



CONFERENCE REPORTS

Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2018
doi:10.1017/S1478570617000604

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES
MINNEAPOLIS, 30 MARCH–1 APRIL 2017

The forty-eighth annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (ASECS) was held in the vast Hyatt Regency in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota, on the last weekend in March. Thankfully, outdoor temperatures were above normal, so a stroll up Nicollet Mall provided a welcome break from what otherwise would have been an overwhelming barrage of intellection. Paper presenters, roundtable participants, posters, plenary speakers and performing artists numbered over 750. There were fifteen parallel sessions during each time block, and those blocks began at 8 a. m. and ran to 5.30–6 p. m. Music-related papers and other occasions at the conference numbered twelve, or 1.6 per cent of the whole. How sobering it is to realize the distance music lies from the mainstream of research on the eighteenth century. Indeed, this journal and others in music are not included in the database maintained by the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies of relevant journals. Whether that distance arises from the trepidation of non-musicians to venture into our field, or from the lack of interpretive ideas that are transferable from music to other fields, or from the physiological and cognitive differences between musical and linguistic modes of communication, I cannot say. Our team of scholars, including several not from music departments, did the best they could to wave the flag on music's behalf.

Michael Burden (University of Oxford), a member of the Committee of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and an editorial board member of the Society's journal, opened the batting with a piece both humorous and serious: 'A Bellyful of Nightingales: Singers and the Celebrity Anecdote'. Such stories, usually about female singers, were a staple of the century and deployed to various ends in their biographies. They could be flattering or insulting, triumphant or demeaning, but were always personal. Laurel Zeiss (Baylor University) offered a poster entitled 'Opening up the Rare Book Room: Using the Library's Special Collections to Explore Eighteenth-Century Music Life'. She summarized an assignment for undergraduates in which they were to examine late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century materials, as well as the William Crotch sonatas website (blogs.baylor.edu/william-crotch-sonatas/), to create a digital or physical exhibit, a poster presentation or a lecture-recital. Jesse Molesworth (Indiana University) provided an answer to one of the issues mentioned above: what can literary scholars learn from musicologists? He did so by analysing the representation of time in two landmark works: James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) and Joseph Haydn's *The Seasons* (1801), the libretto of which derived from the poem. He contrasted the older, cyclical view of time of the poem with the newer, progressive model of the oratorio.

In a session on 'Rococo Queens' Christina Lindeman (University of South Alabama) had her paper about 'Composing the Rococo: Representation of Musical Princesses in Eighteenth-Century Germany' read by a colleague owing to illness. Author of a book on Anna Amalie, a sister of Frederick the Great, Lindeman concentrated on another sister, Wilhelmine, who married Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth. Together, Wilhelmine and Frederick were responsible for the construction of an opera house which, a century later, attracted Richard Wagner to Bayreuth. Lindeman drew attention to the problems posed by relying on visual representations and the sexual stereotyping thereof, noting that women were traditionally portrayed at a harpsichord even when they were more proficient as, say, a lutenist, which was the case with Wilhelmine. Peter Kairoff (Wake Forest University) provided a welcome lecture-recital on J. S. Bach's Goldberg Variations. After presenting an outline of the harmonic and formal structures, and describing canon for those in the audience unfamiliar with musical terminology and compositional technique, he played several of the variations complete on the piano.



The first session devoted entirely to music, 'British Music in the Domestic Sphere', featured Jane Girdham (Saginaw Valley State University), me (David Hunter, University of Texas at Austin) and Linda Zionkowski and Miriam Hart (both Ohio University). Girdham's 'Music for Young Ladies' focused on the place of music in girls' education and domestic lives. Drawing on diaries, she showed the range of girls' musical experiences, from being a student of Ignaz Pleyel to another who doubted the propriety of learning music. In 'Musical Uses of the Profits of Slavery: The Beckfords in England and Italy' I opened up a subject not previously addressed by musicologists: how various members of the extended family of Jamaican plantation owners used their vast wealth to build organs (William Sr), hire musicians (William Jr), literally purchase Muzio Clementi (aged 14) from his father in Rome (Peter) and meet with the Mozarts in London and Italy (William of Somerly). Zionkowski and Hart contrasted the use made by Jane Austen of music in her novels with her personal engagement with the art. They pointed to the importance of music to individuals and in the households where it was encouraged, including Austen's, arguing that the endless repetition required for music was akin to the detailed textual revisions of her novels.

The second session on music, 'Rethinking Difference in Eighteenth-Century Music', turned out to be focused on French repertory. Henry Stoll (Harvard University) spoke on 'Peau blanche, masques noir: Musical Theatre, Rousseau and Blackface in Colonial Haiti'. Drawing not only on Jean-Jacques Rousseau but also Franz Fanon, Stoll ably situated the *Jeannot et Thérèse* of Clément (1758) as a parody or 'Negro translation' of Rousseau's *Le Devin du village* (1752), asking how might we approach this proto-blackface theatre piece put on for the delectation of white planters and slave owners. Scott M. Sanders (Dartmouth College) analysed the colonial context, as expressed in the 1771 opéra comique *Zémire et Azor* by André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry and Jean-François Marmontel, in terms of the musical marvellous. He pointed to a meteorological power depicted through bass tremolos and scalar motion, to an amorous power represented through orchestral colour and to a transformative marvellous associated with a shift to triplet rhythms combined with bass tremolos. In 'Rousseau's Singing Savage, Diderot's Human Harpsichord: Listening for (Non)human Agency in the French Enlightenment' Deidre Loughridge (Northeastern University) contrasted the narrowness of Rousseau's view of women and the 'noble savage' with the more accepting views of Denis Diderot, whose daughter had music lessons that helped him construct materialist theories of sentience and intelligence.

Lastly, Joe Lockwood (University of Oxford) explored the topic of 'Loyalism, Patriotism and Performances of Handel's Music in North America, 1770–1787', demonstrating the loyalist affiliation of the performances of Handel oratorios and coronation anthems. His three examples, from New York and Boston, drew on the interpretations of Ruth Smith to show how the performances rejected some of the meanings that Handel's works elicited in their original contexts.

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Eighteenth-Century Music © Cambridge University Press, 2018
 doi:10.1017/S1478570617000616

AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY FESTIVAL
 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, 6–9 APRIL 2017

The American Handel Society holds a festival and international conference every other year, and this was the third to be hosted by Princeton University. As 2017 marked the two hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the first performance of *Messiah*, it was no surprise to find that Handel's most famous oratorio featured prominently in the festival. It was in fact the theme of the opening Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture.