This chapter is part of:

Music and the Arts in England, c. 1670–1750

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Published by *musiconn.publish*, Dresden 2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25366/2020.112>

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How to Deal with Music and the Arts in England, c. 1670–1750?

Some Introductory Remarks

It comes as no surprise to say that music and the arts in England from 1670 to 1750 is a very broad topic. ‘The arts’ comprise many more than the two most eminent ‘sister arts’ alongside music – poetry and painting. ‘Art’ in this publication refers to any artefact displayed or performed in order to divert or in other way please a consumer / recipient in the broadest sense. Based on this definition, there are many further arts which overlap with music in practice such as dance, gardening, architecture, sculpture and fashion. It is the aim of this publication to focus on some such interrelations and reciprocity in England, c. 1670–1750.

As Lawrence Lipking pointed out in his eminent 1970 monograph on *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England*, it is demanding enough to explain lines of development in ‘single’ arts in the eighteenth century.¹ Since then, a great deal of further valuable research has been done within the various scholarly disciplines involved – musicology, literary studies, art history, dance history, philosophy, cultural, political and social history to name only the most prominent. Such study enriches our understanding of innumerable topics in the field but it rarely considers all the neighbouring arts in equal measure. The question how to interrelate our knowledge of all the arts therefore is a valid one. Based on a highly sophisticated abundance of information on different cultural phenomena – with some topics inevitably being covered in greater detail than others – the cultural life of England

1 Lawrence Lipking, *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England*, Princeton 1970.

from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century still conveys an impression of overwhelming complexity or even perplexity, at least initially. However, on closer inspection, the basic reason for this appears to originate – at least partly – from the lack of any major institutionalised authority for artistic orientation during the time period in question; a situation that, in turn, was *shared* by all the arts.

Following up on this perspective, this publication's aim – of addressing music and the arts' interrelations and reciprocity – stems from some basic preconditions shared by all the arts which accordingly, raise questions on how these same preconditions were addressed by the different artists, intermediaries and consumers and, more importantly in this context, how these preconditions influenced their interactions. The arts' common ground implied here can be divided briefly into three, closely connected factors as follows:

Firstly, alternative sources of income had to be found and secured beyond court. The civil wars and Protectorate had disrupted earlier structures of cultural life with court as its centre – a situation unique in Europe at the time. Even though the monarchy was restored in 1660, further disruptions to the Court's governmental and financial stability not only influenced the building and constant re-building of an English public, further challenged by the Act of Union in 1707.² These disruptions also changed artists' possibilities for income. Artistic endeavours, hitherto a well-known component of refined entertainment as well as political representation but also dependent on financially liquid employers, had to adapt. While the court thus lost considerable – but not its entire – influence on advancing the arts, some continuing mechanisms of patronage were supplemented with a growing number of commercial offerings.³ Most of these artistic novelties from the Restoration to 1750 were short-lived and can largely be regarded as experiments, including those whose success emerged only later on. To name three examples: (1) Richard Steele's and Joseph Addison's magazine *The Spectator*

2 Some examples of these disruptions are the Glorious Revolution, political opposition between Whigs and Tories and religious disputes newly fuelled by the royal succession from the Stuart to the Georgian monarchy as well as England's numerous wars on the continent. Cf. Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, London 1992; Jeremy Black, *Convergence or Divergence? Britain and the Continent*, Basingstoke 1994, pp. 100–158; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State*, London et al. 1989.

3 Cf. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination. English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1997, pp. 3–55.

“only” ran from 1711–1712 with a short revival in 1714 (in contrast for instance, with Edward Cave’s *Gentleman’s Magazine* 1731–1754 which continued after his death until 1907). Still, *The Spectator* continued to be highly popular, was re-issued numerous times in collected volumes and remained one of England’s best-read magazines until the nineteenth century.⁴ (2) Despite being given a royal charter in 1719, Italian opera continued to provide an unstable contribution to London’s cultural life, irrespective of the struggles of several impresarios and artists. Today however, Italian opera is considered one of the most significant artforms in London during the first half of the eighteenth century.⁵ (3) After Restoration, many pleasure gardens were opened – starting with Marylebone (c. 1659) and Vauxhall (1661) –, closed and re-opened, passing through different managerial hands until those at Vauxhall and Ranelagh attained sufficient enduring success to offer a supplementary source of income for artists of all kinds.⁶

Secondly, artists had to find new ways to secure a status of artistic superiority as a central feature of professionalism. Admittedly, professionalism in the ‘modern’ sense was not established until the end of the eighteenth century,⁷ but the need to secure a respectable artistic status became increasingly urgent, fuelled as it was by the segmented, increasingly commercial cultural life that accompanied political and social developments. Again, three examples sketch an obscure situation: (1) Only some of the arts were taught at the universities and in a predominantly ‘liberal arts’ sense through lectures, not conveying practical knowledge. For instance, expertise to attain degrees in music called for substantial education outside the university, for example through an apprenticeship. (2) Only very few musicians were privileged to join the Chapel Royal and there was no comparable courtly ‘art

4 Cf., additionally with regard to its success on the continent, Fritz Rau, *Zur Verbreitung und Nachahmung des ‘Tatler’ und ‘Spectator’*, Heidelberg 1980, pp. 51–103, 151–190.

5 Cf. Lowell Lindgren, “Critiques of Opera in London, 1705–1719”, in *Il melodramma italiano in Italia e in Germania nell’età barocca. Die italienische Barockoper, ihre Verbreitung in Italien und Deutschland*, ed. Alberto Colzani, Como 1995, pp. 143–165; Elizabeth Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music. 1719–1728. The Institution and Its Directors*, New York and London 1989; Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, “The Charter for the Royal Academy of Music”, in: *Music & Letters* 67 / 1 (1986), pp. 50–58.

6 Cf. e.g. Jonathan Conlin (ed.), *The Pleasure Garden. From Vauxhall to Coney Island*, Philadelphia 2013; Michael Tilmouth, “The Beginnings of Provincial Concert Life in England”, in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England. Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, eds. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Lucket, Cambridge 1983, pp. 1–17, pp. 3–8.

7 Cf. e.g. Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century. A Social History*, Oxford 1985, pp. 3–6, 11–13, 26–29.

school' for the other arts. (3) Occupational functions traditionally held by city guilds were increasingly supplemented by clubs such as the Rose and Crown Club, the Scriblerus Club and the Academy of Vocal (later Ancient) Music.⁸ While there were certain artistic 'core areas' to many of these clubs, members often also included 'sister' artists as well as amateurs, leading to all kinds of transfer processes of knowledge on the arts and adding to other forms of education such as common readings, artistic ventures and further interactions with patrons and other employers. Furthermore, a relatively open business market for the artists not only increased national competition – it also attracted foreign artists especially from Italy, France and Germany. London in particular developed into a metropolis for potential but rarely guaranteed lucrative artistic expression. The question of how native artists adapted and how competition affected their relation to one another is a pertinent one. The most outspoken tool to influence the consumer's penchants were the different media of the printing press – Daniel Defoe's *Augusta Triumphans* (1728) is a case in point. However, the printing press offered a range of divergent possibilities to serve the interests of various arts and artists.⁹ Within this rather opaque field of professionalisation and professional self-assertion, boundaries between different arts were negotiated – in particular between their status, respectability and (by implication) questions of suitable superordinate (critical) and art-specific education in discussion, in print and within works of art.

Thirdly, the fundamental social change in England after the civil war led to greater diversity in the arts' audiences (the plural is important) and their expectations.¹⁰ Social change with regard to those who were able to afford expensive culture such as opera seems less striking – costly offerings were still largely confined to aristocracy, gentry and the few very wealthy who

8 For greater variety cf. e.g. Edward Ward, *Compleat and Humorous Account of all the Remarkable Clubs and Societies in the Cities of London and Westminster*, London 1745. For the social and political context of such clubs cf. Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580–1800. The Origins of an Associational World*, Oxford 2000.

9 Cf. Michael Gavin, *The Invention of English Criticism, 1650–1760*, Cambridge 2015; Jeremy Black, *The English Press. 1621–1861*, Thrupp et al. 2001, pp. 50–71; John Brewer and Iain McCalman, "Publishing", in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. Iain McClaman, Oxford 1999, pp. 197–206; Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change. Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 43–159.

10 Cf. Robert O. Bucholz and Joseph P. Ward, *London. A Social and Cultural History, 1550–1750*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 132–218.

would also be admitted at court.¹¹ However, there were also less expensive ways of consuming arts, for example at the theatre, at fairs, in pleasure gardens or in print. Furthermore, an increase in social mobility due to economic developments had multiple effects on arts culture, as did discussions on gender and the so-called ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres respectively.¹² As to expectations, those gained by way of education (and corresponding ideas about the arts) were increasingly supplemented by the press and the printing market which also had an impact on how continental ideas about the arts were perceived, adapted and discussed in England. Individual preferences aside, shared preconditions arise from the fact that many (influential) consumers were not only part of audiences of a single art but participated in art perception as a more general cultural practice.¹³ By way of implication, the way they experienced a specific art cannot be understood thoroughly without learning about the way they consumed other arts – and sciences. ‘Sciences’ or, more context-specific, mostly what was then called natural and moral philosophy, was not only part of the standard university curriculum but gained larger recognition through clubs (such as the Royal Society) and, again, the printing market.¹⁴ To mention a well-known example, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, wrote about the arts in a way that was deeply interwoven with his reception of scientific thought.¹⁵ In this attempt at integrating scientific and artistic thought he was not an exception, even if – again – such attempts posed different challenges with regard to the different arts. There are many further examples to bear in mind other than the well-known adaptations of some aspects of John Locke’s *Essay*

11 Cf. Studies on high-art audiences such as Robert D. Hume, “The Economics of Culture in London, 1660–1740”, in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69 / 4 (2006), pp. 487–533.

12 Cf. e.g. Anthony Pollock, *Gender and the Fictions of the Public Sphere, 1690–1755*, New York 2009; John Brewer, “This, That and the Other. Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Shifting the Boundaries. Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe, Exeter 1995, pp. 1–21; Michael Mascuch, “Social Mobility and Middling Self-Identity. The Ethos of British Autobiographers, 1600–1750”, in *Social History* 20 / 1 (1995), pp. 45–61.

13 As Lipking remarks in spite of his general plan to address painting, music and poetry as separately as can be argued historically, “Like the arts themselves, however, the ways of describing art were also interrelated. The major works of painting, music, and poetry break through their partitions of thought.” Lipking 1970, *Ordering of the Arts*, p. 14.

14 Cf. Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee. The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse*, New Haven and London 2011, pp. 89–112 (chapter “Penny Universities?”).

15 Cf. e.g. Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition. From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 11–21.

Concerning Human Understanding (1689) with interests of literary criticism in Addison's essays "On the Pleasures of the Imagination" (*Spectator*, 1712).¹⁶

In summary, these three factors constitute a disruptive but common socio-cultural ground for artists and an array of entrepreneurs and audiences. Among others, it resulted in various discussions on – and re-evaluations of – the interrelations of the arts. These discussions were most prominently monitored via the increasing printing market but also via the agency of influential patrons, diplomats, philosophers, men of letters and further artists. Therefore, the arts were not only interrelated but depended on one another to a certain degree within a diverse 'public' sphere. Considered together, these reasons – while they are not novelties per se – still call for an ever-fresh look on English 'arts culture' from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century.

There are several prominent reasons which support the idea of making music the linchpin of such scholarly attention. Music was a crucial component of England's rich and manifold cultural life which emanated mostly from London but also spread throughout the so-called 'provinces'. Of course, music was an element of both successful and unsuccessful artistic ventures and was both praised and criticised in various degrees. Yet despite the recurring attacks which music suffered at the hands of other artists, many of which might have stemmed – at least in part – from a sense of competition, many 'rival' artists still acknowledged music's popularity with the audiences. For example in 1723, the versatile writer Jonathan Swift commented to the notorious playwright and poet John Gay on music's significance – referring specifically to Italian opera in public entertainment – as follows: "As for the reigning Amusement of the town, tis entirely Musick."¹⁷ Over thirty years later, the Swiss enamellist Jean André Rouquet looked back on his three decades in England and, referring to the different attractions of the pleasure gardens, similarly concluded, "But all this is only the additional, the concert is the essential part."¹⁸ And, even more generally, albeit grudgingly:

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 37–46.

¹⁷ Letter Jonathan Swift to John Gay, 3 February 1723, in *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D. D.*, 5 vols., ed. David Woolley, Frankfurt am Main 1999–2014, vol. 2, 2001, p. 446–447.

¹⁸ Jean André Rouquet, *The Present State of the Arts in England*, Dublin 1756, p. 103. Rouquet had lived in England from 1722 to 1752.

“Thus the opportunities of diverting the time are numberless in England, and especially in London; but music forms their principal entertainment.”¹⁹

While music continued to play a diverging role at the restored court, it famously found its way to ‘public’ display by John Banister’s concert advertisements in the 1670s. However, even at that time such concerts were neither singular nor new although it took until the second half of the eighteenth century for a regular concert life to be established.²⁰ Meanwhile, from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century, music of all kinds and genres was present in many parts of everyday life and a frequent little, twin or big sister to all the arts. Its salient compatibility with different arts makes it a reasonable linchpin for diving into the reciprocity of the arts. Opera is the most obvious example, but there are numerous other instances: theatre was unthinkable without symphonies, interludes, songs and dance; printed music often had title pages depicting celestial or terrestrial music making; music was a theme in poetry, literature of all sorts as well as painting; musical instruments were designed in significant artful ways etc.

Regarded from a scholarly perspective, even music’s most individual features can serve to re-think other arts’ features through a comparative lens. Namely, music stood out in the increasingly frequent quests to compare the arts based on their mimetic qualities – music’s notorious weakness in this respect and its still unquestioned effect on the emotions rendered both critical and creative overlaps as challenging as they were indispensable. With its ephemeral nature as a time-art, music intensified or contradicted poetry without ever being explicit or palpable; it turned bodies into beautiful figures in dance without (necessarily) taking control; it was grasped and abstracted to a fixed picture in painting; its sounds were explored by instrument makers and generously spread into the air by performers while its secrets were carefully kept within professional and other distinguished circles. Music provided for variability with stunning complexity even in its simple forms – pleasing to many but never to all.

19 Ibid., p. 105.

20 The first advertisement for one of Banister’s concerts was published in the *London Gazette*, 30 December 1672. For the beginnings of English concert life cf. Robert Elkin, *The Old Concert Rooms of London*, London 1955; Catherine Harbor, *The Birth of the Music Business. Public Commercial Concerts in London 1660–1750*, 2 vols., PhD thesis Royal Holloway, University of London 2013; Michael Tilmouth, “The Beginnings of Provincial Concert Life in England”, in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England. Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, eds. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Lockett, Cambridge 1983, p. 1–17.

The act of considering music's reciprocity with other arts unquestionably requires interdisciplinary perspectives. After the so-called 'cultural turn' of the 1990s and the many further 'turns' through which, ideally, a broader perspective in the humanities could be achieved, this notion might seem like over-accentuation. However, this publication explicitly acknowledges that interdisciplinarity is in fact still challenging and at times may result in conflicting views on the 'same' subject. For example, the same interrelation between painting and music may appear quite different to an art historian and to a musicologist. Further divergences may become evident between disciplines with even greater differences in methodological approach. The risk of scholarly misunderstanding – which can never be completely excluded – is heightened in comparison with publications that do not stray outside disciplinary boundaries. However – and more importantly – the chance to extend the disciplinary perspectives is also increased if we accept the invitation to learn from other scholarly traditions' expertise – and to engage in discussion. This volume aims to inspire, stimulate and encourage further interdisciplinary research on this topic.

The ten contributions to this publication form a set of relevant case studies. They do not pretend to cover the whole breadth of reciprocity between music and the many other arts that composed England's cultural life during the time from 1670 to 1750. However, despite their inevitable selectivity, the chapters strive to address several major aspects. In this sense, they serve as an introduction while at the same time adding new insights to the topic. The first section places music and the arts in their socio-cultural context from different perspectives. John Brewer's contribution offers a topography of music within English culture from a broad socio-political perspective, presenting and re-assessing different scholarly perspectives on cultural developments of the time span in question from the 1980s onwards. It considers music's multifarious connections to other arts as well as its many guises which vary depending on place, occasion and evaluation with regard to ominous contemporary ideas of 'taste'. Turning specifically to the musicians' perspective, Melanie Unseld addresses basic education practices beyond the court. Since apprenticeship and comparable educational measures typical to most of the arts largely relied on an oral tradition within 'larger families' and their connections, the boundaries of these 'families' also comprised the mixing of different art(ist)s. For a look beyond apprenticeship as

a form of contemporary professionalisation, Tim Eggington offers an insight into the various measures which different members of the Academy of Ancient Music took in order to advance music – well in line with contemporary demands to argue the nobility of an (ancient) art but music-specific at the same time.

Such standards were naturally developed dependant on a targeted consumer's learning, as described above. Accordingly, consumers, artists and other agents involved in the production and distribution of the arts such as instrument makers, arts sellers, theatre managers and managers of other cultural venues targeted critical devices to argue the arts' respectability – meeting voices which tried to prove the very reverse. Considering the beginnings of 'modern' arts criticism in this period, (the plural is intentional for emphasis), the relevance and interrelations between these groups are exquisitely complex. As revealed by the three contributions which consider parts of such critical interrelations, the plurality of measures taken to upvalue music as well as other arts often included the employment of knowledge from higher learning which might be loosely transformed in the adaptation process. They were invoked from blurred lines between arts and sciences which, despite distinctions between 'natural' scientific objects and artistic practice, grew even more prominent by a mimetic ideal. Due to music's weak mimetic potential, this meant that trying to argue music's excellency with ideas put forward by 'natural' and 'moral philosophy' was just as widespread as it proved problematic when considered in detail. Looking for Charles Avison's sources to his arguments in his *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752) from a philosophical perspective, Alexander Aichele reveals rather loose (that is unsystematic) borrowings from a variety of so-called empiric treatises and not only – if at all – from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Nominally shared but differently applied aspects were not only common to music's borrowings from philosophy but also to standards in comparing different arts. My own chapter takes a closer look at analogies as a common device to infer as well as impart knowledge in its use in music and painting criticism written by musicians and painters. At the same time, artists were not the only ones trying to employ common standards of learning as well as 'politeness' to their advantage. Christoph Heyl gives a particularly curious example of aesthetic and marketing strategies to promote a new instrument with invented ancient roots: the Pastoral Pipes.

The final section explores different aspect of artistic interrelations with contributions embracing aspects of music and painting, dance, theatre performance and literature. Artistic interrelations are easily the broadest part of this publication's overall topic, rendering the selectivity of the aspects addressed by the four chapters even more striking. However, all contributions invoke new perspectives on music and a sister art. Gesa zur Nieden explains how George Frideric Handel's pasticcios can be considered as specifically English adaptations of French pasticcio aesthetics. Barbara Segal's chapter gives an overview on the different areas where music and dance functioned together, thereby indicating a number of stances of artistic interrelations, many of which call for substantial additions to the current state of research. Paul Labelle invites a re-thinking of the performative potential and effect of a likewise largely neglected musical genre: the catch. Finally, Pierre Degott opens up a broader, in a more general sense political aspect. In his chapter, he sheds new light on how St Cecilia celebrations towards the middle of the eighteenth century were increasingly used not just to advance music but to form a joint venture of the arts to advance English culture – separate from the well-known attempts at an English opera. To repeat a central aim of this publication, the call of these case studies for further research is always implied.

This volume holds revised papers first presented at a homonymic conference at Hamburg University in June 2019.²¹ Many people helped to make the conference and this publication possible to whom I owe and happily acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude. First and foremost, I thank all contributors for joining in this venture and sharing their valuable research. Furthermore, the publication owes much to the expertise and helpful suggestions from both the conference board and the peer reviewers who have been most supportive. The conference and this publication could only have been realised by way of generous financial support by the Universität Hamburg, the Mariann-Steegmann-Foundation, the Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung and the Forum Musikwissenschaft an der Universität Hamburg e.V. I also thank the Universität Salzburg, Derra de Moroda Dance Archives, for

21 For more information on the conference, cf. <https://musicandarts.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/> (last access 14 October 2020).

granting digital reproduction rights for one of their most precious sources.²² Furthermore, many colleagues and friends have helped with their advice and support along the way. I particularly thank Stephen Rose, Oliver Huck, Ivana Rentsch, Irene Holzer, Andrea Hammes, Sebastian Bolz and Sue Ryall.

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