagements at pleasure gardens as part of a named regimental band were more rewarding than playing in a theatre. A receipt made out to the Surrey Zoological Gardens dated 16 August 1834, and signed 'C. Godfrey, master of the band of the Coldstream Guards' raises an interesting question around bandsmen's priorities. It quotes a fee of £30 per day for a band of thirty musicians.⁸² Godfrey would have had expenses besides the men's pay, such as a limber for the heavy instruments, though as Wellington Barracks was only three miles away this would not have been a large item. £30 was a surprisingly large sum: when divided by the number of men in the band, it came within a few pennies of the mean average cost per player per night of the orchestra of the Royal Italian Opera. This raises an

⁸² GB-Lbl Th.Cts 51-58. vol. 1

interesting question about the relative value of engagements. We do not know if the men were under military discipline when undertaking outside work with the regimental band, but even if they were not, it would have been in Godfrey's interest to ensure their loyalty by paying a higher rate than they would get in a London theatre. He could afford to do so and preserve a differential for himself of four or five times a bandsman's fee, which was what bandmasters like Charles Weyde earned. If a band was successful, staying with it would have been a more attractive proposition than playing for six nights for 1gn at Sadler's Wells. The possibility should be considered that for the men in the most celebrated bands ordinary theatre work was a second-best activity.

'A soldier do not agree with me at these times'

An assessment of cultural differences between civilian and military orchestral musicians must be speculative, but the harsher aspects of military life should be considered, if only because hardship in service is so often a factor in a sense of comradeship and loyalty among colleagues. The army provided an escape from poverty and conferred other benefits, but it was not always a secure employer, especially after Waterloo. Its establishment was cut from 149,000 in 1816 to 123,000 the following year.⁸³ Militias were scarcely cut at all, but their bandsmen could be vulnerable to operational expediency. Edward Luard joined the North Downs Rifles Militia in the Summer of 1855. Less than a year later the regiment was disembodied, and remained so until 1857, when it was mobilised during the Indian mutiny. Luard wrote 'if we are not kept on the staff I shall try enter some Line Regiment with some of the other young men...'⁸⁴ Eventually he was retained as a supernumary on 1s a day. The demotion affected him badly; his earlier correspondence was lucid and tidily written but the

⁸³ Ian F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers; the amateur military tradition 1858-1945* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 1991) pp. 127-8

⁸⁴ Letter from Edward Luard to John Brownlow 9 July 1856 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/114/10

on Monday, the 18
of August and we are
now in Newtown
and I am among strangers
but I have one companion
whom I am staying with
and I find it very
hard to live on a
shilling a day we are
thinking of starting in
a small way of business
and I have no doubts
that we should be able
to succeed if I had
a title to begin

Ill. 6.10 Letter from Edward Luard to John Brownlow 22 February 1855
GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/114/10

letter dated 20 November 1856 describing his reduced circumstances was repetitive and incoherent, with handwriting and punctuation much degraded:

I am among strangers but I do have one companion who I am
stopping with until I am finding it very hard to live on a shilling
a day we are thinking of starting in a small way of business and
I have no doubt we should be able to succeed if I had a trifle to
begin with I am stoping (sic) with him and his father and I have
no doubt that we should be able to succeed if I had a few
pounds to start with that my friend has got from his brother...⁸⁵

There were worse hazards. A drummer in the Honourable Artillery Company was, in 1804, sentenced to fifty lashes for absence from duty.⁸⁶ Robert Ferguson, a mentally unstable musician on HMS Undaunted was hanged for forging a £10 note despite clear evidence that he was insane.⁸⁷ The requirement to be 'effective' could be particularly hard on boy bandsmen, who could be sent to a theatre of war from the age of seventeen. William Kidston Elles, an officer in the the 38th Regiment of Foot in the Crimea, recorded a routine of regular midnight parades and marches of up to fourteen miles, starting at four in the morning.⁸⁸ Early in its deployment to the Crimea, the 38th lost three of its bandsmen killed by exhaustion and sickness: Thomas Williams, the band corporal, wrote of their 'suffering the trials and hardships of so severe a campaign as this, with having to do night duty and heavy fatigues which tougher men could not bear'.⁸⁹ In 1855 John Rabnett, a seventeen year old bandsman with the regiment wrote:

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Goold Walker, *Honourable Artillery Company* p. 208

⁸⁷ GB-Lna HO 47/42/14

⁸⁸ Diary of William Kidston Elles, 38th Regiment of Foot GB-Lnam 2009-03-02

⁸⁹ Letter from Thomas Williams to John Brownlow 22 February 1855 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/113/W

...I am laid up in hospital very bad indeed the meat that I get for my dinner is dirty and the bread is almost as salty as the salt itself I have had a few hardships since I have been out here I have been down in Sebastopol three or four times to carry wood up to our camp which is about 4 miles and I would not be allowed to fall to the rear to rest myself and I was one time very near dead I was taken to hospital but I survived a soldier do not agree with me (sic) at these times.⁹⁰

It was worse for Augustus Browne, a trombonist, who seems not to have been able to play on arrival, since he wrote that his instrument had 'had a queer damaging such as you have not seen before.'⁹¹ He became ill. In that campaign, survival of sickness or injury was a matter of luck and resilience; an officer in the 38th complained about 'our wretched ambulance establishment' and his fifteen ambulance men, who 'gave more trouble than a whole regiment'. They were usually either drunk, sick or prisoners for misconduct so that the French had had to help with moving patients.⁹² The ship carrying winter clothing sank in a storm and C. Vine, surgeon to the 4th Dragoon Guards, said of the conditions that January that the army was 'in a miserable plight' under snow, hail and constant firing, especially at night.⁹³ In February 1855 the band corporal wrote of Browne's fate from the camp before Sebastopol:

After a long and severe illness of about four weeks with Dysentery & no Remedy or nourishment being giving (sic) him he grew worse, he linger'd on till nature was unable to hold against it any longer, he died on the 31st of January.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Letter from John Rabnett to John Brownlow 13 December 1855 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/114/14

⁹¹ Letter from Augustus Browne to John Brownlow 6 July 1854 LAM A/FH/A6/1/114/B

⁹² Letter from Captain A. Sayard to his brother from the camp before Sebastopol GB-Lnam 5903-128-5

⁹³ Diary of C. Vine, surgeon to the 4th (Irish) Dragoon Guards 1854-6 GB-Lnam 6807-262-1

⁹⁴ Letter from Thomas Williams to John Brownlow 22 February 1855 GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/113/W

out here I have been down in
 Sebastopol three or four times to carry
 wood up to our camp which is
 about 4 miles and ~~he~~ would not be
 allowed to fall to the rear to rest myself
 and I was one time very near dead
 I was taken to Hospital but I survived
 a soldier do not agree with me
 at these times I hope that you
 A/FH/A6/1/114/14

Ill. 6.11 Detail of letter from John Rabnett to John Brownlow from Sebastopol
 13 December 1855GB-Llma A/FH/A6/1/114/14

Culture and Identity

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,
 The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here."
 The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,
 I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:
 O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, go away";
 But it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins", when the band begins to play.⁹⁵

The misfortunes suffered by RSM members such as Charles Jane Ashley, James Smithies and others⁹⁶ were distressing, but they were disruptions of reasonably comfortable lives. The

⁹⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *Tommy* (1890) *The Bombay Edition of the Works of Rudyard Kipling* vol. 21 (Bombay: 1914).

⁹⁶ See above, Chapter 1

civilians who included a military band as part of their portfolio were for the most part people whose origins were middling rather than lowly. Enlisted men who became bandsmen had often known poverty, had travelled widely, had formative experiences in common and some had been traumatised during their service. John Rabnett, the band boy who almost died carrying wood up to camp from Sebastopol, and Daniel Sharpe, who wanted a 'constatiner' because he was too ill to play his clarinet, both survived the Crimea and were sent to India during the 1857 mutiny. Rabnett was accidentally drowned in the Ganges at Benares (Varanasi) in December 1856.⁹⁷ Shortly afterwards Sharpe was invalided home, where a place was found for him in the Coldstream Guards band. Given the reputation of the Coldstreamers' band, it is likely that he found employment in the London theatres, if his health held out.

Speculation about the effect that army life might have had on the way a man played is naturally a risky pursuit, but there are connections that can be made, and which cannot be ignored if a proper picture of orchestral playing in London is to be formed. In earlier chapters, repeated reference has been made to complaints from the 1830s onwards that wind and brass playing in orchestras from the Royal Italian Opera downwards was too loud and too aggressive. Some of this was urged on the musicians by conductors, particularly Michael Costa, whose penchant for loudness extended to rewriting Mozart in a style apparently reminiscent of a military band. Some of it, however, will have come from the players themselves. The physical condition of a wind player has a direct effect on his or her ability to articulate, to project and to play loudly. Without going into technical detail, the strength of muscles around the torso determines the ability to blow. Good physical condition, correctly applied, contributes to the ability to play delicately as well, but only if the intention to do so

⁹⁷ GB-Llma A/FH/K/02/054, 13 March 1858

is present. It is not certain that the bandmasters of the 160 bands identified by the Duke of Cambridge were as aware as Charles Godfrey of the value of light and shade in music. If a man played in a persistently loud regimental band, he would have had neither the opportunity nor the incentive to develop a capacity for dynamic contrast. There is no way to be sure, but if we accept John Ella's premise that a refined musical artist required:

...a knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, composition,
instrumentations, musical history, structure and nature of
instruments, and the elements of acoustics, requiring, at least,
six years studious application.⁹⁸

then we should also admit the possibility that 19-mile night marches in the Crimea and the other rigours of military life would change the way a man played.

It might be entertaining to speculate what such a man would have thought when the King's Theatre band protested that an opera followed by a short ballet made for an exhausting evening, or how he would have reacted to John Mackintosh fearing that the walk of just under a mile from Fitzroy Square to Leicester Square might cost him his life. It is hard to believe that musicians who had survived the rigours of army life were very much perturbed by audience behaviour in the 'Old Prices' riots or the lesser disturbances that were routine in most theatres. It is not possible to know how separate military players were from the rest of the orchestral profession, but even if their sense of a separate identity extended no further than a desire to work with old comrades and a willingness to petition a musical director, that by itself would have influenced the character of the orchestras they played in.

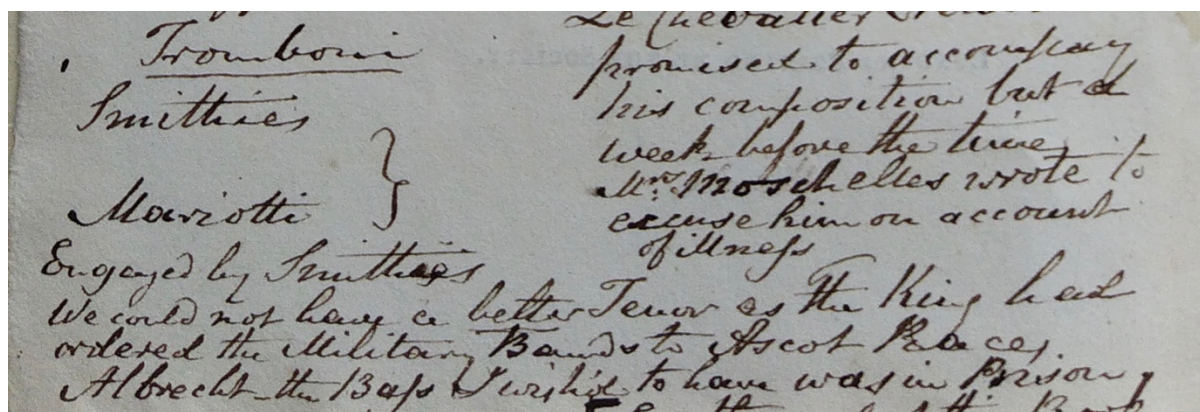
⁹⁸ *Journal of the Society of Arts* 8:658 (1865), 538

A knack for playing an instrument gave thousands of men entry into a world that their fathers could not have imagined. A bandsman who, when he joined his regiment, might have been illiterate and too physically feeble even to be classed as a labourer, but who then went on to be part of a famous band that paid him well, and then a player in a music hall or minor theatre, would not have seen himself as somehow at the bottom of the musical hierarchy; the idea probably never crossed his mind. This is another challenge to the simplistic notion of status in the music profession; of what interest would be a man's place on some notional curve of rank, beside the the transformative work of his regiment and of a man like Charles Godfrey? To some it must have seemed almost miraculous. When Godfrey died in December 1863, a drummer called John Arthur Elliott published, on black-edged card, a long threnody in verse. One stanza probably summed up the feelings of many of the players:

His Muse has spread throughout the land,
And all have heard his name
Connected with the splendid Band
Which shared with him his fame.
We mourn with them the loss they bear,
And shed a last sad tear:
To the memory of Charles Godfrey
A memorial sad we'll rear.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ GB-Llma F/LEG 940-945

8. Making up the numbers: the marginal player



III.8.1 Detail from an annotated concert programme in the Sir George Smart collection. Lbl C.61.h.4.(1.) n

This chapter examines the boom in lower-class entertainment from the late 1830s on, and its relationship to part-time playing. There are indications that although the army was a prolific trainer of new players, the fact that a regiment had first call on bandsmen's services could undermine their ability to work in the civilian sphere. Even so, players continued to be found. Some of them must have come from overseas but the boom in amateur music making that started towards the middle of the century produced large numbers of men who could play competently and who may have been attracted by the prospect of turning professional, either as part-time or full-time musicians. They started to appear at the same time as the strong growth in popular musical theatre that characterised the 1840s and 1850s. By the mid-1860s there were more than forty minor theatres and music halls.¹⁰⁰ If each of them had maintained a band of only six or seven, as was common, they would have been employing more players between them than all the capital's theatres had done forty years earlier. The *Entr'acte* was probably correct in asserting that there was a theatre of some sort in every London parish. There were more casual concerts and 'casinos' or dance halls appeared, to say nothing of innumerable penny gaffs employing one or two musicians. It was a population explosion, one that occurred mostly at the lowest end of the profession.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Bailey, 'Business and Good Fellowship in the London Music Hall', *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 85

Army bandsmen could in theory work around fluctuating civilian demand, but it is not certain that they were always allowed to do so. In June 1833, the King ordered the Royal military band to attend him at Ascot races,¹⁰¹ depriving Sir George Smart of a second trombone for a concert in the Philanthropic Society's chapel. There seems to have been some difficulty in arranging a substitute. John Smithies engaged Mariotti, but Smart regretted that 'we could not have a better tenor'.¹⁰² Five years later, a more serious clash was averted by Royal forbearance:

Her Majesty lately ordered the band of the Fusilier guards to attend her at Windsor, not knowing that the musicians forming it have engagements at the metropolitan theatres. Sir James Hope having mentioned this circumstance to the Queen, however, and that the loss of their salaries would cause distress in their families, she immediately desired that they might be sent back, and ordered the band of the Life Guards to attend.¹⁰³

It is easy to imagine the consternation in the metropolitan theatres that would have broken out if Her Majesty had been less humane. We cannot be certain, but it is possible that the 1839 disaster at Drury Lane, when half the orchestra was absent for a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*,¹⁰⁴ may have been caused by commanding officers who were unsympathetic to their men's other work. Records are sparse but the existence of a conflict of loyalties is undeniable. In 1847 Drury Lane theatre dispensed with military musicians for its opera season:

...we believe we are correct in saying that every member of the orchestra will be compelled as sedulously to attend rehearsals

¹⁰¹ Sir George Smart collection Lbl C.61.h.4.(1.) n

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *The Era* 18 November 1838 p. 7

¹⁰⁴ See above, p.122

as the public performances on stage. This was not altogether the case during former seasons, in consequence of the engagement of military bandsmen, whose public duties in the daytime precluded the possibility of their attending rehearsal, hence there was a want of that unity and precision which ought to be the characteristic of every orchestra where opera is performed.¹⁰⁵

The reformed orchestra was deemed to be much improved. Conceivably the new men at Drury Lane were established full-time players, but 1847 saw the start of the 'opera wars', when Michael Costa persuaded or bullied most of the Royal Italian Opera orchestra into moving to Covent Garden.¹⁰⁶ One source suggests that Her Majesty's made up the deficit with players imported from overseas.¹⁰⁷ Whether or not that was so, demand was high that year and we cannot exclude the possibility that some of Drury Lane's new band were part-timers, perhaps on the cusp of turning professional, whose 'day jobs' gave them flexibility to attend rehearsals.

Combining orchestral playing with an unrelated trade seems to have been common. In 1847 John Brownlow, the secretary of the Foundling Hospital, argued that a boys' band should be started there, partly because competence on an instrument in childhood would lead to part-time employment in later life:

...it is a fact that instrumental performers, engaged at concerts and elsewhere, are all (the principals excepted) filling other occupations during the day.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *Morning Advertiser* 25 September 1846 p. 3

¹⁰⁶ See above p. 128

¹⁰⁷ See above, p. 144

¹⁰⁸ Letter from John Brownlow to Charles Pott, 5 February 1847 LMA A/FH/MO1/041 p.16

He may have been overstating his case a little, but the fact that it was Brownlow who made the suggestion lends credibility to the idea that mechanics might work as musicians. He researched the career prospects of his charges meticulously and was very likely aware of the sort of men who were playing in bands at the lower end of the theatrical spectrum. There is no record of a foundling being sent into a conventional musical apprenticeship; a trade of some sort was their usual destination:

The children are generally disposed of by *apprenticeship*: the girls at the age of sixteen to domestic service for a term of four years, and the boys at the age of fourteen as mechanics for a term of seven years...¹¹⁰

However, Brownlow recorded that many who played in the foundling band continued with music as amateurs after leaving.¹¹¹ They would have had the means to do so; most 'mechanics' (skilled workers) earned between thirty and forty shillings a week. By the 1840s music had become an affordable pastime and the mechanics' rates of pay were high enough for a man to save up for an instrument and to learn to play it. There were abundant opportunities; tutors for most orchestral instruments were published by R. Cocks and Co.; the books themselves do not carry publication dates but were on sale by 1837. Some 'preceptors' were expensive; Drouet's flute book cost fifteen shillings, Kreutzer's violin tutor cost ten, but Cocks also issued cut-price instruction books at between two and five shillings.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ John Brownlow, *The History and Objects of the Foundling Hospital with a Memoir of the Founder* (London: Foundling Hospital, 1881) pp. 78-79

¹¹¹ John Brownlow, *Memoranda; or, Chronicles of The Foundling Hospital*. (London: Sampson Low, 1847) p. 92

¹¹⁴ *Morning Herald* 1 March 1839 p. 8

Elementary theoretical training was easily come by. Dickens wrote that at St Martin's Hall alone, 1,400 people of all classes were given instruction during the course of a week.¹¹⁵ It was widespread, it was cheap and if a benefactor was involved, sometimes it was free. Advertisements giving instrument prices are scarce but in 1836, the auctioneer Watson in Cheapside offered for sale a large stock of instruments. The fact that such a range was accumulated suggests a healthy demand:

Flutes, guitars, violins, violoncellos, bugles, cornopeans, trumpets, concert horns, serpents, and trombones; music stools, canterburies, whatnots and the usual articles connected with this branch of business...¹¹⁶

Ten percent import tariffs remained in force for most instruments until 1860,¹¹⁷ but even before the charge was abolished, prices were low. Trost's Warehouse sold 'concert flutes' for a pound and other instruments could be had 'at the lowest remunerative profit'.¹¹⁸ F.R. Blenkarn in the Kingsland Road sold 'Best Music Half Price'.¹¹⁹ A full-sized violin could be had for 2s.6d at W. Croger's Musical Instrument Warehouse, a short walk from Trost's in the Whitechapel Road; the shop also advertised 'a large stock of good old violins from 15s. to £10 each'.¹²⁰ Most of these would have been imports from Mittenwald, Klingental and Markneunkirchen in the Black Forest, assembled by a system of piece-work. One person made scrolls, another fitted bridges and, as with a modern assembly line, manufacture was quick and cheap.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ *Household Words* vol.1 March-September 1850 pp. 161-164

¹¹⁶ *Morning Advertiser* 13 June 1836 p. 4

¹¹⁷ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 101

¹¹⁸ *East London Observer* 11 December 1858 p. 4

¹¹⁹ *East London Observer* 22 October 1859 p. 4

¹²⁰ *East London Observer* 31 December 1859 p. 3

¹²¹ Brian W. Harvey, *The Violin Family and its Makers in the British Isles: an illustrated history and directory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) pp. 85-87

A little theory, a 2s book from Cocks and a half-crown violin from Croger's might have been all that was needed for a man to start out as an amateur musician. Humorous pieces in the popular prints satirised musical enthusiasts; one invented a Mr Tootledoo, leaning out of his bedroom window in his nightcap, keeping bad time with a yellow flute to a band of buskers.¹²² Others, in slightly more serious vein, considered the social consequences of a passion for music:

Then cometh the fascinating flute, the fiddle, clarionet, the bass viol, the trombone, the cornet, the bassoon... The grandest scene of all is where the orphicleide [sic.] is the idea of a youth. At first it was tolerated from sheer ignorance of its nature, but when it had been made to speak, and it did speak as if it had something to say to one a mile off, then began the trials of the devotee... I well remember him practising on the housetop...¹²³



Ill. 8.2 *Waits* in *The Penny Illustrated Paper* December 1861

¹²² *The Penny Illustrated Paper* 21 December 1861 p.180

¹²³ *East London Observer* 16 July 1859 p.2

The 'orphicleide' on the roof (later it removed to a public park) is significant: the brass family grew quickest in popularity. Valved instruments began appearing in London in the 1830s: J. Kohler advertised his cornopeans in 1834¹²⁴ and the emergence of the brass ensemble as a popular entertainment can be traced to roughly the same time. The Distin family began their careers in Edinburgh in 1835 and a benefit concert in London in November 1836 featured an unnamed cornopean band said to be playing 'for the first time on any stage'.¹²⁵ In the late 1830s and 1840s Cioffi, Koenig, Prospère and a certain Herr Sommers, who played variations on the bombardone for Jullien at Drury Lane,¹²⁶ became household names. The instruments themselves were as much an attraction as the players; in 1844 the Royal Adelaide Gallery was advertising its 'magnificent Sax Horn Band of entirely new instruments'¹²⁷ and in 1846, performances at Covent Garden by The Great Wizard of the North were graced by 'The Monster Band of Saxhorns and Cornopeans, sixty performers'. This was advertised as 'the greatest treat ever offered to the musical world'.¹²⁸ Even the opera war found its way into brass marketing; Lumley's chief attraction for the 1847 season was the soprano Jenny Lind, and that year a music dealer called Brinstead marketed a book of eight Swedish melodies 'as really sung by Mdlle. Jenny Lind' arranged for cornopean, Sax Horn or Sax Tuba.¹²⁹ In 1844 the Distins met Adolphe Sax and became UK agents for his instruments.¹³⁰ They, and other British manufacturers, actively in stimulated the amateur brass band movement by a combination of deft marketing and manipulation of the urge among social leaders to promote 'rational' recreations. It was 'one of the most remarkable sociological shifts to have

¹²⁴ *Naval and Military Gazette and Chronicle of the United Service* 22 March 1834 p.15

¹²⁵ *Weekly True Sun* 6 November 1836 p.12

¹²⁶ *The Times* 29 November 1850 p.3

¹²⁷ *The Times* 10 October 1844 p.1

¹²⁸ *The Atlas* 11 April 1846 p.14

¹²⁹ *The Times* 1 May 1847 p.2

¹³⁰ *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Brass Instruments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) entry for Distin family.

occurred in the history of music',¹³¹ one that has been called cataclysmic.¹³² Prices were low: in 1804 a trumpet from Monzani and Hill had cost six guineas and a French horn fourteen.¹³³ By 1851, Ebbelwhite of Whitechapel were selling cornopeans 'with 3 valves, crooks etc at 25s, 30s and 35s, superior French ditto at 30s, 35s and 40s Sax horns soprano 30s alto 60s, tenor 70s baritone £4 5s'.¹³⁴ An 1859 advertisement placed by the Distins and directed at 'directors of country bands' offered cornopeans for 20s and tubas for 80s.¹³⁵ In Hoxton, W.J. Wade, late of the London Rifle Brigade, formed a class for learning to play these marvels. 'Young Men desirous of joining the above should make early application...Terms 7s 6d per quarter'.¹³⁶

Singing saloons and free-and-easies

...just as high-status concerts grew out of salons, so events for lesser audiences evolved from cafes, taverns, parks, dance halls, cultural societies and churches.¹³⁷

In 1830, the Beer Act abolished duties on strong ale and cider and allowed any ratepayer to brew and sell beer on his premises. Within six months of its passage, 24,000 new beer shops had been set up across the country.¹³⁸ Many of these were no more than a front parlour open to the public and remained so. Others grew: Dickens saw the licensed victualler as '...a sharp and watchful man, with tight lips and a complete edition of Cocker's arithmetic in each

¹³¹ Trevor Herbert, 'Brass Bands and Other Vernacular Traditions', *The Cambridge Companion to Brass Instruments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p.177

¹³² Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music, a critical introduction*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) p.56

¹³³ Earl of Bradford military papers GB-SHRsha 6005/shyks/10/108a 190/77

¹³⁴ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 22 June 1851 p.11

¹³⁵ *Reynolds's Newspaper* 17 July 1859 p.14

¹³⁶ *Shoreditch Observer* 11 February 1860 p.1

¹³⁷ Weber, *Music and the Middle Class* pp. 85-86

¹³⁸ Nicholas Mason, 'The Sovereign People Are in a Beastly State': The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian Discourse on Working-Class Drunkenness', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 29:1 (2001), 109-127

eye'.¹³⁹ To such a character, offering musical entertainment to drinking customers was an obvious step to take. Social clubs with a choral bent, called 'free and easies', had been meeting upstairs in public houses since the 1820s.¹⁴⁰ They had names like *The Convivial Brothers* and the papers advertised them alongside boxing matches. *Josh Hudson's Free-and-Easy* was announced alongside a report of Young Dutch Sam's set-to with Cropley.¹⁴¹ Genteel entertainment, essentially of the same type, was provided by more expensive 'song and supper rooms'. These amateur singsongs gradually became more elaborate semi-professional then fully professional cabarets.¹⁴²

Growth was rapid: in 1839, the Royal Union in Shoreditch was raided by the police for violation of its licence. Their report described a stage with nineteen gas footlights and a hall containing an audience of between eight and nine hundred.¹⁴³ In 1840, entertainments at the Britannia Tavern in Hoxton were being given in a room no larger than thirteen feet by eighteen, but the following year it was replaced with a hall that boasted space for about 150 in the boxes and 850 in the pit. The new building opened with a concert of operatic selections, followed by a new melodrama by Edward Lancaster called *The Red Lance, or The Merrie Men of Hoxton* and concluded with a farce, *The Tailor of Tamworth*.¹⁴⁴ Twenty years later, the site was developed into a theatre that seated more than 3,000. Dickens said it was better than the Italian Opera for listening and had better sight lines than Her Majesty's.¹⁴⁵ In 1852, Charles Morton opened the Canterbury Arms, a pub with a modest entertainment space. It was so popular that he rebuilt it; two years later the pub was secondary to a theatre

¹³⁹ Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller* (Second edition, London: Chapman & Hall, 1861) p. 63

¹⁴⁰ See Lee Jackson *Palaces of Pleasure* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019) pp. 32-55

¹⁴¹ *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 31 January 1830 p. 3

¹⁴² See Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 80-81

¹⁴³ *Morning Post* 11 September 1839 p. 4

¹⁴⁴ Janice Norwood, 'The Britannia Theatre, Hoxton (1841-1899) the creation and consumption of popular culture in an East End community' (Ph.d Thesis, University of Leicester 2006) pp. 6-7

¹⁴⁵ *The Uncommercial Traveller* p. 42

with room for an estimated 1,500-2,000 people. This is thought of as the first 'music hall' in the commonly accepted sense, though the Yorkshire Stingo garden in the Marylebone Road was using the term 'music hall' as early as 1835.¹⁴⁶

There are too few sources for us to be able to say exactly how instrumental employment developed in the 'free and easies', pub entertainments and the theatres that they evolved into. Most taverns were content with a lone fiddler or a piano, but some had both; violin solos varied the entertainment and gave the singers a rest. In most cases, more elaborate bands evolved slowly but a few venues were ambitious from the outset. From its opening in 1831, Thomas Rouse's Grecian Saloon, in the grounds of the Eagle Tavern,¹⁴⁷ presented opera and ballet with a professional orchestra. The band was not full time; in *Miss Evans and the Eagle*, Dickens described comic songs accompanied by an organ.¹⁴⁸ By 1850 the Saloon had several operas in repertoire, including Auber's *Fra Diavolo*.¹⁴⁹ Dickens estimated that 10,000 people a week visited and, somewhat unnecessarily, mentioned that the orchestra was unlike the one at the Italian opera.¹⁵⁰ The programme for Auber's *Les Diamants de la Couronne* in 1848 mentions that 'the orchestral arrangements have been made by Mr. Harroway, R.A. of Music'.¹⁵¹ No copy of Harroway's adaptation has survived, but at a time when Costa at the Royal Opera was rewriting *Don Giovanni* to include bass drum and cymbals, it is unlikely that the Grecian Saloon - or any other East End theatre - was concerned about fidelity to the composer's intentions.

By the 1850s, a rough template for a music hall or small theatre band was established, usually a handful of orchestral instruments gathered round a piano and a harmonium. The Eastern

¹⁴⁶ Senelick, *Tavern Singing* p. xxxi

¹⁴⁷ *Palaces of Pleasure* p. 43

¹⁴⁸ Charles Dickens, *Miss Evans and the Eagle* first published in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* Sunday 4 October 1835. p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ *The Era* 21 July 1850 p. 1

¹⁵⁰ *Household Words* vol. 1 March-September 1850 pp.5 9-60

¹⁵¹ <https://archive.org/details/crownbrilliantso0000aube> Hill Collection, University of Warwick

Concert Hall in Commercial Road East had, in addition to its two keyboards, Mr. Higgins, 'the modern Paganini' plus a double bass, a flute, a clarinet, a *cornet à pistons* and a side drum.¹⁵² A programme for Weston's Grand Music Hall, a medium-sized venue which opened in 1857, gives the names of the band members: the piano was played by Mr. Brown, the harmonium by Mr. Stephen Low, the cornet by Mr. Haydn Millars, the violin by Mr. Howard, the flute by Mr. Fred Berry and the drum by Master Smith.¹⁵³ These musicians were not anonymous: Mr. H. de Solla had been popular enough at Weston's for his defection to Richards' Splendid Music Hall on Islington Green to be announced in the press.¹⁵⁴ As musical director there, he presided over a band of piano, harmonium, violin, cornet and flute.¹⁵⁵

There was a practical logic to organising the orchestra in this way. Music-hall style evolved from saloon singing, in which a performer had to attract the attention of people who were preoccupied with drinking, smoking and other activities. This was often done with bizarre costumes and actions, and with direct engagement with the audience:

...professional room- singers insistently broke through the fictions of their impersonations with an *ad lib* gagging commentary between verses known as "patter" or the "spoken". Mostly extemporized, this direct address of the audience (also practised in the crossover routines of the low comedian in the theatre) represented a further assimilation of English street

¹⁵² *The Era* 30 December 1855 p. 16

¹⁵³ LMA acc.595/41 The programme is not dated, but some of these names appear in other advertisements from the late 1850s on.

¹⁵⁴ *The Era* 26 December 1858 p. 1

¹⁵⁵ *The Era* 5 June 1859 p. 8

style ...of the butcher or mountebank shouting his wares, or the ritual contests of abuse known as "flytings" ...¹⁵⁶

A band 'conducted' from piano and violin could react quickly to whatever the singer or an actor striking an attitude on stage did. The skills required by its members were specific and not directly related to refinement of style. Accompanying a melo-drama or a music hall song required flexibility like that needed for the opera, and possession of these qualities would have offset any lack of finesse in a self-taught man's playing - not that it was likely to be noticed amid the noise of the audience. The opera and larger theatres could be boisterous places; *In Great Expectations*, Dickens described audience participation in Mr Wopsle's performance of *Hamlet*:

Whenever that undecided Prince had to ask a question or state a doubt, the public helped him out with it. As for example; on the question whether 'twas nobler in the mind to suffer', some roared yes, and some no, and some inclining to both opinions said 'toss up for it'; and quite a Debating Society arose.¹⁵⁷

In the lowest theatres, it was often bedlam:

They are sung, or rather roared, with a vehemence that is stunning, and accompanied with spoken passages of the most outrageous character. At the end of every verse the audience takes up the chorus with a zest and vigour which speaks volumes - they sing, they roar, they yell, they scream, they get on their legs and waving dirty hands and ragged hats bellow

¹⁵⁶ Peter Bailey, 'Conspiracies of Meaning: Music-Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture', (*Past & Present*, 144 (1994), 144

¹⁵⁷ Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London: Penguin Classics 1996) p. 254

again till their voices crack. When the song is ended, and the singer withdraws, they encore him with a peal that seems enough to bring the rotting roof in on their heads, as with frantic shouts, shrieks and catcalls they drag him back again so that they may gloat once more over the delectable morsel.¹⁵⁸

Dance bands

As singing saloons multiplied, so did dancing rooms; between 1829 and 1849, applications for music and dancing licences to the Middlesex bench alone increased eightfold. Some places posed as 'dancing academies' like Mr Turveydrop's establishment in *Bleak House*. At Porter's Coffee Rooms in Covent Garden, well-dressed girls danced 'the bold polka to the scraping of a violin'¹⁵⁹ but this, like many similar enterprises, was as much a place for assignation as for quadrilles. *The New Swell's Night Guide*, a review of the less salubrious nocturnal pleasures of the capital, listed many expensive dancing clubs. These were beyond the reach of ordinary working people, and very likely not to the taste of anyone wanting to be thought respectable. There was a gap in the market. As Jackson says:

...there was nowhere reliable in central London where a young person could simply turn up on a whim and pay money to dance to a good orchestra. Then, in the mid 1840s, came the casino.¹⁶⁰

In October 1846, Laurent's Casino opened in the Adelaide Gallery, off the Strand, with a series of *Soirées Musicales and Dansantes* (sic). It was the idea of James Ellis, the proprietor

¹⁵⁸ 'The Amusements of the Mob' in *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature Science and Arts* 1 November 1856 (London, W & R Chambers 1857) p. 284

¹⁵⁹ Anon., *The New Swell's Night Guide to the Bowers of Venus* (London: J. Paul, 1846) p. 26

¹⁶⁰ *Palaces of Pleasure* p. 103

of Cremorne Gardens, and was named after his musical director Émile Laurent, a cornopean virtuoso who in the early 1840s had rescued the promenade concerts at the Lyceum. Both men understood the purchasing power of the shilling public, and this new enterprise combined dancing with elements of a promenade concert. It was an immediate success and imitators quickly appeared: at the Portland Rooms, known as 'Mott's' in Foley Place, it became a fashionable catch phrase to shout 'Pol-kar' after the manner of Frère, the Master of Ceremonies. Holborn casino was quieter, with medical students, government clerks and what Edmund Yates called 'a sprinkling of the shopocracy'.¹⁶¹

These enterprises used a lot of musicians and here, too, the porosity of the London profession was apparent: the band at Laurent's included Grattan Cooke, Winterbottom and Maycock, all of whom played at the opera¹⁶² and was large enough to play the *Freischütz* overture as well as polkas.¹⁶³ Smaller song and dance venues like the Winchester Hall presented operatic choruses and polkas; in the 1850s its band was fourteen strong and included two cornets and a trombone. By 1861 the Highbury Barn, a large pleasure garden that could accommodate 500 dancers in its *alfresco* saloon and twice that number under canvas,¹⁶⁴ was advertising a dance band of forty¹⁶⁵ and, at the bottom of the market, Algar's dancing booth, an immense tented structure erected at Greenwich and Bartholomew fairs, used a band of two harps, three violins, a bass viol, two clarinets and a flute.¹⁶⁶

Turning professional

Once again, the question of where players came from arises, and how they found their way into professional playing. Some adopted the Distin family's strategy and formed groups that

¹⁶¹ Edmund Yates, *Edmund Yates, his recollections and experiences* (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1885) pp. 93-94

¹⁶² *Illustrated London News* 10 October 1846 p. 234

¹⁶³ *Morning Advertiser* 6 October 1846 p. 4

¹⁶⁴ *Chambers's Journal* 1 November 1856 p. 285

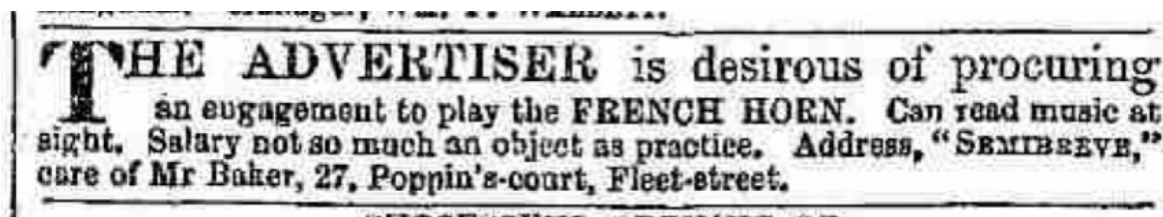
¹⁶⁵ *Shoreditch Observer* 4 May 1861 p. 4

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Frost, *The Old Showmen and the Old London Fairs* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875) p. 264

could be engaged as an identifiable act on a playbill. A certain 'Mr Shapcott', a dyer and smallholder in Exeter, taught his seven sons musical theory each day as they sat around the dinner table and in the mid-1840s he formed a saxhorn band with them. After a few concerts locally, they found themselves popular with mechanics' institutions. Eventually they went full-time:

...the solicitations became so numerous that Mr Shapcott broke up his establishment in Exeter, and since then his family have been engaged in giving concerts...¹⁶⁷

They settled in London, appearing regularly at the Highbury Barn and other venues around Islington. We do not know if the Shapcott boys went into theatrical employment, but as minor local celebrities it is easy to imagine their doing so. Individuals who were not part of



Ill. 8.3 Cutting from *The Era* 2 October 1859 p. 1

any group may have importuned theatre managers directly, and at the end of the 1850s *The Era* carried occasional adverts from brass players in the north of England seeking engagements. Probably most were amateur bandsmen hoping to escape a factory or mine. J. Dean, a bass trombone player of Little Saddle, Yorks, was 'available for theatres, circuses and exhibitions'¹⁶⁸ and Mr J. Meakin of Mossley near Manchester wanted 'a situation playing bombardone in a brass or string band'.¹⁶⁹ London players almost never advertised for work but one exception, from 1859, is intriguing. In October that year, a man calling himself 'Semibreve' sought an engagement to play the French horn 'salary not so much an object as

¹⁶⁷ *The Kentish Independent* 22 November 1851 p. 6

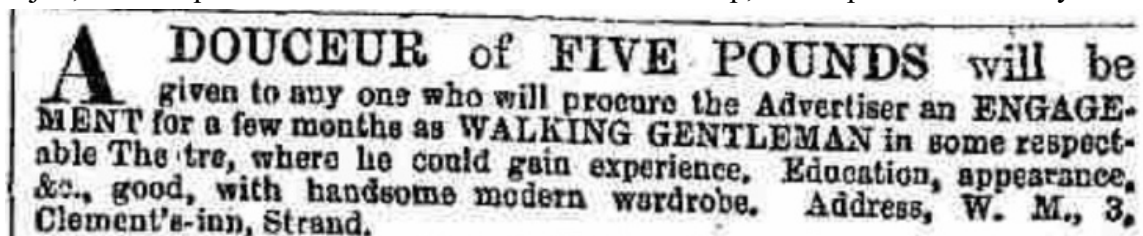
¹⁶⁸ *The Era* 30 October 1859 p. 1

¹⁶⁹ *The Era* 18 September 1859 p. 1

practice'.¹⁷⁰ It is possible that he was a middle-class amateur seeking diversion, but the address, care of Mr. Baker, 27 Poppin's Court, Fleet Street makes that unlikely. Poppin's Court was in a working-class district, not far from the Bridewell prison, Smithfield Market and the slums of Clerkenwell and Gray's Inn Lane. No social survey was made in the 1850s, but in the 1890s the street was assessed by Charles Booth as 'poor, 18s to 21s per week for a moderate family'.¹⁷¹ It was not a good address, but it might be that Semibreve's was worse, perhaps a common lodging house. Perhaps he was fearful of a respectable employer learning of his musical ambitions. There is another possibility. A bandsman interviewed by Mayhew around the same time estimated that there were a thousand or so street musicians in London:

The class of man in the street bands is... those who can't read music... and their being unable to read music prevents their obtaining employment in theatres... and yet a number of street musicians are better instrumentalists than many educated musicians in the theatres.¹⁷²

Was 'Semibreve' one of those better street instrumentalists? He cannot have been a former military bandsman, or he would not have been seeking experience. It is not too fanciful to imagine that he was playing on the street. If not, he may have been working at some menial job, have acquired a French horn in a second-hand shop, developed the necessary reading



Ill. 8.4 Cutting from *The Era* 16 October 1859 p. 1

¹⁷⁰ *The Era* 2 October 1859 p. 1

¹⁷¹ London School of Economics Poverty Maps and Police Notebooks <https://booth.lse.ac.uk/map/15/-0.1242/51.5161/100/0?marker=530354,181332> s

¹⁷² Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1861) vol. 3 p. 163

skills somewhere like St. Martin's Hall and, like the would-be actors who occasionally advertised for experience as 'walking gentlemen'¹⁷³ on the stage, was trying to break into theatrical employment. If he fell into Charles Booth's 'poor' income bracket, getting himself into a theatre would have meant a significant change of circumstances. Combining a theatrical salary of a guinea a week with some other activity, even an unskilled wage, would have made him comfortable. Not comfortable in the manner of a middle-class professional or the well-dressed young man in Clement's Inn who offered a 'douceur of five pounds' for walk-on roles,¹⁷⁴ but also far better off than one providing a subsistence: able to afford decent lodgings and food after the manner of a skilled tradesman.

A pattern for the economics and timetabling of a part-time musical career is suggested by the diary of Charles Rice, a comic singer who worked around London between 1837 and 1875. During the day, Rice was an attendant and Second Assistant Manager at the British Museum on a salary of sixty-seven pounds per annum. The pay was modest enough to begin with, but it was docked for absence through illness and even for Christmas Day.¹⁷⁵ It was not a good job, but the working hours were from seven in the morning until five in the afternoon, leaving Rice free to pursue his second career. He did this with alacrity, at his peak working most evenings. For him, as with many others, the transition from amateur to professional was gradual. A man might roll up and offer a song - rather in the manner of an 'open mic' comedy session today - and if he did well, he might slip into paid employment. The effect of this transition was, for Rice, dramatic. He recorded that his average fee was between four and six shillings a night. If he was prepared to work six nights a week - and it seems that he was - at the lowest rate, singing more than doubled his £4 8s monthly salary from the museum.

¹⁷³ See *The Era* 16 October 1859 p. 1

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Senelick, *Tavern Singing* p. xvii

Rice often worked with a violinist called William Callcott, who accompanied some songs and gave violin and piano interludes during the evening. Once, when the pianist was too drunk to stay on his stool, Callcott saved the day by accompanying the rest of the evening's singing.¹⁷⁶ He was well enough known on the 'free and easy' circuit to have a benefit night at the King and Queen pub in Fitzrovia. Rice sang at it in return for Callcott returning the favour the following week; at Rice's benefit the profit was six pounds.¹⁷⁷ Callcott was an RSM member who had led the orchestra at the Adelphi. He might have fallen on hard times or succumbed to alcohol: entertainers received as much as 2s 3d a night in free drink and Rice once took his fee as 'two glasses of Rum and water, 1/2 a pint of Gin and spruce, two slices of bread and cheese, and two screws of tobacco'.¹⁷⁸ Such a descent is credible: the drunken solitary fiddler in a theatre pit was such an overworked literary *cliché* that one suspects characters like Mr Teazer in Pierce Egan's *Life of an Actor* were based on reality:

...the celebrated Giordani, Viotti, Pinto, Salomon, Cramer Weichsell and Spagnoletti were mere apologies compared with Mr Teazer... Yet, nevertheless, I am sorry to say, that Mr *Teazer* is too fond of a '*drop*', which might prove a very distressing circumstance to my feelings, had I not brought my company to such a high pitch of excellence as to be enabled to perform an opera without the aid of music!¹⁷⁹

Callcott might just as easily have been a model of sobriety who decided that 'free-and-easies' paid better than a theatre. It is likely that they did: a young violinist by the name of Spiller, who appeared on the scene around 1850, was recorded as sharing a fee of 10s with the pianist

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.* p. 229

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 79

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 13

¹⁷⁹ Pierce Egan, *The Life of an Actor* (London: C.S. Arnold, 1825) pp. 125-126

Mears for an evening's work.¹⁸⁰ If he managed six nights' work in a week, he would have been 9s a week better off than a rank-and-file player at Sadler's Wells.¹⁸¹ For a landlord, it was a large leap from spending 5s on a fiddler to retaining the six or seven men who sat around a harmonium, but the number of advertisements for just such a band indicate that the plunge was taken, most likely triggered when the premises were rebuilt on a larger scale.

Houses of call, agents and music shops: the recruitment network

From the 1850s, small agencies catering for entertainers began to appear. Mr. H. Butler announced his intention of opening one at the start of 1851.¹⁸² He provided musicians for concert rooms; so did Arthur Yates Dillon's Theatrical Agency.¹⁸³ Mapleson and Co's British and Foreign Musical Agency offered to provide

...complete Operatic or Concert companies and supply
all the choral, orchestral, and other requisites; also to
negotiate engagements of every kind for *Artistes* of
ability and repute, both vocal and instrumental...¹⁸⁴

The going rate for these services seems to have been 7s 6d in the pound, deducted from a performer's wages for the first few weeks of the engagement. That would have been prohibitively expensive for the lowest class of instrumentalist, though Maynard's Agency, which only charged a 1s 6d. booking fee, may have been more manageable.¹⁸⁵ For most, a pub or a music shop was a likely employment exchange. The Hope, off Drury Lane, served as a 'house of call', an informal employment exchange for tavern entertainers.¹⁸⁶ Charles Rice only recorded his meetings there with other singers, but there is every reason to suppose

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 190

¹⁸¹ Sadler's Wells Theatre Collection, orchestra paybook for 1837 GB-Lilh S/SWT/1/1/2 L4.211

¹⁸² *The Era* 5 January 1851 p.1

¹⁸³ *The Era* 20 April 1851 p. 1

¹⁸⁴ *The Era* 7 February 1858 p. 1

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.* 1858 p. 1

¹⁸⁶ *Palaces of Pleasure* p. 41

that musicians traded engagements in similar places. Croger's Musical Warehouse offered to provide musicians for quadrille parties¹⁸⁷ and it is unlikely to have been the only shop that did so. Any music shop was a natural meeting place for musicians and some recruitment, or at least the engagement of deputies, must have been done in them. Charles Reade, author of *The Cloister and the Hearth*, lived for a time above George Hart's violin shop in Soho. He occasionally dealt in violins on his own account and wrote about the Cremona makers in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. No doubt he chatted to the musicians who came in and out of Hart's, and his *Jack of All Trades*¹⁸⁸ is an account of the career of a real-life character, John Lott, a luthier there. Lott was a fine maker but a notorious eccentric who eventually abandoned violin making to become, amongst other things, an elephant trainer in a circus. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction in the book, but it is likely that an incident in it is an enhancement of a band room anecdote; it is certainly the sort of story that musicians tell. In it, a friend in the Adelphi orchestra helps Lott out of money troubles by getting him a place in the band - and is not deterred by the fact that Lott is unable to play the violin. As camouflage, he uses a good bow for loud, impressive tuning in the band room and in the pit produces another so poor that he cannot be heard when he 'plays'. To make assurance doubly sure, his friend allocates him a desk partner who is deaf, though eventually the trick is discovered, and the perpetrators receive a gentle telling-off. The story is almost certainly exaggerated but as we have seen in earlier chapters, theatre scores appear to have been written down to a standard of instrumental skill. The idea of a man unable to play stretches credibility rather too far, but the thought of a man of limited ability keeping a low profile by 'soaping the bow' does not. For a player to have been casually engaged in a music shop or public house is likely.

¹⁸⁷ *East London Observer* 31 Dec 1859 p. 3

¹⁸⁸ Charles Reade, *A Good Fight and other tales* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1859) pp. 269-273

Market forces

Mechanics playing part-time to supplement their income may partly account for the failure of theatrical wages to improve as demand for musicians increased. During a court action brought in 1851 by the Lyceum band to recover arrears of salary, a horn player called Baynes testified that his weekly wage was 1gn.¹⁹¹ Claims from other musicians suggested that this was the usual rate, a sum no different from what had been paid at the Adelphi nearly twenty years before. Part of the problem was that ticket prices had generally fallen:

Before the 1830s, admission prices for the Victoria were: boxes 4s, pit 2s, gallery 1s. By the late 1830s, all these prices had been halved, but the cheapest admission was still 6d, compared to the penny of the gaffs. By the mid-1840s, though, the gallery price was 4d, and in the middle of 1848 it finally dropped to 3d. Other theatres followed the same pattern. In 1854 the Bower had a 2d gallery, and a 'half-price' (after 8.30 p.m.) box was just 4d.¹⁹²

This naturally put pressure on wages, but for a mechanic or a man on a modest middle-class salary, even a low theatrical wage was worth competing for on price. Ehrlich cites an example at the end of the century of army bandsmen undercutting rivals by working for a quarter of the civilian rate.¹⁹³ That may have been a unique incident, but it is more likely that it was an egregious example of a long-established practice. Theatrical managers would have known the significance of an extra guinea a week for a musician from the artisan classes, just as they would have had a good idea of military and civilian pay and negotiated accordingly.

¹⁹¹ *The Era* 12 January 1851 p. 12

¹⁹² Marc Brodie, 'Free Trade and Cheap Theatre: Sources of Politics for the Nineteenth-Century London Poor', *Social History*, 28:3 (2003), 346-360

¹⁹³ See Ehrlich, *Music Profession* pp. 151-152

The notion of a player with a portfolio of occupations is more credible than the idea that a nineteenth century theatre musician was getting by on less than £50 a year. Joseph Gubbins, a flute player in the foundling band became a rate collector in Staines.¹⁹⁴ His council salary was only £40 per annum but would have formed a dependable base for more seasonal work in a music halls or dance bands. Edward Hughes, a trombone player who became a haberdasher in Bloomsbury decided in December 1853 'to see the world and, if possible, to improve my station in life'¹⁹⁵ but others, less adventurous, might easily have spiced up a shopkeeper's existence with music on the side. Some might have played to tide them over seasonal variations in another trade. If a skilled man had the stamina to work all day and play in the evenings, he might have made a very decent living. In the absence of detailed records, that must remain a guess but if it is even half correct, at the lowest end of the orchestral profession, players may not have been well-to-do but they were certainly not scraping a subsistence.

Going full-time

The anonymous journalist for *Chambers's Journal* was disgusted with the lewd songs he heard in a low theatre, 'which it were flattery to describe as grossly indecent' but he acknowledged that the show was not all bad:

...we are surprised at the same time with the amount of real talent displayed by some of the staff. There are songs by a female singer given in a style that would do credit to some of the minor theatres, there is a *pas seul* by a danseuse who might

¹⁹⁴ LMA ACC/0809/LB/102

¹⁹⁵ LMA A/FH/A/6/2/12 pp. 85-6

figure in Drury Lane; and there are athletic feats rivalling those at Astley's...¹⁹⁶

It would have been remarkable if, in some of these theatres, there had not been the odd player who might have done credit to a minor theatre or Drury Lane. The boundaries were porous enough for a man to find his way to a better theatre if he wanted to. Not everyone did: Fred Perry, a drummer, joined the band at the Britannia Theatre in 1851 and remained there for forty-six years.¹⁹⁷ Grattan Cooke conducted the band at Highbury Barn, accompanying dancing on the 'monstre platform'.¹⁹⁸ If he had spotted a capable but unknown player, he might easily have recommended him to a colleague in a more distinguished sector of the profession. Thereafter, it would have been a matter of the inevitable deputisations to see how the newcomer managed in more challenging surroundings. Young players on their way to better things played in music halls and low theatres, and those venues provided employment for men whose careers were in decline; a viola player called Alsept, who had been part of the Lyceum cooperative and played at the Philharmonic from 1840 until 1851, was by 1856 in Zeluti's band at the Winchester Hall in the Southwark Bridge Road accompanying, amongst others, 'J.G. Forde, the inimitable patter versus clatter', whatever that may have been.¹⁹⁹ When a meeting was held at the Hope Tavern to discuss the creation of a friendly society for Tavern singers and players, John Willy, a prominent chamber music player and member of the Philharmonic band, was chairman.²⁰⁰ Willy was well-known for his kindly disposition, but he must also have known that even a player of his distinction might one day be grateful for a tavern musicians' friendly society.

¹⁹⁶ *Chambers's Journal* 1 November 1856 p. 284

¹⁹⁷ Norwood, 'The Britannia Theatre' p. 95

¹⁹⁸ *Islington Gazette* 23 May 1857 p. 1

¹⁹⁹ *The Era* 26 December 1858 p. 1

²⁰⁰ Senelick, *Tavern Singing* p. 29

There were pressures to work full-time; it is, for example, difficult to see how a man could combine another trade with a job somewhere like the low Surrey-side theatre mentioned earlier. It gave fourteen performances a week: three on Mondays and Saturdays, two on the other four days. Shows were long; a riverman in the audience found the length an attraction, though not for artistic reasons:

I've got no money to spend in the public-house; here I
get shelter and two or three hours' amusement for a
penny - it's preferable to walking the streets in the wet
and mud.²⁰²

Many of the better theatres confined themselves to a single evening performance, but the pattern started to change at the end of the 1850s. In 1859, the Royal Alhambra Palace gave performances at 2.00 and 8.00.²⁰³ In 1859, the Distins appeared twice nightly at Weston's Grand Music Hall.²⁰⁴ The doors opened at seven and the Distins played at 9.00 and 11.00. With such long hours, combining two occupations was probably a young man's game; Charles Rice ruined his health with a mixture of heavy drinking and sleep deprivation and died at fifty-eight after a fall that broke his back.

It is unlikely that 'Semibreve' progressed from Poppin's Court to the Philharmonic Society, but since we do not know his real name, we cannot be certain that he did not. The Victorian era was well supplied with men of ambition. Joseph Firbank, a miner turned navvy rose, via sub-contracting on the railways, to be a major contractor, a Justice of the Peace and a Deputy Lieutenant. He died a rich man.²⁰⁵ Such prodigious leaps of fortune might have been beyond

²⁰² *Chambers's Journal* 1 November 1856 p. 284

²⁰³ *East London Observer* 29 October 1859 p. 4

²⁰⁴ *Morning Advertiser* 29 October 1859 p. 1

²⁰⁵ Terry Coleman, *The Railway Navvies, a history of the men who made the railways* (London: Hutchinson, 1965) p. 60

the average instrumentalist in a theatre pit, but perhaps 'Semibreve' made his way from Poppin's Court into a music hall. We shall never know, but we can hope that he did.



Ill. 8.5 George Schaf, *Street Musician With Children* (1840) British Museum 1862,0614.972
© The trustees of the British Museum
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1862-0614-97

Conclusion

...historians are forever left chasing shadows, painfully aware of their inability ever to reconstruct a dead world in its completeness, however thorough or revealing their documentation... We are doomed forever to be hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot.¹

Simon Schama

My overriding research objective was to explore the experience of the orchestral player at every level of ability, not merely the well-documented elite, and to do so with emphasis on the lived experience. As I stated in the Introduction, the leading question was simply: 'what went on?' There are very few thorough sources for an answer: to return to Michael Burden,² assumptions of what must have happened are inescapable in a field documented in the fragmentary manner that this one is. Those assumptions - perhaps 'informed guesses' is a better phrase - have been based upon certainty about radical changes in the level of demand. Ehrlich identifies two undercurrents that stimulated this: a reordering of the relationship between work and leisure among potential audiences and what he calls the 'cult' of rational recreation - a desire to civilise the people and to exercise social control through artistic and intellectual pursuits.³ As we saw in Chapter 7, we must add a third, less conceptually elusive element: a desire on the part of the military for enhanced display and accordingly for larger bands.

It is astonishing that men were in found in sufficient numbers in so short a time when there was no conservatoire worthy of the name. It was possible because of what amounted almost

¹ Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties, Unwarranted Speculations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991) p. 320

² See above, p. 14

³ Ehrlich, *Music Profession* pp.65-6

to a popular revolution, one driven partly by the army's in-house training but also by an assortment of vernacular activities that had the potential to foster musical awareness in anyone who happened to be receptive. It is highly likely that many professionals began their careers simply by picking an instrument up and exploring how it worked. These factors all influenced the character of the London orchestral profession and the picture that has emerged is of an occupational group that was more socially diverse and more musically protean than has previously been realised. Given this, it will not readily be understood in terms of hierarchies. Of course, understanding requires structures, but we should view these as patterns that we descry from afar, not as something that the players themselves would necessarily have recognised.

Cyril Ehrlich used to counsel against attempting paradigm shifts in a thesis, but it has been necessary to do so because of the poor or- at best - sketchy quality of secondary sources. It is surprising that no more credible picture than Rohr's has hitherto emerged. It was said of Michael Costa that 'he read the music and, reading nothing into it, was therewith content'⁴ and a comparable failure of imagination seems to have informed her conclusions. Her use of the pejorative 'piecemeal' indicates an unstated assumption that a stable, salaried existence is automatically preferable and that the absence of institutional validation was to be deplored. The idea is questionable but has its adherents:

Without fixed professional standards or hierarchies,
professional musicians occupied an undefined social status.
The piecemeal nature of musicians' work and lack of formal
qualifications meant most were held in low regard.⁵

⁴ See above, p. 130

⁵ Rosemary Golding 'The Society of Arts and the Challenge of Professional Music Education in 1860s Britain'. *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education*, 38:2 (2017), 128–150.

The logic of this is not apparent. Was a musician's work any more 'piecemeal' than that of an advocate? Why should the lack of formal qualifications assume such importance? We have such things nowadays but they have no bearing on a player's ability to find work. As to being held in high or low regard, much of the foregoing has shown its irrelevance; a man's ability to get the job done mattered more than a delineation of some chimerical rank, and there is no record of anybody engaged in the business of putting on a concert bewailing the absence of performance diplomas. To understand something in terms of what it is not is a questionable endeavour, to do so in terms of what one would have preferred to it be, more so. Most important at all, to conclude that a perceived lack of status disqualifies an occupational group from careful examination reveals a surprising approach to history.

This study has sought to challenge the narrow and impoverished view of the profession that Rohr and others offer to us. In doing so, it has given little space to considerations of high art. High art was not especially important in the commercial environment that prevailed. At the outset I gave a broadly-drawn definition of an orchestral player.⁶ We should also acknowledge the broad range of functions of the orchestra itself. It remains an orchestra whether it plays a Beethoven symphony or a Musard quadrille and following an operatic recitative or an outburst of music hall 'flyting' demands similar musical autonomy: the idea of the orchestra needing a conductor to make it play together belongs in the amateur sphere. The variety of professional environments in London was not a failure in the system. It was a success story - but it was a success story primarily of popular entertainment. A historian of the playing profession should be wary of assuming the attitudes of the anonymous writer in *The Atlas* who imagined that concert promoter's purpose should be to modify public taste:

⁶ See above, pp. 15-16

...to wean them from their passion for silly ballads, and gradually to lead their taste, through the lighter kinds of orchestral music, upwards to an appreciation of the grandest works of art...one speculator acts the part of pioneer - cautiously ascertains the drift of public inclination, and makes way for the next, who as cautiously increases the dose of good music and introduces and induces the public to swallow it without wry faces or spasms. ⁷

The players were craftsmen, doing a job and the product they manufactured sold well to an audience that was mostly interested in enjoyment rather than medication. That is not to dismiss the importance of artistic commentary, merely to question its relevance here.

Underlying the project was a curiosity as to what kind of men these were. The energy and combativeness of their correspondence and the independence - on occasions irresponsibility - of their actions indicate that though their origins were many, as a body they were tradesmen who were disinclined to 'know their place' and, as the Drury Lane band wrote in 1821, were not inclined to exhibit 'snivelling thankfulness'.⁸ That is important, because it indicates a degree of security and independence that separated them from the solo performers who sought to make themselves acceptable in polite society.

The question whether it was a rational decision to pursue music professionally is interesting because it challenges received wisdom surrounding the subject. To return to Rohr one last time, she has repeatedly been shown to be wrong about the economic position of orchestral musicians and their prospects. From the perspective of the class from which most of them

⁷ *The Atlas* 31 October 1840 p. 12

⁸ See above, p. 73

came, a man who could escape poverty or a more arduous skilled trade while earning the same or better money by playing music could, aside from any aesthetic considerations, be shown to be working in his own material interests.

A great many sources have been consulted in the making of this study. How revealing any documentation manages to be is a function of perspective and as I said in the introduction, the viewpoint here has been that of a player who for four decades did essentially the same job as these men. It is a perspective that understands the limitations of a purely utilitarian view of professional music. If we assume that economic imperatives were the main driving force in musicians' activities, we might draw some reassuringly linear conclusions, but they will not be very accurate. Personal fancy is more 'round the corner and out of earshot' than many other factors but that does not make it a side issue; a certain vagrancy of mind is common among performers, and the financial independence of John Smithies⁹ may as easily have stemmed from an abiding outside interest as from anxiety about money. Such things have their parallels today: Arthur Faulkner, one of the finer English viola makers, was a member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra; in the London Symphony Orchestra in the 1980s, musicians who were earning large sums from playing their instruments whiled away long flights developing computer software, dealt in fine wines and instruments during session breaks and one trombone player became a millionaire by building not a better mousetrap but a superior mouthpiece. Playing principal at the Royal Opera House is slightly less well paid than deputising for a performance of a West End musical. Deciding which to do is not a matter purely of economics; many will prefer *Zauberflöte* to *The Lion King* - but some will not. Many dislike the clinical nature of session work despite the high rates it pays, and avoid it unless money is tight. Orchestral playing is and was an untidy occupation to pursue;

⁹ See above, p. 19

Anthony Bourdain's modern description of restaurant cooks could, with small modifications, easily be applied to many orchestral players:

...a dysfunctional, mercenary lot, fringe-dwellers motivated by money, the peculiar lifestyle of cooking and a grim pride...¹⁰

This research has suggested a number of avenues for future study. An important one is the relationship with France. Paris expanded almost as rapidly as London, Ehrlich's 'discipline of the clock'¹¹ applied as much to middle and lower class Parisians as to their counterparts across the Channel and the activities of Musard and his imitators created a large local market for freelance musicians. It is certain that French players made little impact at the top of the orchestral profession in London. That is no surprise, since a French player whose skills gave him a choice would have been more likely to prefer the better organised and more stable continental model of employment. At lower levels, the picture may have been different despite the less appealing living conditions that London afforded. As we have seen, thanks to improved communications, by the 1850s French players were coming to London, at least for casual engagements¹² and their later relationship with British performers merits examination in detail.

Two important questions have had to be omitted from the text altogether. One is the extent to which the Georgian and early Victorian professions may be seen as direct ancestors of the one in modern times. It was a surprise to encounter no nineteenth-century equivalents of modern orchestral players' slang. Most of those terms are too robust to quote here, but one will suffice for comparison. In the present day, film and media sessions are confirmed close to the date of recording because they are one of the last elements in the production process to

¹⁰ Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) p. 55

¹¹ See Ehrlich, *Music Profession* p. 66

¹² See above, p. 147

be tackled. If a contractor asks a player to pencil a week of film sessions into his diary, it is common practice for that musician to 'stack' - double book - confirmed but less lucrative engagements as insurance against non-confirmation of the film. If the media work is confirmed, he accepts as an occupational hazard the recriminations that will follow when he offloads the 'stacked' engagements. When in 1821 Christophe Gottfried Kieswetter waited until the last moment before asking the Philharmonic Society for leave of absence to play in Liverpool,¹³ he may not have had a name for the tactic, but he was for all practical purposes 'stacking'. There are other parallels. Hollywood soundtracks have long been recorded in London. This is partly for economic reasons; session rates in London are considerably lower than in Los Angeles, where the musicians are better unionised. But film work rarely crosses the Channel to Europe, where musicians on salaries might reasonably be expected to negotiate lower rates - not unlike mechanics in non-musical trades taking on theatre work. The reason for this surely lies in the speed with which recordings can be done in London; most lay people would be surprised to learn how much of the movie soundtrack they enjoy was being sight-read as it was recorded, and such economically efficient processes are alien to the heirs of the Darmstadt band with its month of rehearsals for the *Eroica*.¹⁴ Did the need to assemble the repertoire for a week-long provincial festival in a single morning provide the grounding for the Abbey Road sessions for the soundtrack to *Star Wars*? The idea is not fanciful, but it would be unwise to take the many similarities as proof that a causal link exists. There were, after all, two geopolitical cataclysms in the 20th century, there was also the advent of cinema, of recording, its evolution into stereo, then into digital reproduction and finally into streaming. All have had a dramatic effect on the way Britain's orchestral culture

¹³ See above, p. 192

¹⁴ See above, p. 25

operates; a comprehensive tracing of the profession's mores as far as the present day would be revealing.

The second, most interesting and most speculative unanswered question concerns historical performance. How did they play? We will never know exactly; we have little to go on beyond what critics wrote, and it would be unrealistic to assume they were either well informed or unbiased. We can, however, make educated guesses and the discussion of training given in chapters 6 - 8 provides a basis for such speculations. Not every army bandmaster was a Charles Godfrey: some of the playing must have been very poor but while an indifferent player might have harmed a performance, he might as easily have risen in the company of musicians who, in a less porous profession, he would never have encountered. It is not likely that orchestras would have kept their audiences if the performances they gave were all bad, and it is worth noting that the standard of ensemble on early recordings of music hall artists is extraordinarily high. We cannot be certain that these were original music hall bands, but the discipline with which those players accommodate the lyrical freedom of Gus Elen or Marie Lloyd is remarkable. Did these men learn their trade from players of earlier generations who accompanied 'flytings' in the 1850s?¹⁵ Or from men who played at the opera? Of one thing we can be sure: by 1861 the London orchestral profession had a considerable hybrid vigour, and we cannot assume that the the month-long rehearsals for the Darmstadt *Eroica* automatically produced a better performance than one assembled quickly in London: there are many ways to kill a performance but few are as lethal as over-rehearsal.

There are now orchestras who use 19th century instruments to give what they hope are authentic performances of the great classics, but so far nobody has attempted to recreate a proper mid-nineteenth century London orchestra using the processes that operated within it or

¹⁵ See above, p. 300

considering the psychology of the players. It would be a difficult thing to achieve given the risk-averse approach to playing that has gained sway in recent years, though the results would be interesting. In order to achieve a truly authentic performing style one should exclude all the best players from the rehearsals and only bring them into the orchestra for the concert. Costa and Jullien were, after all, exceptions to the rule.

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