

REVIEWS



BOOKS

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THE ADVANCEMENT OF MUSIC IN ENLIGHTENMENT ENGLAND: BENJAMIN COOKE AND THE ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC

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The Academy of Ancient Music was formed in 1726 and operated for nearly eight decades until its final collapse in 1802. Its aims and activities were extraordinary in a number of ways. One of its primary activities was the performance of ‘ancient’ music, an innovative and radical programme in a milieu in which musical novelty was highly valued. Originally formed as the Academy of Vocal Music, this group, which mixed amateur enthusiasts with professional musicians, soon settled on the title of the Academy of Ancient Music, ‘Ancient’ eventually being defined as music of the sixteenth century or earlier. But the society was not solely an antiquarian endeavour. The music its members valued and performed was chosen because it exemplified ‘the true, ancient, art, depending on nature and mathematical principles’ (16). These are the words – as his pupil John Wesley recorded them in his *Journal* on 13 June 1748 (ed. Nehemiah Curnock, eight volumes (London, 1909–1916), volume 3, 355–356) – of one of the Academy’s founder members, Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), who emerges as the prime mover of the organization.

The range of Pepusch’s activities informed every aspect of the society: he became the leader of the Academy’s performances, he composed music which the Academy performed, he developed theoretical and aesthetic ideals that guided the Academy’s intellectual agenda and he taught a generation of musicians who were deeply influenced by and perpetuated his ideas. Pepusch’s musical and intellectual heir was his pupil Benjamin Cooke (1734–1793), who succeeded him as director of performing activities in the Academy, and who pursued the theoretical grounds suggested by his master’s thought. Cooke was a composer too, and in his composition put his theoretical concerns into practice. Thus he combined a concern for grounding musical language in mathematical principles – a quality perceived in the best compositions of the past – with a desire to shape the contemporary understanding of music as a rational art form worthy of serious study and consideration.

Cooke is today little known and has attracted limited scholarly attention. This book shines valuable light on his career and his music, showing him to be a figure of significant interest particularly because of the range of his musical endeavours. Cooke came into the ambit of the Academy as a boy, and received musical tuition from Pepusch. Many of his student exercises are preserved in GB-Lcm 823; they show the emphasis Pepusch placed on contrapuntal procedures and on canon. Cooke was an apt performer and scholar. By the age of twelve he was deputy to John Robinson, organist of Westminster Abbey, and in 1749 was appointed librarian to the Academy. In the period after Pepusch’s death, he became its conductor and later succeeded Robinson as organist at the Abbey. Like Pepusch before him, Cooke became the prime mover of the Academy, directing its performances, training the boys of its musical seminary, writing music for it and maintaining its library.

Eggington’s method of looking at the Academy through the figure of a professional musician is worthy of note. Much of the received history of the Academy in Cooke’s lifetime has drawn upon the writings of his friend and fellow academician Sir John Hawkins. But Hawkins was a gentleman-scholar rather than



a trained musician; his opinions on the society and its aims, especially as they are realized in his *General History of Music* (1776), tend to throw emphasis on music of the past. In fact, extant programmes for the period of Cooke's leadership show that the Academy strongly favoured music of the eighteenth century in its performances. While the music of Handel was heard more often than that of any other composer, the music of David Perez (1711–1778), William Jackson of Exeter (1730–1803) and Cooke himself was performed regularly.

A thorough understanding of the Academy's theoretical underpinnings has been hampered in the past by reliance on Hawkins's writings. Since he was not a practical musician or composer, he struggled to articulate clearly in musical terms the theoretical precepts that underpinned the academicians' aesthetic position. Eggington offers a corrective in the form of Cooke's *Musical Conjectures* (1769), his treatise on speculative music theory, which, despite his intentions, was never published. What remains is a draft manuscript (GB-Ob Tenbury MS 1344) chaotically overlaid with notes, and intimidating enough in appearance to have dissuaded previous scholars from examining it in detail. Eggington navigates the reader carefully through the detailed tract, focusing attention on those aspects of Cooke's writings that lay at the centre of the Academy's intellectual philosophy. Eggington notes that 'the aim and motivation underlying *Musical Conjectures* [are] in some ways more important than its contents' (140), a necessary caveat given the fact that many of Cooke's theories lack scientific justification. In short, Cooke wished to defend the use of the 'Common Scale', an unequal temperament allowing modulation through all of the keys, with the most perfect intervals situated in those with the fewest sharps or flats. He sought to demonstrate the basis of the scale in both nature and Greek theory as a means to assert a timeless conception of harmony existing in mathematical principles. Likewise, he attempted to demonstrate through harmonics that the triad was the natural basis of the musical scale and of musical language. His desire to find universal principles even led him to adapt Newton's (spurious) speculations linking optics with acoustics in order to explain fugal inversion and transposition.

Eggington reveals two primary motivations behind Cooke's theoretical musings. The first is a desire to rationalize his 'predilection for certain kinds of harmonic strategies' (165). Whatever the limitations of his theories in terms of their scientific respectability, Cooke located the importance of the Common Scale in the distinction it gave to different keys. Expressive potential could be generated through modulations that contrasted more and less 'perfect' keys and by exploiting the melodic and harmonic qualities of the intervals in each key. Cooke identified passages in the music of certain 'Masters', especially Handel, which he saw as exemplifying the expressive potentials of the scale; he also exploited these characteristics in his own compositions. One of the strengths of Eggington's method is the way in which he analyses passages of music to demonstrate Cooke's theoretical ideas in practice. Cooke himself identified his unfinished *Anthem for the Lying-in Charity* as an example of the 'advantage gained [sic] by maintaining the common Scale of the organ'. In a five-part polyphonic setting of the text 'I will greatly multiply thy sorrows in thy conception' Eggington elucidates Cooke's methods of 'circular' modulation, and shows how the composer's sense of the 'nervous and robust, (almost fierce)' wide fifth between $A\flat$ and $E\flat$ found in the Common Scale is exploited at the climax of the passage. Beyond its practical applications, Cooke's interest in theory epitomized his belief that music was built on universal mathematical principles; Eggington sees this as a proto-romantic ideal, anticipating the shift from the view of music as an imitative art to one that is abstract and autonomous. If Cooke's theorizing was in part an attempt to find a practical method to compose music that met the universal principles that Hawkins identified in the work of past masters, it also had a moral and metaphysical component in his desire 'that good Music and true Harmony may long continue to improve & flourish in these Kingdoms to the promotion of Religion & Virtue and the exclusion of Idleness and Vice' (135).

Eggington devotes two chapters to Cooke's music, for which he is a strong advocate. The first explores Cooke's canons, part-songs and orchestral anthems. As a pupil of Pepusch, Cooke was required to realize canons, a genre for which he developed a continuing fascination. His interest met both convivial and scholarly aims. Cooke won the Catch Club prize of 1775 for his *Canon by twofold Augmentation*, and he realized sixteenth-century canons presented in geometric forms for Hawkins's *General History*. He subsequently



made one of his own 'In Imitation of the old Method', a four-in-two canon presented in a square in which each part works *recte* and *retro* (that is, in prime and retrograde forms). Eggington sees in Cooke's glees skilled experiments in using signifiers of renaissance style within a modern tonal idiom. As a composer, he appears to his best advantage in his large-scale orchestral anthems. Three works are used to locate the distinctiveness of Cooke's compositional voice in a stylistic diversity that mixes renaissance and baroque compositional strategies with new galant idioms. Well illustrated with musical examples, these chapters advance a convincing case for modern revival of this almost wholly unknown repertoire. A fine alto solo in 'Call to remembrance' (1764) exemplifies a forward-looking approach to tonality, which exploits the expressive properties of the Common Scale. 'I heard a great voice' (1764), performed 'repeatedly' at the Academy, evokes the religious sublime through short, dramatic passages rather than longer closed movements. The unusual scoring of 'The Lord in his wrath' (1765), which combines pairs of clarinets, horns and bassoons with chorus, vocal soloists and strings, is an aspect of the influence of contemporary trends in instrumental music, which Eggington also detects in Cooke's use of gradual rhythmic transformations rather than abrupt shifts between contrasting figures. Eggington sees the distinctive aspects of Cooke's voice as both exemplifying and adding nuance to the interests of the Academy. Though his music is clearly rooted in older practices, he was not engaged in composing in an archaic style, but rather in integrating "'ancient" gestures within a predominantly modern musical discourse' (203), a practice Eggington compares with Haydn's approach in *The Creation*.

In Eggington's view, two large-scale projects by Cooke, the adaptation of Johann Ernst Galliard's *The Morning Hymn* and the newly composed setting of William Collins's 'The Passions, an Ode for Music', 'encapsulate the distinctive aims of the Academy, both musical and philosophical' (205). Galliard (c1686/1687–1747), a founding member of the Academy, set Milton's hymn for Adam and Eve from book five of *Paradise Lost* as a chamber cantata for two voices and continuo, publishing it in 1728. Cook adapted the work between 1769 and 1772, for the most part preserving Galliard's polyphonic writing, harmonic language and musical structure, while concentrating his own creative additions upon the orchestration and texture. Cooke's choices reveal those aspects of the work that for him – and by implication the Academy – represented enduring principles of music, and those that could be further emphasized through bringing orchestral colour to bear, and intensifying the impact of contrapuntal passages (by, for instance, reallocating and expanding them for a four-part chorus). Eggington contrasts Cooke's approach with that of Boyce in altering Purcell's *Te Deum*; Cooke wished to 'enhance', Boyce to 'improve'.

Work on the *Morning Hymn* proved to be a spur to Cooke's ambition, which he realized in his setting of Collins's ode, the largest project he undertook. The work is richly scored: in addition to strings Cooke included pairs of flutes, oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, a harp, lute, timpani, carillon, organ/celestino, harpsichord/lyrichord and Greek instruments (tibiae pares, trigonale and cymbalum), used to evoke the sound world of ancient Greece. Cooke's method of employing diverse styles is at its most pronounced in this work. Such diversity is a sign not only of his interest in and knowledge of older styles, but also of the potential of musical association: several references to the music of Handel, for example to *Messiah*, are calculated to intensify the expressive power of a given musical passage. Despite the fact that the setting of Collins's 'Ode' offers perhaps the best example of the way in which Cooke's music embodied the ideals of the Academy, it also exhibits an eccentricity that 'may be difficult to appreciate' (248) for the modern-day listener. Though Eggington does not make the point explicitly, the reader is left with the impression that Cooke's method of stringing together short, contrasting musical units suffers when stretched upon the larger frame of a work nearly an hour in length.

One tension that arises in the book is that between exploring Cooke and his music on the one hand, and on the other directing that exploration toward the explication of the philosophical and musical interests of the Academy. Occasionally the former loses out: though Eggington finds much to praise in Cooke's music, he does not explore why it has fallen into such deep obscurity today. Even by the first half of the nineteenth century, esteem for his compositional ability had fallen sharply, as an anonymous assessment in *The Harmonicon* attests: 'he is always elegant, seldom deeply impressive, and rarely evincing a genius



that could soar beyond the bounds of education' (*The Harmonicon* 44 (September 1831), 207–208). One might also have hoped to learn more about other compositions written for the Academy, especially by Cooke's English contemporaries, in order to understand their relation both to Academy ideals and to Cooke's own musical achievements. The appendices of the book include two particularly useful research tools: a brief description and catalogue of Cooke's manuscripts, a collection of twenty-seven volumes held in the Royal College of Music, and a detailed list of Cooke's compositions and writings. The manuscript collection includes the majority of Cooke's compositions, but also reveals the great range of his musical interests and, by implication, those of the Academy. This is a book that will interest many readers thanks to the variety of topics with which it engages. Some will value the musical and biographical portrait of an overlooked figure, others the thorough exploration of the activities and priorities of the Academy of Ancient Music – especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. The greatest strength of the book, however, is the way in which these two investigations interact and shed light upon one another to offer a fascinating portrait of a significant movement in the musical and intellectual world of eighteenth-century England.

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ANTÓNIO JORGE MARQUES

A OBRA RELIGIOSA DE MARCOS ANTÓNIO PORTUGAL (1762–1830): CATÁLOGO TEMÁTICO, CRÍTICA DE FONTES E DE TEXTO, PROPOSTA DE CRONOLOGIA

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In late June 1809, as war raged in the Iberian Peninsula, Marcos Portugal wrote an eloquent self-portrait describing his career and output. It took the form of a list of compositions. The autograph vanished around the late nineteenth century, but not before its contents were transcribed and published ('Marcos e José Mauricio. Catalogo de suas composições musicaes', *Revista Trimensal do Instituto Historico Geographico e Ethnographico do Brasil* 22 (1859), 487–506). The document lists the works he composed 'since HRH the Prince Regent decided to employ him in his Royal Service, specifying compositions for the Church, both with instruments and *a cappella*, and theatre music both in Lisbon and Italy, where the said composer went twice with explicit licence' from the king (488; my translation). Although the list reflects the composer's retrospective look at his work shortly before joining the royal family in Rio de Janeiro, it does not include the totality of his compositions up to that date. Moreover, Portugal continued to work on it after moving to Brazil, notating entries up to 1816. This document has subsequently informed three essential works on this Portuguese composer, the first one being the forty-page entry on Marcos Portugal in Ernesto Vieira, *Diccionario Biographico de Musicos Portuguezes* (Lisbon: Mattos Moreira & Pinheiro, 1900, volume 2, 191–230), which also contains a transcription of the list. In 1910, Manoel Carvalhaes published *Marcos Portugal na sua Música Dramática* (Lisbon: Castro Irmão; a supplement was published in 1916), a study of his theatrical music that remains unmatched. This was the area that brought international, albeit short-lived, recognition to Marcos Portugal. This book also consolidated the perception that he was above all an opera composer, reflected in virtually all dictionary entries and reference articles on the musician produced in the past century. Carvalhaes's book was followed by a handful of essays of diverse length and quality, but it took a hundred years for another landmark publication to appear, now addressing systematically the composer's sacred