

# Engaging with the past: a practical manifesto

Ingrid E. Pearson

The launch of *Musica Antiqua* presents an opportunity to celebrate historical performance and to reflect on a movement which has truly come of age. Historical performers now function in highly scholarly ways, teaching future generations by drawing upon the physicality and orality of their own learning, in combination with the literacy of source materials. The rush to the recording studio has slowed to a trickle, sadly due to fiscal pressures as well as a market saturated by a variety of recorded interpretations. None the less, the large number of musicians active in historical performance is now more liberating than bewildering as many second- and third-generation practitioners bring a rich variety of approaches manifest in performance and on recording.

I am convinced that it is our relationship with the rich heritage of source materials which has enabled historical performers to acquire skills across both practice and theory, in both the craft and art of historical performance. I feel privileged to work at London's Royal College of Music, where my colleagues and students and I are able to interact with collection materials of international significance. This valuable legacy of treasures, due partly to the vision of its founders and its first Director Sir George Grove, comprises material dating from the 15th-century onwards, including music manuscripts, early printed music, film scores, diaries, musical instruments from all over the world, as well as modern repertoire and literature. There are also original portraits, as well as prints and photographs comprising the most substantial

archive of images of musicians in the UK, not to mention the vast numbers of concert programmes, documenting concert life from 1720 to the present day.



Sir George Hunter Donaldson  
by Frederick Sandys 1878  
(Royal College of Music, London)

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Aside from the educational impact for members of the RCM community, by which I mean staff, students and members of the public, the archival, historical, documentary, social and cultural significance of these treasures is considerable. Of course people are treasures too and the RCM's list of alumni of historical performers is indeed distinguished, including Roger Norrington, Sarah Connolly, Arnold Dolmetsch, Annette Isserlis, Thurston Dart, Trevor Pinnock, Alina Ibragimova,



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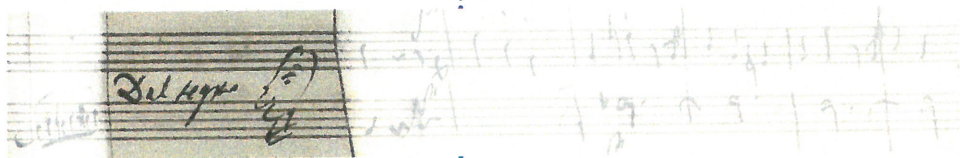
Danny Yeadon, Melvyn Tan and Sue Addison, just to name a few.

Of particular current interest to me, as a performer of 18th- and 19th-century repertoire, are two treasures from the late 18th-century; a manuscript and a treatise. The manuscript is amongst the consistently exquisite, significant and valuable holdings donated to the RCM by the Scotsman Sir George Hunter Donaldson, depicted here in his 33rd year by Frederick Sandys in 1878. In fact, the RCM library's reading room now bears Donaldson's name, as well as a minstrel's gallery from Siena and coffered ceiling that he added to the room for the 1894 opening of the RCM's now-familiar Prince Consort Road premises. Donaldson was a man with both taste and money, confirmed by his gift of the manuscript of Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 24, in C minor, K. 491. The manuscript's journey from Vienna to London began when Mozart's widow Constanze sold it to the publisher and dealer Johann Anton André of Offenbach-am-Main. In 1800 André issued authoritative editions of 'Six Grand Concertos...', as opus 82, which included the concertos numbers 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 27; namely K467, K 482, K 488, K 491, K 503 and K595. Indeed

André's publication was timely, helping to ensure that these works entered the repertoire when keyboard virtuosity and keyboard instruments were both progressing at an exponential rate. Beethoven admired K. 491 and Felix Mendelssohn performed it during the 1830s and '40s. The manuscript of K. 491 then passed to André's son-in-law, Johann Baptist Streicher, of the firm of Viennese piano makers. Then, in 1856, it was purchased by Otto Goldschmidt, the German-born conductor and pianist, and husband of the soprano Jenny Lind, who was one of the first singing professors at the RCM. When Goldschmidt settled in England in 1858 he brought his Mozart manuscript with him. He subsequently auctioned it, through the firm of Puttick &

2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and bass.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that Mozart himself premiered the work on 7 April, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. The rate at which Mozart composed can be gleaned from that fact that, three weeks before this concerto, he had written the A major concerto, K. 488, and, a little over one month after the composition of K. 491, he wrote the opera *Le nozze di Figaro*.

The manuscript of K. 491 is often untidy, with lots of alterations and deletions. In works like this, where Mozart himself was the intended soloist, he often left passages quite bare, knowing that, in performance, he would improvise or decorate as he felt appropriate. On a page from the end of the first movement we see



Simpson, and the manuscript was purchased by Donaldson, who gave it to the RCM in 1894.

In Mozart's own handwritten thematic catalogue, which documents his works from 1784 until 1791, the entry for 24 March 1784 reads: 'a clavier concerto accompanied by violins, violas, 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,

the words 'Dal Segno' and four faces drawn by Mozart. These markings indicate that here in the Coda Mozart wants to reuse material from bars earlier in the movement, where, incidentally he drew another little face on the score! Note also the rapid semiquaver figuration on the penultimate staff of the page. Another page, from the opening





W. A. Mozart Piano Concerto in No. 24 in C minor K. 491, 1st movement (RCM MS 402)

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W. A. Mozart Piano Concerto in No. 24 in C minor K. 491, 3rd movement (RCM MS 402)

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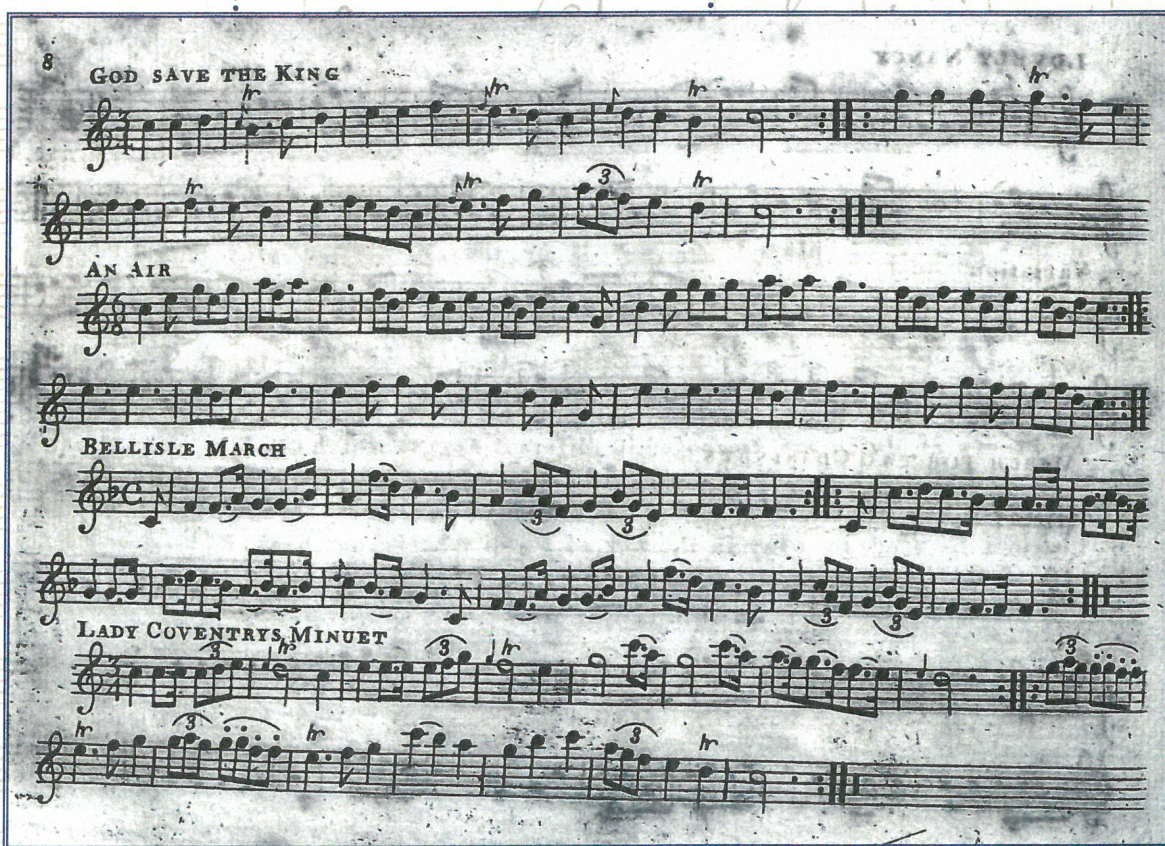


of the third movement, shows, in the lower right hand part of the page, many crossings-out, making deciphering this difficult at first glance. The piano right hand starts on the 4th stave from the bottom, and then, three bars before the end, continues back some bars on the 6th stave up! The opportunity personally to interact with the manuscript of K. 491 means we can't help but wonder what Mozart's première performance actually sounded like. Whilst we now know something of late 18th-century Viennese performing practices, the first performance of K. 491 was almost certainly equally fluent and voluble, exhibiting significant discrepancies between text and act. Those performers' actual moments of enaction must continue to elude us, in order for our own priorities to become manifest in performance.

A treatise which pre-dates the Mozart concerto by twelve years was acquired by the RCM only last year. This work is entitled *The Clarinet Instructor*, and is now the oldest known English-language work of its kind for the clarinet, pre-dating, by eight years, a similar publication housed in the British Library.<sup>2</sup> *The Clarinet Instructor* survives as the first bound in a volume, which also

contains another clarinet tutor as well as a collection of music. Reproduced here is the first page of actual music for the aspiring clarinetist to practise. Clarinet tutors of this kind have been issued since the late 18th century, catering for a growing market of amateur players. The sentiments of *The Clarinet Instructor* continued to be reproduced, with ever so slight variations, into the 19th century. However, by the 1820s, new methods were written to accompany new instruments

It's not hard to notice the rhetoric of social and civic responsibility behind the current UK government's *Big Society* programme.<sup>3</sup> In order truly to help people "to come together to improve their own lives" we must invoke the learning of the past, especially that which is preserved in treasures left to us by previous generations. We must continue to safeguard these treasures assiduously, passionately and substantially, in this primarily temporal and fiscally-referenced



page 8 from *The Clarinet Instructor* c. 1772 (RCM MS shelfmark G94)

with greater amounts of keywork. The directions given in this tutor are of a relatively literal and simple nature, which may point to a different, perhaps even amateur readership in comparison with contemporary methods by Continental writers. They might also suggest, however, that such instruction books were used by performing musicians who were already competent on another instrument.

climate in which we must now function. It is essential also to acknowledge the gestation period of works of art, and that, with the ever-increasing impact of globalisation and technology, the meaning and value of objects continues to change, and with these, their reception. Indeed, engaging with the past, through musical treasures, presents us with the opportunity to question the current homogenisation and



*The Clarinet Instructor by which*  
**PLAYING on that INSTRUMENT**  
*is rendered easy to any one unacquainted with Music as it contains a*  
**Compleat Scale.**  
*of all the Notes with the Graces also a Dictionary explaining such words*  
*as occur in Music with several favorite Aires the whole by a*  
**CAPITAL PERFORMER on the above INSTRUMENT.**  
*To which is added Six new Duos for two Clarinets and a*  
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democratisation of art, culture, and indeed society as a whole, brought about by new forms of mass media technologies.

Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* recounts the 5th century BC conflict between Athens and Sparta, leaving us with the observation that 'Men make the city, and not walls or ships without men in them'. A truly Big Society is one where we all participate, both individually and collectively, in the exchange of learning. The wellbeing of society

begins with the wellbeing of individuals. The abundance and wealth of historical performance owes much to the survival and preservations of manuscripts, tutors, diaries, paintings etc. but these will always need to be mediated and interpreted by each practitioner. The treasure within each individual must be nurtured and safeguarded, and only through the interaction of human and other treasures can society realise its full and true potential.

In July 2011 Ingrid Pearson became Research Fellow in Performance Practice at London's Royal College of Music, following some six years as Deputy Head of Graduate School. She works across theory and practice, particularly as a clarinettist in the arena of historical performance. Ingrid moved to the UK from Australia to undertake a PhD in performance practice at the University of Sheffield, and has performed with the major UK period ensembles. She has published for Cambridge University Press, recorded for DG Archiv, and her research has been supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and The Galpin Society.

1. First loaned to the British Museum in 1956 by the heirs of Stefan Zweig, the original catalogue in Mozart's own hand became a permanent part of the BL's collection from 1986, as Stefan Zweig MS 63. See also Mozart *Eigenhändiges Werkverzeichnis* Faksimile Bärenreiter, Kassel, 1991.
2. See *The Clarinet Instructor...* (London: Longman & Broderip, c. 1780), shelfmark b.160.i.
3. See <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview> (Accessed 24 July 2011)

