

**Fortieth Annual Conference On Music In Eighteenth-Century Britain**

**Friday 29 November 2024**

10am Registration and refreshments

10:30am Colin Coleman (London) — New members, please: onboarding the early subscribers to the Society of Musicians

11am Philip Winterbottom and Diane Clements (London) — Jacob Kirkman (1710-1792): a financier in Georgian England

11.45am Andrew Jones (Cambridge) — Elizabeth Legh: an anecdote, a ‘cantata’, and a hypothesis

12:40pm Performance (Picture Gallery)

1-2pm Lunch and viewing of *Elizabeth Legh: Lover of Musick & All Ingenious Things*

2pm Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson (Brentwood, Essex) — Johann Christoph Pepusch and Richard Leveridge

2:30pm Matthias Range (Oxford) — Handel’s ‘Liberty Oratorio’?

3pm Thomas McGeary (Champaign, IL) — Music, sensibility, and the man of feeling: a subversive music aesthetic

3:30-4pm Refreshments

4pm Martin Perkins (Birmingham) — Sir Samuel Hellier’s Band of Music

4:30pm Rachel Cowgill (York) — Musical parties public and private: observing music in the journal of Miss Jane Ewbank of York, 1803–1805

**5pm** Conference ends

**Colin Coleman (London) — New members, please: onboarding the early subscribers to the Society of Musicians**In the course of adding some unique documents in the Royal Society of Musicians’ archive to ESTC (English Short Title Catalogue) two other similar lists of subscribers, which otherwise appear to have been unnoticed, have come to light. These two lists of the subscribers to the ‘Fund for Decay’d Musicians’ date from 1738 and 1740, and are a change to the earliest known document relating to the RSM.

The documents identify the names of the professional musicians associated with the

RSM at the outset, and reveal date periods of activities of some individuals. They also highlight the early honorary subscribers, giving a sense of the social structure of the Society’s following, and identifying a growing number of female subscribers at this period of the 1740s.

**Philip Winterbottom and Diane Clements (London) — Jacob Kirkman (1710-1792): a financier in Georgian England**

Over the last few decades there has been increasing interest in the intersection of the musical and financial spheres in eighteenth century Britain. This paper contributes to, and expands on, this stream of scholarship by considering in detail some of the ways in which the harpsichord maker Jacob Kirkman diversified into the world of finance.

For very few participants in the musical life of eighteenth-century Britain are there surviving personal or business records by which their earnings or wealth can be charted. Kirkman was no exception. Although the fruits of his labour survive in, and the success of his enterprise is evidenced by, the multitude of his instruments still extant today, there are no records by which the rewards of his work can be quantified in detail. It is clear from Kirkman’s will that he died a wealthy man, and that at the time of his death he had investments in property and in public and private debt. This collaborative paper uses recent research undertaken in public and private institutional archives to demonstrate that, during his final twenty years, Kirkman was a significant financier in late Georgian London.

By considering the nature of Kirkman’s involvement in lending, investment and money management, this paper shows how his personal financial activity combined customary, person-centred approaches with the use of newer tools including the banking system, insurance and investment in public debt. It also takes into account how Kirkman managed credit and portfolio risk and how his strategy changed over time as his personal circumstances altered, as economic conditions changed, and as his resources allowed.

**Andrew Jones (Cambridge) — Elizabeth Legh: an anecdote, a ‘cantata’, and a hypothesis**

The hypothesis that I present at the end of this paper is derived from my study of a glaring error in a heading found in two important manuscript sources of Handel’s music: one in Cambridge and one in Oxford, of which the former has been described briefly by Winton Dean, and the latter at greater length by Donald Burrows. The two copyists were both reliable in their transcriptions, so how did they make this mistake? The explanation takes us back to the sources of the music, and to significant changes that were made – but by whom and why? It also throws new light on Handel’s biography. A performance of the music (almost certainly a world première) follows the talk. The crucial figure in my research is Elizabeth Legh (1694-1734), to whom Katharine Hogg and Colin Coleman have devoted an excellent display on the second floor of the Foundling Museum.

**Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson (Brentwood, Essex) — Johann Christoph Pepusch and Richard Leveridge**

The composer Johann Christoph Pepusch and the bass singer Richard Leveridge were almost exact contemporaries and both were hard working musicians in London for many years from the late 1690s. On the surface their careers were very different, for Leveridge was a popular stage singer and song composer while Pepusch was a scholarly composer, teacher and music theorist. At first, therefore, it seems surprising that in 1752, near the end of Pepusch’s life or shortly after his death, Leveridge wrote the words of two acrostics on Pepusch’s name in praise of the composer. This paper sets out to trace the connections between the two musicians from the opera arias that Pepusch arranged or composed for Leveridge to their full-scale collaboration on the St Cecilia Ode staged at Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre in 1723, with Leveridge as librettist and soloist and Pepusch as composer. For periods amounting to over twenty years they worked for the same theatre company, with Pepusch leading the band that accompanied Leveridge’s singing. During the two years when they were in competing theatre companies, Leveridge’s comic libretto for his afterpiece Pyramus and Thisbe gently mocked Pepusch’s tragic masques at the other house. From about 1732 their paths would seem to be completely separate, yet Leveridge’s laudatory acrostics suggest they had kept in touch.

**Matthias Range (Oxford) — Handel’s ‘Liberty Oratorio’?**

Handel’s Occasional Oratorio (HWV 62) was clearly written in response to the 1745/46 Jacobite rising and has been interpreted as Handel showing his support for the Hanoverian regime. However, the oratorio was written – and performed – while the outcome of the rebellion was not yet certain. A fresh look suggests that several passages in the oratorio are in fact rather ambiguous and could be understood favourably by those sympathetic to the Jacobite cause.

While it is plausible that Handel did not have any actual political intent, but simply wanted to be attractive to all quarters (with their paying audience), this paper also highlights another aspect. One of the oratorio’s remarkable features is its reference to ‘liberty’,

expressed most strikingly in the opening aria of Act II, which Handel himself seems to have moved here from his next oratorio, Judas Maccabaeus. Furthermore, ‘liberty’ is again celebrated in conjunction with religion and law in a fiery aria against tyranny towards the end of the work.

Much literature has emphasized that in eighteenth-century Britain ‘liberty’ was one of the most prominent and celebrated virtues. Considering any possible ambiguity in the remainder of the oratorio text – perhaps even emphasizing it – it appears that liberty for Handel stood above the divide into Jacobites and Hanoverians. He celebrated it not in the grand, bombastic and yet ambiguous choruses, but more hidden in an introvert aria in the middle of the oratorio. Obscured by the clamour of war-like exultations, ‘liberty’ humbly shines through as one of the oratorio’s main themes.

**Thomas McGeary (Champaign, IL) — Music, sensibility, and the man of feeling: a subversive music aesthetic**

The mid-eighteenth century in Britain is often termed (mostly in literary studies) the Age of Sensibility. Various links been sensibility (sentiment) and features of eighteenth-century music have occasionally been suggested.

But these scattered instances are not sufficiently precise, consistent, or widespread enough to identify the music (style of composition) to be associated with, or identified as a product of, the Age of Sensibility.  This essay attempts to identify such a music and its aesthetic in eighteenth-century Britain.

The emergence of the sentimental movement can be related to changes in thought about human neurophysiology and religious and moral thought of the previous century and eighteenth-century ideas about National Music and literary primitivism.

Most definitive of the Age of Sensibility are the ‘sentimental novels’ – and especially those that feature the Man of Feeling: the male character(s) who most displays the moral and emotional traits of the sentimental movement.

Not insignificantly, most of the canonic novels of the sentimental movement feature encounters with music. These encounters are consistent enough that we can construct from them the music that most appropriately represents the aesthetics of the Man of Feeling. This aesthetic (what music is valued, its features, the characteristic response to it) turns out to be subversive of the dominant musical culture of the age.

**Martin Perkins (Birmingham) — Sir Samuel Hellier’s Band of Music**

Sir Samuel Hellier, 1736–1784, was a Staffordshire landowner and barrister whose life-long passion for music resulted in the accumulation of a large collection of music, and of musical instruments. These two important collections – held at the universities of Birmingham and Edinburgh, respectively – have been the subject of some study from musicologists and organologists. However, the personal letters and papers of Sir Samuel and his circle, which are still in private ownership, have received little attention. These 200 hundred letters reveal the circumstances behind Sir Samuel’s musical activities which included commissioning organs for his house and the village church, organising public concerts, and forming his own orchestra comprising estate workers and tenants and villagers. This paper discusses the rise and fall of Sir Samuel’s Band of Music, revealing his efforts to procure instruments, music, and tutors for its members. It will examine the network of musicians and music traders in London and the Midlands which he relied on, financial constraints, and the motives behind his cultural and philanthropic aims.

**Rachel Cowgill (York) — Musical parties public and private: observing music in the journal of Miss Jane Ewbank of York, 1803–1805**The 34,000-word journal kept between 1803 and 1805 by Miss Jane Ewbank (1778–1824) is an extraordinarily rich and multi-faceted account of elite society in late Georgian York. The Ewbanks were wealthy druggists and bankers with a handsome property and warehouse on fashionable Castlegate, and Jane was well provided for at her father's death in 1795. Her engagement with music – one of the many themes running through this remarkable document – proves to be entirely in keeping with eighteenth-century ideas about women’s ‘accomplishments’, polite social relations and sensibility. Although we look in vain for excitement over the publication of new work by favoured composers, or the trials and tribulations of getting new repertoire under her fingers, it is clear she was a competent pianist and acquaintances were keen to involve her in private music-making.

Where Jane is most revealing, as this paper shows, is as a proficient observer of others' performances, from the domestic settings of the drawing-room music party to the public arena of the Assembly Room subscription concerts. Her journal has much to tell us about the variety of spaces and milieux in which musical entertainment could be found in late eighteenth-century York, and their connectedness within the broader circuits and entrepreneurial activities of musicians across the north, including the oboist John Erskine (1753–1847) and violinist John White (1779–1831). Ewbank’s journal, housed in the National Library of Scotland, is currently the focus of an interdisciplinary project led by Jane Rendall, Rachel Feldberg and Matthew Eddy – this paper is based on my contribution.