‘Flippant dolls’ and ‘serious artists’: Professional female singers in Britain, *c*.1760-1850



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Short Abstract

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Existing accounts of the music profession argue that between 1750 and 1850 musicians acquired a new identity as professional 'artists' and experienced a concomitant rise in their social and cultural status. In the absence of sustained investigation, it has often been implied that these changes affected male and female musicians in similar ways. As this thesis contends, this was by no means the case. Arguments in support of female musical professionalism, artistry, and their function in public life were made in this period. Based on the gender-specific nature of the female voice, they were an important defence of women's public engagement that has been overlooked by gender historians, something which this thesis sets out to correct. However, the public role and professionalism of female musicians were in opposition to the prevailing valorisation of female domesticity and privacy. Furthermore, the notion of women as creative artists was highly unstable in an era which tended to label artistry, 'genius' and creativity as male attributes. For these reasons, the idea of female musicians as professional artists was always in tension with contemporary conceptions of gender, making women's experience of the 'rise of the artist' much more contested and uncertain compared to that of men. Those advocating the female singer as professional artist were a minority in the British musical world. Their views co-existed alongside very different

and much more prevalent approaches to the female singer which had little to do with the idea of the professional artist. Through examining debates about female singers in printed sources, particularly newspapers and periodicals, alongside case studies based on the surviving documents of specific singers, this thesis builds a picture of increasing diversity in the experiences and representations of female musicians in this period and underlines the controlling influence of gender in shaping responses to them.

Long Abstract

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It is often argued that the period between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries in Britain and Europe saw the decline of aristocratic patronage of musicians, the development of anonymous middle-class urban markets for music and as a result the 'rise of the artist' from grovelling servant to unprecedented heights of social status, wealth and cultural iconicity. This narrative, however, focuses almost exclusively on famous male composers and very little work has been done on how far it describes the experience of other groups in the music profession, particularly women.

Although it is often implied that female musicians experienced similar changes to their male counterparts, there are many problems with such a view. Being a musician in the early nineteenth century now meant being a public figure, rather than working within a royal or aristocratic household or an ecclesiastical institution. While this might prove beneficial to male musicians, for whom a public role was seen as a natural corollary of their gender identity, the situation of their female colleagues was complicated by a deep-seated unease about women's professionalism, independence, and presence in public life, stemming from the prevailing valorisation of female privacy and domesticity and its associated feminine qualities of modesty and diffidence. Furthermore, artistic identity, 'genius' and creativity more generally were

predominantly gendered as male attributes. Contemporary aesthetic theory often excluded the possibility of female artistic endeavour, rendering women instead the passive muses of masculine creativity. The influence of such theories in the early nineteenth century made it much more difficult for women to claim the same kind of artistic identity that their male counterparts possessed.

This is not to deny that the 'rise of the artist' brought about significant change in the lives and careers of British professional female singers and attitudes towards them. Powerful arguments were made in defence of their professionalism, their artistry, their independent lifestyle and their public presence. Nevertheless, the effects of these changes were fundamentally shaped, constrained and sometimes negated by contemporary understandings of gender and femininity. Consequently, such ideas were only one relatively small strand among the multiple influences that shaped how men and women in nineteenth-century Britain responded to these women. In certain contexts, such as in the pages of leading specialist music periodicals, or among the audience at certain concert venues, they may just have formed the dominant influence. Outside such milieus, however, the situation could be very different. Viewpoints inherited and adapted from those of the previous century persisted and the professionalism and artistry of these women remained contested concepts right through to the mid-nineteenth century and beyond. One of the central tasks of this thesis, therefore, is to uncover the particular and often quite narrow social and cultural contexts in which female singers claimed and were awarded full professional and artistic status, and compare these to the very different contexts and representations of them that existed elsewhere. In so doing, it provides a fuller, more complex picture of the 'rise of the

(female) artist' as a much more partial and contested process than the existing narrative implies.

While this thesis is, therefore, a response to a particular set of arguments about the development and changing status of the music profession, its second, related and equally important aim is to understand previously underexplored forms of women's public engagement in this period and their relationship to changing conceptions of gender. The existing literature on this topic has underlined a fundamental ambivalence and uncertainty towards women's public activities, a hesitancy often shared by the women themselves. For the most part, historians have concluded that women's public activities tended to be framed as an extension of, rather than a challenge to, women's domestic and familial responsibilities. Very few made the case for women's rights to engage in public life on the same terms, in the same ways and on all the same issues as men. In these studies, however, female singers have often been overlooked. In contrast, this thesis contends that there are significant insights to be gained from drawing professional female musicians into the mainstream of gender history. Whereas women's political, economic, literary and artistic activities, and even their instrumental musical activities, could all be done by men, no man could recreate the female singing voice. For this reason, female singers were presented with potentially far greater opportunities than the vast majority of women in early nineteenth-century society to pursue a public, professional career and an independent lifestyle. This does not mean that their public professionalism and artistry were not circumscribed by and framed with reference to particular codes of femininity that acted to soften and defuse the challenge such women might represent to dominant gender ideals. But they were highly conspicuous figures whose public role attracted much debate as contemporaries used their example as a tool

to think about their definitions of appropriate feminine behaviour. An investigation of professional female singers consequently offers a particularly valuable insight into contemporary conceptions of gender and attitudes towards women's public engagement, professionalism and artistry in general.

The first two chapters argue that, between 1760 and 1850, public discourse about female singers, and the relationships between singers and their audiences, changed markedly. Chapter one explores how, in the late eighteenth century, the majority of audience-members possessed a particular way of interpreting professional female musical performance based on a set of ideals derived from amateur female musical performance among the propertied class of British society. These associated female performers with reticence, diffidence and reluctance towards self-display, confining virtuous female performance to the domestic, private arena. Consequently, professional female singers tended to be associated by this group with negative character traits because, through courting rather than rejecting publicity and self-display, they failed to accord with this amateur ideal. Not all types of professional female singer were thought to depart from these amateur ideals to the same extent, however, with concert-singers thought to be much closer to the amateur ideal than stage-singers. Equally, it is clear that among sections of the audience, especially in the cheaper galleries of the theatres, very different criteria for assessing professional female singing prevailed. Nevertheless, given the high ticket costs generally charged for professional musical performances, it is evident that the attitudes of those wealthy enough to participate in amateur music-making and absorb its ideals dominated responses to professional female singing in the late eighteenth century.

Chapter two argues that, during the early nineteenth century, these amateur ideals were challenged and disrupted by the emergence and increasing diffusion of new ideas about musicians in general and female musicians in particular. Changes in the relationship between audiences and singers, especially the rise of the professional music critic and the specialist music periodicals, provided a forum for new ideas about the musician as 'artist' to emerge and, in some instances, be applied to professional female singers. These new voices sought to reinforce the line between amateur and professional singers, emphasising the very different nature of these musical activities, and thus demanding that different assessment criteria were required when judging amateur and professional female performance. They argued that female singers should be seen as professional artists and their performances should be evaluated according to their musical skill and expressive power. The modesty and diffidence that were highly prized in amateur female performance consequently had no place in professional female music-making. Female professionals should not be condemned for their professional confidence in front of audiences, but instead should be praised and celebrated; their public activities were perfectly compatible with feminine propriety. Such attitudes, however, were confined to a relatively small minority. Even among those writing in the specialist music periodicals in support of professional female singers, there remained a reluctance to see female professionals pursue their artistry to its full extent. Referring to the 'excessive' performances of Italian prima donnas, they argued that, if pursued too far, female artistry, and particularly its requirement for intense emotional self-expression, was incompatible with femininity and might even provoke distaste or disgust from audiences. Furthermore, beyond the specialist musical press, alternative attitudes towards professional female singers, particularly those which emphasised the

visual rather than the aural aspects of female performance, abounded. To such writers, female musical performance remained primarily a display of physical beauty, rather than honed professional skills and emotional expression. Although new ideas about the female musician as professional artist emerged in the early nineteenth century, therefore, they remained in pronounced tension with conceptions of femininity, while older attitudes inherited and adapted from the eighteenth century persisted and continued to shape debate in important ways.

The remainder of this thesis takes the form of three case studies. In part this is because of the limitations of available evidence, but more importantly, it has been adopted because it confers a series of useful advantages. It is only by close examination of the experience of particular singers in particular contexts that the relationships between printed words and social practice comes into focus, allowing us to see how influential certain arguments and opinions were over various segments of the musical public on different occasions, as well as the presence of other pressures upon singers' behaviour that were not observed by those writing for the press. Furthermore, this thesis argues that although audiences possessed generalised attitudes towards female singers as a whole, they also responded to them as individuals possessing particular reputations and images. It therefore makes sense to view the singer in the round, as audiences did, understanding how off-stage behaviour could influence how audiences responded to singers on stage, or how visual images and signature songs might affect how an audience thought about a performer's moral character. These specific and important interconnections tell us much about the structures governing female performance and, indeed, the musical world more generally, insights which might be lost in a thematic treatment of this material. Although a case study approach inevitably limits the extent of

generalisations that can be made about female singers as a group, by comparing the strongly contrasting experiences of different singers it is possible to make meaningful statements about common themes that pervaded the lives and careers of female singers as a whole.

The first case study (chapter three) explores how Catherine Stephens and Eliza Vestris cultivated starkly different public images as professional female musicians in the 1810s and '20s. This comparison demonstrates the importance of conceptions of gender in defining the relationships cultivated between particular singers and particular groups within the early nineteenth-century musical public. Both singers sought, as far as they were able, to construct very specific images with an eye to commercial advantage. Vestris developed a scandalous and sexualised image based upon her cross-dressed portrayals of male libertines on the London stage, designed to appeal primarily to audiences from a low social strata who packed the cheaper galleries of the theatres. Stephens, on the other hand, sought to fuse the image of the professional stage-singer with a reputation for exemplary feminine propriety, a fusion accepted by her well-to-do audiences not only in the theatre, but at concerts and oratorios as well. In contrast, Vestris's public image prevented her from developing a concert or oratorio career; her gender transgressions were simply not suited to the sober and respectable world of the concert hall. What this demonstrates is that it was their compliance with or transgression of their audiences' conceptions of gender, rather than their accordance with the idea of the professional artist, that determined their commercial success. It suggests that the influence of the arguments of those advocating the image of the female singer as professional artist in the specialist music periodicals had very little effect on determining how most people responded to such women.

The second (chapter four) examines two public charitable campaigns on behalf of the retired and impoverished female singers Cecilia Davies and Eliza Salmon, *c.*1820-1850. The arguments used to persuade the public to support these singers and the particular groups prepared to contribute to such campaigns indicates the nature and extent of the social value ascribed to the professional female singer in the first half of the nineteenth century. Cecilia Davies's campaign reveals the attitudes of members of propertied society, who, looking to cultivate a reputation for cultural sophistication, participated in and supported this campaign because of the prestige of association with a woman they felt to be a famous 'artist'. Eliza Salmon's campaign, largely initiated and supported by other members of the music profession, reveals how arguments were increasingly made about the entitlement of female singers to support simply because of their membership of the profession, demonstrating the extent to which such women had gained acceptance as fully professional public figures. In both cases, however, these campaigns failed to achieve their objectives, illustrating the limited extent of these attitudes across wider society. While many in the music profession, along with a particular segment of the musical public, clearly felt such women to deserve support because of their status as professional artists, elsewhere in society moral distaste or simply apathy towards these women demonstrates the prevalence of alternative ways of thinking.

The third and final case study (chapter five) explores the experience of being a professional female singer in the early Victorian era (*c.*1830-1850) through the letters of Clara Novello and her family and the diary of Marianne Lincoln. Both singers had been trained, and clearly considered themselves, to be professional musical 'artists'. Yet their experiences, thoughts and feelings reveal the tension they encountered between this

artistic identity and their gender identity as women. While their documents suggest that in private they identified themselves with the image of the professional artist, the experiences they record make it clear that they felt hesitant and unsure about whether and how best to express this identity in more public contexts. This demonstrates that the tension evident in wider social discourse between professionalism and artistry on the one hand, and understandings of femininity on the other, was clearly felt by female singers themselves. The changes that took place in the early nineteenth century did not replace one way of thinking with another, but opened the door to a multiplicity of perspectives, which proved difficult for singers to resolve.

By the mid-nineteenth century, therefore, there had been very significant changes in the place and reputation of female singers within the musical world and wider society, changes which made it possible for them to be seen, and to see themselves, as professional artists. As this thesis contends, however, in many ways it is the limits of this transformation which stand out. In the first half of the nineteenth century, contradictory conceptions and attitudes towards the professional female singer co-existed, structuring and influencing the lives and careers of individual singers in a wide variety of ways. Contemporary conceptions of gender meant that attitudes towards female singers and their experiences of life as professional musicians were extremely different to those of their male colleagues. Understanding this is vital to developing a more accurate and fully-rounded picture of the development of British culture in this period and women's role within it.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
CN	Clara Novello
CS	Catherine Stephens
DHC, Rackett papers	Dorset History Centre, Dorchester, Dorset, Papers of the Rackett family of Spetisbury, Dorset [N.B. Items in this archive do not possess an individual reference number, but are classified only to bundle level. Brief information about the document and dates are given in the references for greater precision. The documents are not reliably foliated.]
DR	Dorothy Rackett
DS	Dorothea Solly
EMS	Edward Maxwell Stephens
EV	Lucy Elizabeth ('Eliza') Vestris
Harmonicon	*The Harmonicon, a Journal of Music*
HTC	Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University Library, Cambridge, MA, USA
JT	Sir John Trevelyan
JW	James Winston
MSN	Mary Sabilla Novello
Musical Examiner	*The Musical Examiner: An Impartial Weekly Record of Music and Musical Events*
Musical Journal	*The Musical Journal, a magazine of information, on all subjects connected with the science*
Musical World	*The Musical World; a Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence* [the title varied throughout the periodical's long run, see Richard Kitson, *The Musical World, 1836-1865* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996), p. ix, note 1]

ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [online]
QMMR	*The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*
RWE	Robert William Elliston
SS	Samuel Solly
TR	Rev. Thomas Rackett
TS	Thomasina Solly
VN	Vincent Novello

Introduction

'We rejoice', declared the editor of the *Musical World* in 1839,

> to do justice to the immense talent which the fair community of this country are developing in every department of practical music. Of lady singers of singular merit and promise we have a perfect swarm. They are no longer to be viewed as flippant dolls, got up, as the phrase is, in a certain music lesson for concert-room exhibitions, but as serious artists, who enter with enthusiasm into all the deepest passion of music, and sympathize in even the remotest conceptions of the composer.[1]

According to this editor, a profound change had occurred during the early nineteenth century in the status and function of the female professional singer. In his eyes, 'dolls', pretty and passive objects of their spectators' gaze, had been replaced by active, creative 'artists' who displayed a dynamic power to move their audiences through the deep emotional self-expression of their performances. Their 'flippant', inappropriate and amateurish levity of approach had been displaced by a new seriousness of artistic commitment, while the few flimsy lessons that had previously sufficed had given way to rigorous professional training. Rather than the casual 'exhibition' of drawing-room talents by women somehow straying outside their proper sphere, these women were fully professional performers who had dedicated their lives to the high calling of Art and thus occupied a legitimate place in public life.

This editor's assertive statement gives a strongly affirmative answer to one of the central questions posed by this thesis: were female singers in early-nineteenth-century Britain seen by their audiences, and by themselves, as professional 'artists'? Yet while this editor might 'rejoice' in his opinion that this was the case, his response was not the

[1] [Editorial], *Musical World* 11/65 (28 Mar. 1839), p. 189.

only possible answer to this question, nor indeed the one most prevalent in wider society. Writing for the *Musical World*, the leading specialist music periodical of the day, his views reflect those of a particular group of critics and a particular type of public, emerging during the first half of the nineteenth century, who engaged with and understood the role of professional female musicians differently to their eighteenth-century predecessors. The ideas they advocated were a crucial dynamic force in the changes that this thesis will investigate, but it is critical to appreciate that such ideas were only one relatively small strand of the multiple influences that shaped how men and women in nineteenth-century Britain responded to the arts and to professional female singers in particular. In certain contexts, such as in the pages of leading specialist music periodicals, or among the audience at certain concert venues, they may just have formed the dominant influence. Outside such milieus, however, the situation could be very different, often highly contingent on a variety of other factors and frequently contradictory to what was happening elsewhere. Viewpoints inherited and adapted from those of the previous century persisted and, despite the editor's call to discard them, images of 'flippant dolls' overlapped with those of 'serious artists' right through to the mid-nineteenth century and beyond.

The central task of this thesis, therefore, is to explore how these contrasting ideas and attitudes shaped audience responses in a variety of venues for musical performance and, by extension, wider debates about female singers in society as a whole. Yet rather than see professional female singers as lacking agency and floating helplessly on the turbulent seas of competing discourses, it will argue that they developed a range of subjective stances in order to project an image of their public engagement which helped them to achieve their desired ends. This does not mean that they consistently advocated

the 'serious artists' model of their activities or always understood themselves in this way. Indeed, their own subjectivities could be internally conflicted and variable depending upon context, reflecting the strain of trying to inhabit the role of both public artist and 'respectable' woman, in an age which tended to prescribe privacy and domesticity as the norm for women. Rather, what emerges as the object of study in this thesis is the process of continual negotiation between these women and their publics over quite how their presence in public life should be seen: as legitimate or illegitimate; moral or immoral; licentious or chaste; beguilingly feminine or disturbingly masculine. Were they professionals or quasi-amateurs; masters of vocal technique or objects of physical beauty; capable of creativity and originality or simply tools to reproduce masculine art; ordinary women or exceptional celebrities; within 'polite' society or beyond it? Above all, were they artists first and women second, or vice versa? Or, to put it another way, did the fused identity 'female artist' exist in this period and how stable was this identity?

Historiographical context: the 'rise of the artist'

These questions have been provoked by the well-established narrative of the 'rise of the artist' in European society between 1750 and 1850, most recently expounded by Tim Blanning.[2] As the *ancien régime* crumbled and the use of culture as a means of

[2] Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the present* (London, 2008), ch. 1. See also T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 78-99 and 181-82; Tim Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648-1815* (London, 2007), ch. 10, especially pp. 513-27; and Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London, 2010), pp. 31-43. Blanning's predecessors in this argument include: Alfred Einstein, *Music in the Romantic Era* (London, 1947); Henry Raynor, *Music and Society since 1815* (London, 1976); Giorgio Pestelli, *The Age of Mozart and Beethoven*, tr. Eric Cross (Cambridge, 1984); Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, tr. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, 1989); Alexander L. Ringer, 'The Rise of Urban Musical Life between the Revolutions, 1789-1848' in Alexander L. Ringer (ed.), *The Early Romantic Era. Between Revolutions: 1789 and 1848* (Basingstoke, 1990),

representing political power and status by court and aristocracy waned, he argues, poets, painters and musicians turned to a wider marketplace for their talents among the ascendant middle classes of urban Europe. In so doing, they shed their previous status as merely a specialised form of liveried servant in great aristocratic houses and royal courts and instead became international superstars, fêted by the very emperors and kings they had once served. Blanning's particular contribution to this narrative is to fuse it with the influential theories of Jürgen Habermas about the rise of the 'public sphere' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and to argue that it was music and musicians that benefited above all the other arts from these changes, their 'triumph' representing one of the key distinguishing features of modern western society.[3]

The changes described by Blanning and others were undoubtedly of fundamental importance in the development of European musical culture. Nevertheless, as this thesis contends, there are many aspects of musical life in this period that this narrative struggles or fails to explain. This is particularly so when it comes to trying to describe changes in the lives, careers and representations of female musicians. Blanning's argument is based almost entirely on the experience of famous male composers; he explores, for instance, illustrative moments in the lives of such figures as Monteverdi, J. S. Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Rossini, Paganini, Liszt and Wagner.[4] The only woman who is mentioned alongside these giants of the western canon is the Prussian soprano, Gertrud Mara, in relation to her bitter dispute with her patron,

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pp. 1-31; and John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession* (Cambridge, 1992), chs. 1 and 4, among others.

[3] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, tr. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, 1989).

[4] Blanning, *The Triumph of Music*, ch. 1.

Frederick the Great.[5] The experience of composers such as Beethoven or Wagner, however, was very far removed from that of the female performers who executed their compositions, a qualification which is absent from Blanning's narrative. More problematic still, the inclusion of Mara, without sustained discussion of the differences in the situation of female performers, unfortunately leads to the implication that women experienced a similar process of change to that of their male counterparts. As this thesis will show, this was by no means the case. Though undoubtedly affected by the emergence of new attitudes towards musicians in the early nineteenth century, women working in the music profession also had to face the prevailing gender ideals of their society, which in many senses conceived true femininity to be antithetical to professional and artistic life. For this reason, female musicians' experience of the rising social and cultural status of the musical artist was much more contested, contingent on context, and uncertain.

The antithesis between professional artistry and gender ideals expressed itself in two major ways. Firstly, the shift to a market- rather than patronage-based system of musical consumption had very different implications for female musicians compared to their male counterparts. As Blanning argues, being a musician in the early nineteenth century now meant being a public figure, engaging with anonymous urban publics instead of individual aristocratic, ecclesiastical or royal patrons. While this might prove beneficial to male musicians (at least those few who managed to achieve success in these new and often precarious market conditions),[6] the situation of their female colleagues

[5] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[6] Blanning himself notes that the market was not necessarily a universal good for musicians both as a result of the insecurity it could bring but also because of the 'philistinism of the general public', see: *The Culture of Power*, p. 182; *The Pursuit of Glory*, pp. 525-26; *The Triumph of Music*, pp. 101-04; *The Romantic Revolution*, pp. 43-60. More generally, the economic insecurities of the market (not just those generated by 'popular' taste)

was complicated by a deep-seated unease about women's presence in public life, and by attempts to delineate which activities were appropriate, how they should behave and how their status as women should be viewed if they pursued such public prominence. The experience of female musicians in these new market conditions certainly represented a pronounced contrast to their situation under the patronage system, where their relationships with male patrons had often been seen, in some cases quite accurately, as openly sexual, while the boundary between courtesan and female singer in contemporary opinion had been especially thin.[7] But while the rise of the musical marketplace brought these patronage structures and their consequent sexual associations to an end, it did not represent, in any straightforward sense, the same process of liberation, empowerment and rising social status as it did for their male colleagues, for whom a role in public life was seen as a natural corollary of their gender identity. Sexual associations, for instance, though differently configured, were just as prominent in the new marketplace environment as musical performance and self-display by female musicians in front of a paying public was readily likened to prostitution by those for whom professional female musical performance was by definition a transgression of female privacy and domesticity and its associated feminine qualities of modesty and diffidence.

Secondly, artistic identity, 'genius' and creativity more generally were predominantly gendered as male attributes. This was a result, in part, of the aesthetic theories propounded by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer which entirely excluded the possibility of female artistic endeavour, rendering women

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have been discussed by John Rink, 'The Profession of Music' in Jim Samson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 64-65 and Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, p. 90.

[7] See especially Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*, pp. 56-66.

instead the passive muses of masculine creativity.[8] Their theories, widely influential on the development of aesthetics in nineteenth-century Europe, have to a large extent been replicated not only in the formation of both the traditional literary and musical canons, but also, as we have seen, in the privileging of the male composer in the historical narrative of the 'rise of the artist'. It was the influence of such theories in the early nineteenth century that made it more difficult for women to claim and be ascribed the same kind of artistic identity that their male counterparts claimed, but it did not preclude it entirely. As our opening quotation illustrates, the influence of Kant and Schopenhauer was not universal and some commentators and audience members were prepared to ascribe the status of 'serious artists' to professional female musicians. Understanding to whom, by whom and in which contexts such artistic status was awarded is one of the purposes of this thesis. In so doing, it intends to provide a fuller, more nuanced picture of the 'rise of the (female) artist' as a much more partial and contested process than the existing narrative implies.

While this thesis seeks to suggest that there is much about late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century musical life as yet unaccounted for by existing scholarship, it shares the assumption of Blanning and others that social and economic change – in essence the emergence of a large urban commercial market for music – lay behind the

[8] On this topic in general see Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson* (Princeton, 1980), pp. 13-40; Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists* (London, 1987), pp. 15-26; Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London, 1989); Patricia Zakreski, *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848-1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 8-10; and Margaret Hunt, *Women in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow, 2010), p. 286. More specifically to the subject of female singers, see Nancy B. Reich, 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class' in Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 133-34, and, for a slightly later period, Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 20-25. An interesting example of this gendering of creativity and genius can be found in the masculinisation of piano performance and the piano virtuoso, see Tia DeNora, 'Embodiment and Opportunity: Bodily Capital, Gender, and Reputation in Beethoven's Vienna' in William Weber (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914: Managers, Charlatans, and Idealists* (Bloomington, 2004), pp. 185-97.

changes occurring in this period for both female and male musicians. One difficulty, however, in setting out to explore how these changes affected female musicians in Britain is that, strictly speaking, it is a model which is derived from and applies best to the situation in continental Europe where the transition from court patronage to an open market for music is a clear feature of the 1750-1850 period. As is frequently affirmed by historians, Britain was unusual when compared to its European neighbours in that court culture had largely given way to urban, commercial demand for music by the early eighteenth century, if not before.[9] Blanning points out that Handel was the first musician in history to earn a substantial living in large part from the paying public of early eighteenth-century London, a city which at that time was undoubtedly the most developed urban market for music anywhere in Europe, a position it would arguably retain throughout our period.[10]

Nevertheless, although London already possessed by the late eighteenth century a long-established market for music free from the dominance of a royal court, scholars have stressed that London's music market experienced change in its character and structure in the early nineteenth century comparable to that experienced in other European states and with similar implications for the role of 'artists'. In the eighteenth century, the strength of London's precocious market for music principally lay not in new participants joining the market, but in the intensifying concentration of aristocratic wealth and leisure that gathered in the capital during the social season.[11] This helped to

[9] See Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 1993) pp. xiv, 1-8 and 53, and William Weber, 'Musical Culture and the Capital City: The Epoch of the *beau monde* in London, 1700-1870' in Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (eds.), *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 76-77.

[10] Blanning, *The Triumph of Music*, p. 24.

[11] McVeigh emphasises the dominance of the aristocracy over London's concert life up to the end of the eighteenth century, see *Concert Life*, pp. xiii-xiv, 6, 11-22, and 53, and Simon McVeigh, '"An Audience for

create a market clearly more varied, innovative and competitive than that of most other European states, but which nevertheless still retained some of the qualities of older court-based forms of consumption, including aristocratic dominance and elements of the patronage system. Handel, after all, composed a succession of works for royalty (receiving in return a royal pension of £200 a year) and achieved fame as a composer of *opera seria*, a genre designed to reflect monarchical and aristocratic power, for an opera public overwhelmingly composed of nobility and gentry who undoubtedly considered themselves patrons and took a significant role in opera house management.[12] Similarly, as Simon McVeigh argues, audiences at public subscription concerts in the later eighteenth century, with their high ticket prices and lady-patronesses' vetting of subscribers, possessed a decidedly aristocratic flavour.[13] Indeed, he asserts that eighteenth-century musicians 'could never have regarded themselves purely as concert-artists' and that an expectation of servility and gratitude towards noble patrons still persisted in a world where securing a teaching contract or an engagement for private concerts at the nobility's great estates and townhouses was still a far more lucrative option than risking the open market.[14]

High-Class Music"': Concert Promoters and Entrepreneurs in Late-Nineteenth-Century London' in Weber (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur*, p. 165. See also, Joel Sachs, 'London: The Professionalization of Music' in Ringer (ed.), *The Early Romantic Era*, pp. 202-04.

[12] Donald Burrows, *Handel* (2nd edn., Oxford, 2012), pp. 83-105. Burrows notes the importance of royal and aristocratic patronage to the success of the fledgling Italian opera company and Handel's career. The relationship between the nobility and gentry and the Italian opera later in the century is charted in Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London, Vol. 1: The King's Theatre, Haymarket 1778-1791* (Oxford, 1995) and Judith Milhous, Gabriella Dideriksen and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London, Vol. II: The Pantheon Opera and its Aftermath 1789-1795* (Oxford, 2001). Aristocratic participation in the management of the Italian Opera continued as late as *c.*1830 according to Simon McVeigh, 'A Free Trade in Music: London during the Long 19th Century in European Perspective', *Journal of Modern European History* 5/1 (2007), p. 68.

[13] McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 11-22 and McVeigh, 'A Free Trade in Music', pp. 67-68.

[14] McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 187-89 and 203-05, and McVeigh, '"An Audience for High-Class Music"', pp. 164-66.

It was only in the early nineteenth century, therefore, with the foundation of new forms of subscription series, in particular the Philharmonic Society (1813), and more importantly in the 1830s and '40s of large-scale single-ticket concerts, such as the Promenade concerts (1838) and Louis Jullien's Concerts d'Hiver (1841), that the increasing numbers and social range of concert-goers generated a market of a size sufficient to rival the claims of patronage,[15] although as McVeigh notes, elite patronage retained a presence in the British musical world until the closing decades of the nineteenth century.[16] It was in this new, broader and more commercialised British market that notions of the musician as 'artist', rather than merely 'player', 'vocalist' or 'professor' – ideas largely introduced to Britain from the continent – found ready adherents. They were designed to complement the changed relationship between the performer and the more anonymous and diverse audiences of the early nineteenth-century musical world and facilitated an appreciable rise in the social status afforded to professional musicians. As McVeigh argues, patronage relationships 'came under direct scrutiny in the post-Napoleonic years as artists began gradually to assert their independence and self-respect as professionals unbeholden to ties of patronage. The relationship between servility and gentility was redefined: a musician might aspire to be

[15] Although there are several differences of opinion between scholars regarding the chronology and precise nature of these changes, the general trajectory from aristocratic dominance and patronage to a diverse upper- and middle-class anonymous public is clear. See Sachs, 'London: The Professionalization of Music', pp. 210-32; Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 14-16; Simon McVeigh, 'The Benefit Concert in Nineteenth-Century London: From 'tax on the nobility' to 'monstrous nuisance'' in Bennett Zon (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies: Volume 1* (Aldershot, 1999), p. 253; Peter Clark and R. A. Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840' in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume II 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 581; William Weber, 'Musical Culture and the Capital City', pp. 86-89; McVeigh, '"An Audience for High-Class Music"', pp. 166-180; McVeigh, 'A Free Trade in Music', pp. 67-71; and Ian Taylor, *Music in London and the Myth of Decline: From Haydn to the Philharmonic* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 101-115.

[16] McVeigh, '"An Audience for High-Class Music"', pp. 167-68. See also Deborah Rohr's view that 'the shift from personal patronage to market competition was gradual and musicians combined many different types of patronage throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (p. 40), *The Careers of British Musicians, 1750-1850: A Profession of Artisans* (Cambridge, 2001), ch. 3, especially pp. 40-42.

regarded as a gentleman because of his professional standing rather than despite it'.[17] Notwithstanding the continental European focus of much of the existing literature on the 'rise of the artist', therefore, it is a valid question to ask how these changes, which applied in early nineteenth-century Britain just as much as in Europe, and which primarily focused upon male musicians, affected their female colleagues.

Studies of female singers and of female musicians more generally in Britain, however, have been few and far between. The place of women in the music profession formed a part of the work of both Cyril Ehrlich and Deborah Rohr, although given their intentions to provide overviews of the profession as a whole, their emphasis falls on the challenges facing male musicians, with women receiving minimal or overly simplistic treatment. Ehrlich gives some useful statistics from the census data but little more, while Rohr discusses the place of women within the profession at slightly greater length, but simply asserts that female singers suffered from the same moral prejudices as actresses in this period, that this deterred many from pursuing professional careers and that it was only viewed as an acceptable profession for women whose families had fallen on hard times.[18] In relation to the role of gender, she is more concerned with the association of music and its performance with femininity (and hence its emasculating effect on male musicians in contemporary opinion) than on the situation of female performers themselves.[19]

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[17] McVeigh, 'The Benefit Concert', p. 254.

[18] Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford, 1985), p. 235 (Table 1). The focus of his study is the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the situation of women in the music profession in this era receives some coverage (especially pp. 156-61), but there is very little on their situation prior to the mid-nineteenth century (only briefly discussed on pp. 13-16); Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians*, pp. 11-12 and 108-09.

[19] Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians*, pp. 15-21 and 180.

In studies where women have been the main focus, however, scholars have begun to examine the specific set of circumstances facing female musicians and the strategies they developed to deal with them. Their work has begun to explore attitudes towards female musicians in Britain and through case-studies, the lives, careers and subjectivities of individual performers (including pianists, organists and composers as well as singers).[20] This body of scholarship has outlined a variety of useful methodological approaches to placing the agency and subjectivity of female performers against the structural backdrop of social discourses about them, both positive and negative.

Unfortunately, however, this field of research has developed something of a chronological gap, with work on the eighteenth century by Pierre Dubois, Leslie Ritchie and Nicholas Salwey ending around 1800, and that of Derek Hyde, Therese Ellsworth, Judith Barger and Sarah McNeely concentrating on the high Victorian period post-1850, or at the very earliest, post-1830. Developments in the first half of the nineteenth century have, for the most part, been left unexamined. This is unfortunate, as the widely differing characterisations of the eighteenth century, on the one hand, and the later nineteenth century on the other, imply a significant period of change in the 1800-1850 period. Dubois, for instance, argues that in the eighteenth century female singers were

[20] Derek Hyde, *New-Found Voices: Women in Nineteenth-Century English Music* (3rd edn., Aldershot, 1998, first published 1984); Pierre Dubois, 'Profession: Siren – The Ambiguous Status of Professional Women Musicians in Eighteenth-Century England' in Isabelle Baudino, Jacques Carré and Cécile Révauger, *The Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 147-60; Leslie Ritchie, *Women Writing Music in Late Eighteenth-Century England: Social Harmony in Literature and Performance* (Aldershot, 2008); Nicholas Salwey, 'Women Pianists in Late Eighteenth-Century London' in Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (eds.), *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 273-90; Therese Ellsworth, 'Victorian Pianists as Concert Artists: The Case of Arabella Goddard (1836-1922)' in Therese Ellsworth and Susan Wollenberg (eds.), *The Piano in Nineteenth-Century British Culture: Instruments, Performers and Repertoire* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 149-169; Judith Barger, *Elizabeth Stirling and the Musical Life of Female Organists in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 2007); and Sarah McNeely, 'Beyond the Drawing Room: The Musical Lives of Victorian Women', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 5/2 (Summer 2009), online via <http://ncgsjournal.com/issue52/mcneely.htm> accessed 30 Aug. 2012.

not accorded professional status, were frequently associated with prostitution, were seen as objects of desire rather than artists, were threatening to the established gender order by transferring a private activity into the public realm and that consequently an 'unconscious desire to de-professionalize their work' predominated.[21] From the 1830s to the mid-nineteenth century, however, Hyde argues that 'the public persona which the singers presented grew more respectable' and that there was a 'more serious approach to the artists themselves' in wider society, a conclusion supported to a greater or lesser extent by Rohr, Barger, Ellsworth and McNeely.[22] This study seeks to bridge this crucial chronological gap and will explain how certain assumptions about female musicians prevalent in the eighteenth century were challenged and disrupted, though by no means entirely displaced, during the early decades of the nineteenth century, placing the later changes described by these scholars in a longer-term perspective and making the case for the first half of the nineteenth century as a crucial period of change. Furthermore, by illustrating the ways in which divergent ideas about female performers might co-exist alongside one another, it corrects a common tendency to attempt to find the point at which female professional singing became 'respectable', arguing instead that we must always be attuned to who is ascribing 'respectability' and to which kinds of professional singers. This approach provides a more flexible model of change, which, while it allows new developments to be described and their impact and influence assessed, also retains a greater awareness of the contingency and continued variation in the image of the female singer in British society.

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[21] Dubois, 'Profession: Siren', p. 160.

[22] Hyde, *New-Found Voices*, p. 20. See also Deborah Rohr, 'Women and the Music Profession in Victorian England: The Royal Society of Female Musicians, 1839-1866', *Journal of Musicological Research* 18/4 (1999), pp. 307-346, and the work of Barger, Ellsworth and McNeely cited above.

British professional female singers have also attracted less attention because, for the most part, they did not perform the musical genres, such as Italian opera, which are the subject of major musicological investigation. Some of the most important approaches to female singers in recent years, for instance, have come from studies of the prima donna, such as that by Susan Rutherford and the collection of essays edited by Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, both of which build on and refine the earlier work of Rupert Christiansen and John Rosselli.[23] Understandably, such studies have tended to adopt a long nineteenth-century perspective, focused upon the 'golden age' of opera in Europe from Rossini until the advent of recording technology and film. In contrast to this thesis, the parameters of their studies come not from the context of any given historical society, such as early nineteenth-century Britain, but instead from a particular musical genre – opera – looking at how its performers specifically were viewed in a wider, multi-national context in order to contextualise the development of opera as an art form in the nineteenth century. In some senses, studying only performers of a particular musical genre limits an ability to compare and contrast, as contemporaries certainly did, singers in different contexts, something this thesis seeks to do.[24] More important still, it is not a desire to describe the development of a musical genre that drives this thesis, but instead an ambition to understand the role of gender in shaping artistic production and consumption at a particular social level of early nineteenth-century society.

[23] Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815-1930* (Cambridge, 2006); Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2012); Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera*; Rupert Christiansen, *Prima Donna: A History* (2nd rev. edn., London, 1995, first published 1984).
[24] That said, Cowgill and Poriss's volume contains an insightful and deliberately comparative essay on famous non-operatic female singers in Britain by Sophie Fuller: '"The Finest Voice of the Century": Clara Butt and Other Concert-Hall and Drawing-Room Singers of Fin-de-siècle Britain' in Cowgill and Poriss (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna*, pp. 308-27.

Historiographical context: women and the public sphere

One aim, then, of this thesis is to respond to a particular set of arguments put forward by cultural and social historians and musicologists about the development and changing status of the music profession which do not, at present, sufficiently take account of the role of gender in shaping the strongly divergent experiences of male and female musicians. However, this thesis is also a work of gender history; its second and equally important aim is to understand previously underexplored forms of women's public engagement in this period and their relationship to changing conceptions of gender. In particular, it seeks to interpret the actions of female musicians in the context of prevailing gender hierarchies, paying close attention to the ways in which their behaviour might be viewed by contemporaries as bolstering or challenging gender norms and ideals.

Such an investigation is made all the more relevant by the fact that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have acquired a particular importance in studies of the history of women and gender. Initially, attention was drawn to this period as a result of the gathering pace of social and economic change, the burgeoning strength of evangelical forms of religion and an upsurge in the volume of prescriptive literature produced in these decades. This led to conclusions that this era saw the emergence of strongly delineated public and private 'separate spheres' of work and home for men and women.[25] In the last couple of decades, while the importance of this period has been retained, the 'separate spheres' paradigm has given way to a more complex and dynamic view of the interrelationship of gender, publicity and privacy, as historians

[25] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987), especially part one.

have pointed out continuing or increasing opportunities and roles for women in public life and have explored in greater detail both the wider discourses about women's public presence and the attitudes of women themselves to their public activities.[26] In particular, historians have stressed the degree of ambivalence surrounding women's activities in public life. Clare Midgley, for instance, in her study of women and the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, set out to explore the 'ambivalent and complex attitudes of women anti-slavery campaigners to their own social position' and traced a 'distinctive female approach to anti-slavery'.[27] Similarly, Kathryn Gleadle argues for an awareness that women's 'status as political actors, as well as their own political subjectivities were often fragile and contingent. They might be conceptualized (and feel) integral to the political process at one moment – but this could quickly evaporate in the face of other cultural pressures'.[28]

As this literature repeatedly emphasises, while there were certainly a great number of women who took part in public life in a variety of ways, prevailing ideals of

[26] This shift was epitomised by Amanda Vickery's article, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal* 36/2 (1993), pp. 383-414. See also Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth-Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29/1 (1995), pp. 97-109. The range of women's public activities that have now been investigated is vast, though strangely their role as musical performers has been largely absent from the writings of gender historians. Some examples of this work that have influenced this thesis include: Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (2nd edn., New Haven, 1992), pp. 237-81; Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, 1996); Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London, 1997); Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2003, first published 1998); Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, 2000); Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds.), *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (Basingstoke, 2000); Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001); Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (eds.), *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century England: 'On the Town'* (Aldershot, 2003); Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford, 2005); Nicola Phillips, *Women in Business, 1700-1850* (Woodbridge, 2006); Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender, and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867* (Oxford, 2009); Laura Engel (ed.), *The Public's Open to Us All: Essays on Women and Performance in Eighteenth-Century England* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009).

[27] Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London, 1992), pp. 5 and 202.

[28] Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 3.

feminine domesticity and privacy generated a fundamental uncertainty towards the activities of such women, a hesitancy often shared by the women themselves. The ways in which they justified their public involvement varied, but for the most part it tended to be framed as an extension of, rather than a challenge to, women's domestic and familial responsibilities. Very few made the case for women's rights to engage in public life on the same terms, in the same ways and on all of the same issues as men.

While its conclusions about the ambivalent nature of women's public activities are largely similar, this thesis makes the case for the importance and high visibility of female singers in particular in debates about femininity, public life and professionalism. Women's professional music-making has generally remained the province of musicologists; its relationship to wider historical debates about women's engagement in public life has unfortunately often been overlooked by gender historians. This thesis suggests that there are considerable insights to be gained from drawing professional female musicians into the mainstream of gender history. Female singers, after all, possessed a unique and gender-specific talent: the female voice. Whereas women's political, economic, literary and artistic activities, and even their instrumental musical activities, could all (in theory at least) be done by men, no man could recreate the female singing voice. For this reason, female singers were presented with potentially far greater opportunities than the vast majority of women in early nineteenth-century society to pursue a public, professional career and an independent lifestyle. This does not mean that their public professionalism and artistry were not circumscribed by and framed with reference to particular codes of femininity that acted to soften and defuse the challenge such women might represent to dominant gender ideals. But they were highly conspicuous figures whose public role attracted much debate as contemporaries used

their example as a tool to think about their definitions of appropriate feminine behaviour. It is not coincidental, for instance, that the life of the professional female singer became symbolic of female independence in nineteenth-century fiction, perhaps most clearly in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876).[29]

Three further contexts render such an investigation of women's role in public musical life all the more significant and useful. The first is the general trend towards professionalization, and its associated practices of formal training, examination, and regulation, in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society. No longer simply confined to physicians, lawyers and the clergy, professionalism also inspired changes in how musicians, artists, authors and many others viewed themselves and their work. Penelope Corfield's general account of this process, however, dwells only incidentally on the effect of professionalization on women. She describes professionalism as a male-gendered discourse, but briefly suggests its meritocratic ethos laid it open to challenge by women.[30] This investigation joins with other explorations of women's professional work – for instance, as teachers, writers and painters – in expanding upon Corfield's suggestions and exploring further the extent to which women could adopt and adapt the rhetoric of professionalism to bolster their own position in public life.[31]

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[29] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Graham Handley (Oxford, 1984), see especially the conversations between Herr Klesmer and Gwendolen Harleth in ch. xxiii and between Deronda and Alcharisi in chs. li and liii. See also Mary Burgan, 'Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction' in Nicholas Temperley (ed.), *The Lost Chord: Essays on Victorian Music* (Bloomington, 1989), pp. 43, 54, 60 and 67.

[30] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 1995) is the best general account of the process of professionalisation. For her comments on women and professionalism specifically, see pp. 33-36, 188 and 213.

[31] See Christina de Bellaigue, 'The Development of Teaching as a Profession for Women before 1870', *The Historical Journal* 44/4 (2001), pp. 963-988; Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2000), especially ch. 2; and Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian women artists* (London, 1993), pp. 9-10, 78-86.

The second context is the expansion of the press and, in particular, the new functions it performed during this period.[32] Perhaps most important is the emergence of reviews of musical and theatrical performances in the newspapers, often in dedicated columns, during the second half of the eighteenth century. By the end of this period, the expansion of this function had led to the employment of specialist music critics on the leading papers. This fundamentally altered the ways in which singers could communicate with an increasingly national audience stretching well beyond those who could regularly attend their performances and significantly increased the public visibility of such women. Also of immense significance is the dramatic expansion in the periodical magazine press which, by the 1820s, led to the emergence of specialist music periodicals.[33] Not only did this again contribute to the increased flow of information between singers and audiences but, most importantly, specialist periodicals helped to crystallise a self-consciously 'musical' reading public and provided a forum in which debates about the situation of women in the music profession (among many other things) could take place. Not only did these changes in the press have significant, though rather mixed, implications for the agency of singers in controlling their image, they also contributed to the formation and expression of the more diverse types of responses to female singers emerging in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the differences between the specialist and non-specialist press.

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[32] For an overview of these see Michael Harris, 'London newspapers' in Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 413-33 and Aled Jones, 'The Press and the Printed Word' in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 369-80.

[33] On this process in general, see Brian Maidment, 'Periodicals and serial publications, 1780-1830' in Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 498-512. On music periodicals specifically, see Leanne Langley, 'The English Musical Journal in the Early Nineteenth Century', PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983.

Thirdly, as Vic Gatrell and Simon Dickie have observed, the behaviour of women was one of the key fracture lines between the 'polite' and the 'impolite' worlds of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain.[34] The behaviour of female singers, whether demure modesty, slapstick buffoonery or cross-dressed libertinism, was crucial to fixing in their audience's mind whether a particular form of entertainment was 'polite' and respectable or its opposite. The division of the audience into those who laughed and those who disapproved of the more rumbustious forms of behaviour pursued by some singers cannot necessarily be matched neatly to divisions of social class or status; as Gatrell and Dickie both emphasise, impolite culture was a feature that stretched right across the social hierarchy.[35] Rather, it was perhaps venue and musical genre that played the largest part in dictating audiences' expectations of appropriate behaviour on the part of female singers; as the evidence explored later will show, the theatre was a very different world to the concert hall. It is important to remember, however, that access to concert halls and the styles of music performed there was socially limited by the high cost of tickets, especially compared to the theatre. Consequently, while elites might well laugh along at the boisterous impoliteness of certain theatre performers, the polite and respectable culture of the concert world was more socially exclusive. Social status divisions cannot neatly be mapped on polite and impolite culture, but this did not mean they had no role to play.

[34] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2006), especially ch. 12, but also pp. 437-47; Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2011), pp. 4-7, 31-32, 38-39, 41-43.
[35] Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, pp. 9-10, 15-19; Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter*, pp. 20-32.

Parameters, scope and methodology

Certain parameters have been imposed on this project in order to give it a clear focus. Although the period covered in this thesis has been adopted partly in order to answer questions posed by gaps in the existing scholarship in this field, the chronological markers (*c*.1760 and *c*.1850) have been chosen with specific reasons in mind. Taking a long view, the history of professional singing by women in Britain begins during the cultural revolution following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Such singing took place as part of theatrical entertainments in the newly re-established theatres and as a result the female singers of Charles II's reign were simply a specialised form of actress from whom they were generally indistinguishable in wider discourse. Almost a century later, despite the appearance of some alternative non-theatrical venues for female musical performance, such as public concerts (occurring in London since 1672), the situation had altered little.[36] Such non-theatrical alternatives were few and far between and famous singers of the mid-century decades, such as Kitty Clive, were still in essence simply actresses specialising in music.[37] During the mid-eighteenth century, however, as Simon McVeigh argues, the increasing concentration of wealth and leisure in the capital during the nobility and gentry's social season precipitated a concomitant boom in the number, scale and ambition of subscription concert series.[38] After 1764, the year in which the innovative socialite Teresa Cornelys began hosting large-scale subscription concerts at Carlisle House under the direction first of Gioachino Cocchi and

[36] On the early history of the concert in London, see McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 1-8.
[37] See Berta Joncus's study of Clive for more details of her career in English opera: 'A Star is Born: Kitty Clive and Female Representation in Eighteenth-Century Musical Theatre', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2003.
[38] McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. xiv, 4-8, 14-27, 53-54 and see especially the tables detailing the subscription series taking place each season on pp. 234-37.

later Johann Christian Bach and Carl Friedrich Abel, at least one and often two or three major subscription concert series existed in London annually during the social season.[39] This development, alongside the increasing number of oratorio seasons held at the theatres during Lent, meant that there were now a far greater range of opportunities for female singers to be employed to sing in non-theatrical contexts.[40] From this point onwards, it became possible for women to choose to pursue careers as singers without having to act. Many did so in order to avoid, with varying degrees of success, the more pronounced social stigma attached to actresses. This separation enabled the concept of what was initially termed the 'public singer' to emerge from the shadow of the actress, which had considerable ramifications for the portrayal of both career paths in contemporary discourse. Although they remained closely related, not least through the hybrid form of the stage-singer, these two roles took on different characteristics. This study therefore begins at the point when the professional female singer became a recognised figure in public life and discourse.

At the other end of this period, in 1839, Elizabeth Masson and a committee of her professional female colleagues established the Society of Female Musicians (SFM). As Deborah Rohr has argued, the number of women active in the music profession by the 1830s had increased to such an extent that providing financial aid in retirement and ill health had become a pressing concern, with the press reporting with increasing frequency appeals on behalf of elderly and impoverished female singers such as Cecilia Davies.[41] Applications had been made by Masson to the Royal Society of Musicians to permit women to become members in their own right (rather than as wives and widows)

[39] *Ibid*., pp. 14, 54, and the tables of concert series on pp. 234-37.
[40] *Ibid*., pp. 28-32, and the tables of oratorio series on pp. 238-41.
[41] Rohr, 'Women and the Music Profession', pp. 310-12.

and gain entitlement to the pensions offered to their male colleagues. This was denied, leading the indefatigable Masson to establish a parallel organisation to assist independent female musicians.[42] This was only possible because of a sense of public value and legitimate status as musicians and artists which had gradually been accorded to such women during the first half of the nineteenth century. It would have been almost unthinkable to have conceived of such an institution in 1760. While Rohr has explained the short-term causes of the birth of the society, this thesis takes a longer-term approach, looking at these broader changes in understandings of the role of the professional female singer both in wider society and on the part of such women themselves. In order to explore the kind of women who made up the membership of this society and what they thought about their careers, this thesis examines the personal documents of two of its members, Clara Novello and Marianne Lincoln. Exploring their thoughts and feelings about their identity and their work as they began their careers as young female singers in the 1830s and 40s provides a deeper sense of context for the SFM's foundation. It is for this reason that the period covered by this thesis extends to *c*.1850.

Methodologically, this thesis adopts two contrasting but mutually supportive approaches. The first, contained in chapters one and two, is to examine the changing public discourse about professional female musicians as articulated in printed sources, primarily newspapers and the periodical press. The second is to present a series of case studies in chapters three, four and five of particular singers and their experiences. In part, this is because of the limitations of available evidence, such as letters, diaries, autobiographies and visual images, which is plentiful for only a handful of singers and almost non-existent for most. A case study approach therefore makes best use of the

[42] *Ibid*., p. 308.

available evidence, but, more importantly, it is the only way to illuminate fully the impact of conflicting attitudes towards female musicianship on the lives and careers of female singers and the degree of agency they possessed in responding to them. Examining the experience of particular singers in particular contexts also allows us to understand the precise social constituencies of the competing ideas about female singers expressed in the printed press and the influence these possessed over their careers and performances. Only through such an investigation can the relationships between printed words and social practice come into focus, allowing us to see how influential certain arguments and opinions were over various segments of the musical public on different occasions, as well as the presence of other pressures upon singers' behaviour that were not observed by those writing for the press. Furthermore, this thesis argues that although audiences possessed generalised attitudes towards female singers as a whole, they also responded to them as individuals possessing particular reputations and images. It therefore makes sense to view the singer in the round, as audiences did, understanding how off-stage behaviour could influence how audiences responded to singers on stage, or how visual images and signature songs might affect how an audience thought about a performer's moral character. These specific and important interconnections tell us much about the structures governing female performance and, indeed, the musical world more generally, insights which might be lost in a thematic treatment of this material. Although a case study approach inevitably limits the generalisations that can be made about female singers as a group, by comparing the strongly contrasting experiences of different singers it is possible to illustrate the wide spectrum of potential experiences of female singers more generally and make

meaningful statements about common themes that pervaded the lives and careers of all female singers.

This thesis, therefore, revolves around the experiences of eight singers whose documents offer a variety of perspectives on the situations faced by female singers and how they changed over time. In chronological order of birth, they are: Ann Catley (1745-1789), Elizabeth Linley (1754-1792), Cecilia Davies (*c*.1756-1836), Eliza Salmon (1787-1849), Catherine Stephens (1794-1882), Lucy Elizabeth ('Eliza') Vestris (1797-1856), Clara Novello (1818-1908) and Marianne Lincoln (1822-1885). These eight singers all share certain traits which determine the kinds of female singers to whom their experiences can be related. Most obviously, they were all fully professional singers, meaning that they, or family members and agents on their behalf, received payment for public (and sometimes private) vocal performance. Their experiences were consequently very different to those of amateur female musicians, though the two were, as we will see, often compared in significant ways. They were also all British and, with the exception of Davies who was from Ireland, all English, although Vestris (*née* Bartolozzi) had Italian and French parents and Novello's family also had some European roots. All were classed in the press as 'English singers', which was, as we will see, an important distinction in the eyes of the public from their foreign (and primarily Italian) counterparts, also present in large numbers in London throughout this period. Although foreign female singers will feature as comparative examples, the focus of this thesis is on the experience of indigenous female singers.

Significantly, five of the eight (Catley, Stephens, Vestris, Novello and Lincoln) were Londoners, a telling indication of the geographical centre of gravity of the British music profession. Although British provincial towns and cities also feature in their

careers increasingly as the period progresses, alongside tours to the continent (Davies, Novello and Lincoln) and to America (Vestris), all eight spent the majority of their careers working in the capital and, as a result, this thesis focuses on cultural life in London. Stephens, for instance, typically spent the months from December or January through to July engaged at Covent Garden and Drury Lane and performing at a wide variety of other London concerts, before undertaking a tour of provincial theatres and music festivals across the British Isles between August and November, a pattern not dissimilar to that of the other singers investigated in this study.[43] While her touring activity demonstrates that, outside the London social season, the best money was to be made in the provinces, her annual and prolonged spells working in the capital clearly underline that London during the season was the most dynamic centre of demand for music anywhere in Britain. Furthermore, London concerts also represented the focus of attention for the press, with only major provincial music festivals receiving comparable coverage. Few musicians could afford to ignore these facts. Consequently, the critical importance of the activities of professional female singers in London to this thesis is by no means a distortion of historical reality and accurately reflects both the career patterns of such women and their ambitions to make their name, first and foremost, on London's concert and theatre stages.

Another aspect that unites these eight women is their social origins. In accordance with the observations of Nancy Reich regarding the social status of female musicians in this era, all except Catley, whose parents were a hackney coachman and a

[43] Based on a reconstruction of Stephens's career pattern for the years 1813-1830 compiled primarily from newspaper advertisements.

washerwoman, came from the 'artist-artisan' class.[44] Linley, Davies, Salmon, Novello and Lincoln all came from families of professional musicians or related trades, while Stephens's and Vestris's fathers were a carver and gilder, and a print-seller and engraver respectively (although Stephens's sister and Vestris's mother both had theatrical and musical careers). As for the social status of their audiences, all eight worked within a cultural sphere which was at least dominated by, if not exclusive to, the wealthier members of British society, even if those who worked in the theatre may have performed for a more diverse audience.[45] At least until the last two decades of this period, ticket prices for musical performances were very high and often paid by subscription. The venues where these singers performed – the King's Theatre (Italian opera house), the patent theatres of Covent Garden, Drury Lane and the Haymarket (occasionally at the minor theatres as well), subscription or benefit concerts at the Hanover Square Rooms and other West End venues, oratorios at theatres in Lent or provincial cathedrals, churches and halls during a festival, and lecture-concerts in various institutes in the City of London – were, for the most part, the cultural institutions of only a limited section of British society. This heterogeneous and evolving group evades easy labels; clearly broader than the nobility and gentry (including, for instance, wealthier merchants, industrialists and members of the professions), yet far from 'middle-class', they are perhaps best characterised as 'propertied society', a term which emphasises the fact that significant wealth was the key criterion for admittance to the venues for professional musical performance encountered in this thesis.

[44] Reich, 'Women as Musicians', pp. 125-30.
[45] As noted by Jane Girdham, see *English Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Stephen Storace at Drury Lane* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 44-45.

One consequence of focusing on female singers who worked in such venues is that professional female performers working in other venues in London – the minor theatres, pleasure gardens, taverns and ale-houses, the streets – and for quite different audiences regrettably have been excluded from this study. This is not done from any motive of 'de-professionalizing' their work, as Dubois puts it, nor does it mean to imply that they are any less compelling as subjects of historical enquiry. Rather, necessary constraints on the scope of this project have limited its focus to professional female singers working in (largely) high-status venues. The possibilities for future investigation in this area, however, are broad indeed.[46]

While the eight singers at the heart of this study have been chosen in some instances for their similarities, in others it is their differences that prove most illuminating. Their social status at death, for instance, shows the varying life trajectories of professional female singers. Some, such as Catherine Stephens who became the Countess of Essex, ended their lives amid wealth and titles, while others such as Cecilia Davies or Eliza Salmon suffered severe financial hardship for many years prior to their deaths. Equally different are the types of careers they pursued within the music profession, from the almost entirely theatrical or operatic careers of Catley and Davies, to the non-theatrical concert careers of Linley, Salmon and Lincoln, with Stephens's, Vestris's and Novello's mixed careers falling somewhere in between. Furthermore, each

[46] There has been very little work on performers in these venues. The burgeoning growth and cultural importance of the illegitimate theatres is emphasised by Jane Moody in *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge, 2000), especially ch. 1, but apart from a section on Joseph Grimaldi and Edmund Kean (ch. 7), performers, and female performers especially, do not receive a great deal of attention. Singers at Vauxhall Gardens are discussed briefly in David Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History* (New Haven, 2011), especially pp. 281-87. For the taverns and streets, see Katie Barclay, 'Composing the Self: Gender, Subjectivity and Scottish Balladry', *Cultural and Social History* 7/3 (2010), pp. 337-53 (though this only focuses tangentially on ballad-singers who were paid for their performances); Tim Fulford, 'Fallen Ladies and Cruel Mothers: Ballad Singers and Ballad Heroines in the Eighteenth Century', *The Eighteenth Century* 47/2 (2006), pp. 309-29; and Oskar Cox Jensen, 'Napoleon and British Popular Song, 1797-1822', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, [to be submitted], ch. 5 'Song II: Performers and Performance'.

of the case study chapters will focus on different sections of these singers' careers, and thereby will seek to encapsulate between them the different stages in the life-cycle of a singer, from debut and early career (especially Stephens, Vestris, Novello and Lincoln) through to retirement and old age (Davies and Salmon).

Perhaps most significant of all, however, is the question of fame and success. Nearly all of these singers experienced extraordinary success and the fame it brought with it. Although for singers such as Linley, Stephens, Davies and Salmon retirement brought a shift to a greater or lesser extent in their experience of celebrity, most of these eight singers achieved and retained remarkable fame and renown for much of their lives. Only Lincoln can be said to have been an 'ordinary' singer who was relatively little-known during her career, especially when compared to the astronomical fame of some of her contemporaries, such as Jenny Lind.[47] Although Lincoln briefly achieved prominence, at least within the musical world, as a result of her invitation to perform at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, her experience provides a useful counterweight to that of her more famous fellow professionals. The reason for this bias towards famous and successful singers, which evidently excludes many singers who struggled through failure and obscurity, is quite simply the limited availability of source material, such as letters and diaries, which is almost non-existent for those who did not at least achieve a modicum of fame during their careers, and only really available in substantial quantities for the most famous singers, individuals whose documentary traces their descendants and later collectors felt were worth preserving. Even for the famous singers considered here, manuscript material can be non-existent (Catley), indirect (Linley) or very limited

[47] On the topic of Lind's fame, see George Biddlecombe, 'The Construction of a Cultural Icon: The Case of Jenny Lind' in Peter Horton and Bennett Zon (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies: Volume 3* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 45-61.

(Salmon), which necessitates a heavier reliance on printed sources and the inferences that can be derived from them about singers' thoughts and feelings than is ideal, but at least such printed material is comparatively abundant for such famous individuals.

This emphasis on a few prominent individuals is problematic in the sense that celebrity breeds exceptional and unusual behaviour, as the power it confers on its bearers frequently renders them immune, or at least less likely to comply, with social prescriptions that structured the lives of their contemporary professional colleagues and women in wider society more generally. However, by raising the public profile and awareness of these women's behaviour, fame can also be viewed more positively, as a means by which they acquired exceptional degrees of influence in shaping the patterns of behaviour of other less famous singers and, arguably, women in general.[48] In some circumstances, therefore, it is appropriate to see them as simply the most striking or extreme examples of general patterns of behaviour among singers of lesser stature. The difficulty is in pinpointing precisely which behaviours were considered and sometimes condemned as celebrity eccentricity and which were viewed as templates or inspirational actions which other women in the profession might follow, a question which will recur throughout the analysis presented in this thesis.

[48] For reflections on these problems by theorists of celebrity, see Richard Dyer, *Stars* (New edn., London, 1998; first published 1979), pp. 20-59, especially pp. 43 and 54-59; Chris Rojek, *Celebrity* (London, 2001), pp. 31-33 and 46-47; and Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London, 2004), pp. 23-26, 102-07 and 118-22. A particularly interesting case study which discusses some of these themes in practice, albeit in a twentieth-century context, is Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London, 1994), ch. 5 ('Feminine Fascinations: A question of identification?').

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Laying out the case for the serious study of professional female musicians on their own terms at the opening of his pioneering study of the prima donna in 1984, Rupert Christiansen expressed the hope that 'one day someone combining the skills of historian, musicologist and sociologist will dig it deeper'.[49] Although in an age of disciplinary specialisation the hope of finding such skills combined in a single individual is unlikely, Christiansen's wish is slowly being fulfilled by the combined work of many scholars in recent years, gradually drawing together the insights of social and cultural history with those of musicology. This thesis is a contribution to this process on the part of an historian and is intended to be useful to musicologists and historians alike. It remains, however, a work of history first and foremost and widespread discussion of the music that these women sung is not a feature of what follows. Rather, it is the relationship between music and society – how the production and consumption of music is shaped by inequalities of power, wealth and status within society, and in this case, by conceptions of gender in particular – that is at the heart of this thesis.

Some remarkable changes occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century in attitudes towards professional female singers. For the first time, they found audiences and advocates in the press willing to applaud them as professionals and to acknowledge them as 'serious artists' occupying a legitimate space in public life. Yet for most in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society, female public professionalism and artistry, and the independence it offered to women, was always in tension with the valorisation of feminine domesticity, modesty and diffidence. Female singers negotiated

[49] Christiansen, *Prima Donna*, p. 4.

their way through these conflicting discourses in a variety of ways, but they were keenly aware, as the following chapters will demonstrate, of the vital importance of their gender in shaping how audiences responded to them and how they thought about themselves. Looked at from the perspective of the female performer, rather than the male composer, the musical world seems a very different place, and the history we can write about it far less triumphant. It is a history well worth writing, if we wish to chart more accurately the changing place of the professional female singer within British society in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and, from a broader perspective, the influence of gender on the development of British culture as a whole.

Chapter One

Amateur accomplishments, professional singing and femininity in the late eighteenth century

> On a fair Syren we have fixed our choice,
> And wait with longing ears for BARCLAY's voice.
> When lo! – the Nymph by bashful awe betrayed,
> Her fault'ring tongue denies her looks its aid,
> But so much innocence adorns her fears,
> And with such GRACE her modesty she wears,
> By her disorder, all her charms increase,
> And, had she sung better, she'd PLEAS'D us LESS![1]

On the 23 May 1792, Caroline Barclay made her debut as a singer-actress at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket in Prince Hoare's and Stephen Storace's English opera, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, the event to which this spectator-turned-poet refers.[2] The newly-built theatre, normally London's Italian opera house and pleasure ground of the aristocracy,[3] was vast, with a capacity of over three thousand,[4] so it is perhaps no surprise that the young debutante was nervous. It might be assumed that a 'fault'ring tongue' would have sabotaged a stage debut. Yet, as this adoring poem reveals, for at least some of her audience, a display of apparent nervousness in such an undertaking by a beautiful young woman was in fact more pleasing than a confident, polished and professional

[1] *Evening Mail*, 28-30 May 1792.
[2] See [Prince Hoare], *Dido, Queen of Carthage; An Opera. With the Masque of Neptune's Prophecy* ([London], 1792), with music by Stephen Storace *et al*. This was Barclay's first theatre performance, but she had made her professional singing debut a few months earlier in the oratorio series at the King's Theatre (see *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 25 Feb. 1792).
[3] During the demolition and rebuilding of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane between 1791 and 1794, the theatre company under Richard Brinsley Sheridan took up temporary residence at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, performing on nights when the Italian opera company was not using the theatre. See Judith Milhous, Gabriella Dideriksen and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London, Vol. II: The Pantheon Opera and its Aftermath 1789-1795* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 183-85.
[4] Milhous, Dideriksen and Hume, *Italian Opera*, p. 296.

musical performance. The poet, signing himself 'ABDALLAH' and thus identifying himself with Barclay's fictional lover in the opera, sees her 'bashful awe' as highly significant, because it conformed to a particular type of attractive, virtuous femininity, characterised by 'innocence', 'modesty' and fear of displaying oneself in public. Importantly, he believes better singing – that of experienced professionals, for instance – would put the performer outside the sphere of this type of femininity and send quite different, if not entirely opposite, messages to audience members about the performer's personality.

This type of response to professional female singing was a common one in the eighteenth century. In subtle, but important ways, it demonstrates the influence that notions of the ideal amateur female musician had over responses to and interpretations of professional female singing. Outside of the cheaper galleries at the patent theatres, the vast majority of the audience members at professional musical performances were from wealthy, propertied society. Nearly all would have been familiar with, and most likely performed as, or listened to, amateur female musicians in domestic contexts. Indeed, this kind of female singing would probably have been a more frequent part of their musical lives than attendance at concerts of professional singing. They were consequently well versed in the set of assumptions and expectations that governed when and how female amateurs should perform. As we shall see, these ideals about amateur performance were reflected in conduct books, novels and in the everyday behaviour of young women of propertied society. As Richard Leppert has argued, these codes governing amateur

female performance formed part of a system by which gender roles and hierarchies were inculcated and reinforced in eighteenth-century elite society.[5]

While Leppert focused on the effect of these ideals on amateur female performance, this chapter examines the striking extent to which concert and theatre audiences in the late eighteenth century applied some of these same ideas about amateur performance in their assessment of professional singers. The amateur ideal emphasised the careful control of the circumstances of female performance and understood a reluctant attitude towards self-display to be a sign of feminine virtue. Professional female singers were thought to court, rather than reject, public attention and admiration and to have no qualms about displaying themselves and their abilities in front of vast crowds. This implied a renunciation of the modesty and diffidence which were thought to denote a virtuous female character. While not shared by everyone in the eighteenth-century musical world, it was this tendency to view professional female performance through the lens of amateur ideals that lay at the heart of many of the negative assumptions made about the characters of professional female singers in this period. In many ways, the professional female singer was conceived as an aberration, something to be explained away as a result of the poverty, low social status and consequent lack of polite education on the part of the singer, or as the product of a vain, conceited and immoral character, or both. Professional singing was only to be accepted as compatible with feminine propriety if accompanied by a display of diffidence and nerves on the part of the singer to signal their inner virtue. This attitude dominated the response of the majority of high society audiences in the late eighteenth century to professional female

[5] Richard Leppert, *Music and image: Domesticity, ideology and socio-cultural formation in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 28-45, 147-68 and Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation and the History of the Body* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 67-77.

singing and, though it evolved and was challenged by competing discourses in the early nineteenth century, continued long after.

This chapter is, therefore, mainly concerned with a relatively small social group, consisting of those with sufficient income both to engage in amateur music-making and imbibe its ideals and norms, and to attend regularly expensive professional musical performances in London. They are collectively referred to here as 'propertied society' for two reasons. Firstly, it was the possession of substantial wealth and leisure time, rather than any other characteristic, such as a specific rank, that enabled participation in the relatively commercially-oriented musical world and in amateur music-making.[6] Aside from a shared income level, 'propertied society' was diverse, incorporating wealthier merchants, industrialists and members of the professions alongside the nobility and gentry, and encompassing a range of musical tastes from Italian opera to Handel oratorio or theatre music. Despite these other differences, however, for the most part, they shared a common understanding of the relationship between amateur performance and feminine propriety which shaped their responses to professional singers in similar ways and which rendered them quite distinct from other, less wealthy sections of society. Secondly, the term 'propertied' is also particularly apposite because it was the concerns of 'property' that, in many ways, fuelled the training of young girls in accomplishments such as amateur music-making and dictated their conformity with

[6] This is not to say that social status had no role to play in shaping late eighteenth-century audiences. Simon McVeigh notes that some subscription lists for musical events were controlled by 'lady patronesses' to ensure exclusivity. Nevertheless, he argues that this system 'diminished at fashionable concerts towards the end of the 18th century' ('A Free Trade in Music: London during the Long 19th Century in a European Perspective', *Journal of Modern European History* 5/1 (2007), p. 68). Though he is keen to emphasise that the 'reins of taste were firmly in the hands of the higher aristocracy' at subscription concerts, he is also clear that 'anyone who could pass himself off as a well-educated gentleman of good bearing' could attend and 'money opened doors without too many questions' (*Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 11-12).

particular codes of feminine propriety. The amateur female performance ideals of this social group were intricately bound up with a desire to control, and profit by, the transfer of property and wealth between families via the marriage market.

It is possible, in fact, to be quite specific about the disposable income level required to take part in the capital's musical world. Take, for instance, a hypothetical family of four – two parents and two daughters – and their musical expenditure for a winter season in London at some point during the 1780s. The following costs are based on a fairly substantial amount of musical activity but in general the selection of the second-best seats. Although unable to afford the subscription cost of 20 guineas for the Italian opera, they enjoy occasional visits to hear the newly-arrived castrato or prima donna, attending two times during the season and sitting in the gallery, for which tickets cost 5*s*.[7] They are able to afford, however, the cheaper, though still expensive, subscription rates of a concert series, perhaps the Professional Concert, at 5 guineas a season.[8] Charitably inclined, they attend a concert in aid of the New Musical Fund and sit in the first gallery at the King's Theatre for 5*s*.[9] As lovers of Handel's oratorios they attend four performances at the patent theatres during Lent, sitting in the pit for 5*s*.,[10] and as keen theatre-goers they attend eight performances at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, sitting in the pit for 3*s*. 6*d*.[11] Of course, there are four of them, so assuming they

[7] Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London, Vol. I: The King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1778-1791* (Oxford, 1995), p. 6 for season subscription price, p. 4 for box, pit (both 10*s*. 6*d*.) and gallery prices.

[8] McVeigh, *Concert Life*, p. 236 for Professional Concert subscription price.

[9] See, for instance, the advertisement in the *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, 29 Mar. 1787 for the New Musical Fund concert at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, where box and pit tickets cost 10*s*. 6*d*., first gallery 5*s*. and second gallery 3*s*.

[10] McVeigh, *Concert Life*, pp. 239-40 for 1780s oratorio prices, generally either: box 10*s*. 6*d*., pit 5*s*., first gallery 3*s*. 6*d*., second gallery 2*s*., or box 5*s*., pit 3*s*., first gallery 2*s*., second gallery 1*s*.

[11] Jane Girdham, *English Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Stephen Storace at Drury Lane* (Oxford, 1997), table of theatre prices on p. 45: box 6*s*., pit 3*s*. 6*d*., first gallery 2*s*., second gallery 1*s*., all available for half price entry after the mainpiece of the evening's entertainment.

all attend every performance, these costs must be multiplied by four, and ancillary costs of an evening out, such as transportation and refreshments, though not counted here, would have added to the cost. On top of this, the daughters are keen to cultivate their musical accomplishments and so, while they do not own an instrument of their own in their rented London town house, they make sure to hire one from John Broadwood's workshop, perhaps a modest square piano for 10*s*. 6*d*. a month from January to May.[12] Naturally, the daughters are eager to improve their skills and so a music master must be hired, who agrees to teach both daughters together for 5*s*. per week during their stay in town.[13] And of course the daughters need something to play, and are quite taken with some of the latest songs in the operas and theatre productions they have attended, purchasing eight songs for them to learn at 1*s*. each.[14] In total, when the father of this hypothetical family comes to do his accounts, he realises, perhaps to his dismay, that his family have spent almost forty guineas on musical activities in a single season, despite attending on average little more than one musical performance a week. Considering that the family almost certainly would have wished to enjoy other expensive cultural pursuits and the daughters certainly would require education in polite accomplishments other than music, as well as the need to maintain both a house in the country and at least

[12] Michael Cole, *Broadwood Square Pianos: Their Historical Context, and Technical Development Together with a new Biography of John Broadwood* (Cheltenham, 2005), p. 74.

[13] Deborah Rohr notes that discovering the rates that music teachers were paid is extremely tricky. From the sources she cites, it would appear that 5*s*. was a middle-range rate in the late eighteenth century. See Deborah Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians, 1750-1850: A Profession of Artisans* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 136-37.

[14] There was a wide range of sheet music available in different formats and at different prices. A single theatre song in this period was normally priced at 1*s*., see for instance the 'Song of the PAGE, sung by Mrs. Martyr, in the Comedy of the FOLLIES of a DAY. Composed by Mr. Shield, price 1*s*.' advertised in the *Daily Universal Register*, 1 Jan. 1785. The music of an entire English opera, however, such as *Fontainbleau*, also by William Shield, advertised in the same place, could cost as much as 10*s*. 6*d*. For a full range of prices of vocal and keyboard music, see the advertised price lists of the music-sellers Longman and Broderip in the *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, 30 Oct. 1788 and 9 May 1789.

rent one in the capital during the season, our hypothetical family's total income must be very high indeed.

To gain an idea of what that income might be, we can compare this hypothetical example to real patterns of recreational expenditure extracted by Benjamin Heller from a sample of London diaries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[15] Heller notes John Trusler's estimation in his *London Adviser and Guide* (1786) that a family of eight (including children, servants and dependents) could perhaps afford to spend around £38 per year on all commercial recreational and 'pleasure' activities (not just music), if they possessed a total income of around £250.[16] Those on lesser incomes were effectively prohibited from regular attendance at musical performances: the trainee doctor James Ware on an income of £72 in the 1770s spent just £3 on all commercial recreation; actress and writer Elizabeth Inchbald put just £2 out of a total of £121 to similar purposes in 1781; while in the early 1760s, a lawyer such as George Herbert spent £11 of his £152 income on his recreational pursuits.[17] By contrast, those on greater incomes could approach the levels of spending shown by our hypothetical family much more easily. George, 2nd Earl Spencer disbursed £4,941 in the half year between December 1782 and June 1783, of which (after discounting over £400 of gambling losses and club expenses) around £30 went towards other recreational activities.[18] Lady Anna Grenville, with an expenditure totalling £1,439 during just the first six months of 1807, spent £72 on commercial recreational pursuits including twenty-seven visits to the opera

[15] Benjamin Heller, 'Leisure and pleasure in London society, 1760-1820: an agent-centred approach', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2009, pp. 116-28.
[16] *Ibid*., p. 121 (Table 5), which is based on John Trusler, *The London Adviser and Guide: Containing Every Instruction and Information useful and necessary to Persons Living in London, and coming to reside there* (London, 1786), pp. 167-77.
[17] Heller, 'Leisure and pleasure', pp. 117-18, Table 2 (Ware), 118, Table 3 (Inchbald) and 118-20, Table 4 (Herbert).
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 125-26, Table 9.

(where she shared her box subscription with a group of fellow upper-class ladies) and nineteen trips to the theatre.[19] What this suggests is that in order to be able to afford the amount of musical activity pursued by our hypothetical family, they would need to possess a total income amounting to at least several hundred, if not several thousand pounds per annum.

Of course, it is possible to speculate endlessly about how much music different families consumed, the role of taste being a particularly important problem, and it is entirely possible, and almost certainly true, that many families on lesser incomes attended a handful of musical events, perhaps occupying the cheaper gallery seats in the theatres for one or two shillings, for instance.[20] But this exercise should serve to emphasise the point that those who could afford both the necessary materials for amateur music-making and attend concerts of professional singing regularly were a relatively small and wealthy group. By far the most significant consumers of music in this period, their attitudes towards musical performance were consequently highly influential in shaping the 'musical world' in general and the careers of female singers in particular. It is to tracing these attitudes, and particularly their understandings of amateur female performance, that we now turn.

The amateur ideal in conduct literature

Perhaps the most obvious place to start to observe the outlines of the assumptions structuring amateur female musical performance is the diverse and eclectic set of texts – sermons, essays, letters, lectures, magazines, collections of aphorisms,

[19] *Ibid*., pp. 122-24, Table 7.
[20] See note 11.

morality tales, and plans for the conduct of female education – which sought to guide the behaviour of young women of propertied society. As well as offering religious instruction, guidance on morality and advice on how to conduct oneself in society, these texts also extensively discussed the education of girls both in topics of polite conversation, such as history, geography, or modern languages as well as the activities collectively known as 'accomplishments', including needlework, drawing, painting, dancing and music, and in particular, dwelt upon the correct use or performance of these skills once acquired. As recent scholarship has established, this was an area of public debate which saw significant new developments from the 1780s and 1790s, and in particular a hardening of attitudes towards female accomplishments, increasingly seen, by writers ranging in perspective from Hannah More to Mary Wollstonecraft, as part of a culture of vanity and display cultivated at the expense of nurturing inner virtue or reasoning and critical faculties.[21] Whether this was indicative, however, of a wholesale change of attitudes or practice in educating girls in the 'elegant accomplishments' is debateable; popular earlier works such as James Fordyce's *Sermons to young women* (1766) and Hester Chapone's *Letters on the improvement of the mind, addressed to a young lady* (1773), which adopted a less condemnatory attitude towards accomplishments, continued to be frequently reprinted into the early nineteenth century.[22] Although

[21] Jenny Davidson, 'Professional Education and Female Accomplishments: Gender and Education in Maria Edgeworth's *Patronage*' in Linda V. Troost (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Women: Studies in Their Lives, Work, and Culture* (5 vols., New York, 2006), iv, pp. 274-75; Anne Stott, 'Evangelicalism and Enlightenment: The Educational Agenda of Hannah More' in Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (eds.), *Educating the child in Enlightenment Britain: beliefs, cultures, practices* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 49-50; Anne Stott, '"A singular injustice towards women": Hannah More, Evangelicalism and female education' in Sue Morgan (ed.), *Women, religion and feminism in Britain, 1750-1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 24-26 and *passim*.; Deborah Simonton, 'Women and Education' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850: An Introduction* (London, 2005), pp. 45-46.

[22] At least fourteen further editions of James Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women: In Two Volumes* (2 vols., London, 1766) appeared between 1766 and 1814 (excluding non-London editions), while at least thirty-six

writers therefore disagreed about the compatibility of accomplishments with the nurturing of virtue or reason, significantly they all shared a concern to guide women away from seeking opportunities to display themselves and show off their talents, either through, in earlier works, advocating strict guidelines on when, how, what and for whom amateur female musicians should perform or, in later, more hostile works, advocating the minimisation or even rejection of the vain display of accomplishments as part of a young woman's education.

Examining the qualities and behaviour that these conduct writers ascribed to the ideal amateur performer reveals several patterns crucial to understanding why amateur performance took the form that it did, but which, as we shall see later, also explain the particular ways in which contemporaries reacted to professional performers. Perhaps the most fundamental point was that female amateur performance should be a purely domestic affair, separated, as far as possible, from anything resembling public performance. Amateurs were advised, in the words of Maria Edgeworth reproduced in a collection of easily memorised aphorisms, that 'the elegant accomplishments of music and drawing should be considered as domestic occupations, and not as matters of competition or exhibition'.[23] Hester Chapone concurred that the primary audience for amateur female music-making was the family: 'if you have any acquired talent of entertainment, such as music, painting, or the like, your own family are those, before whom you should most wish to excel, and for whom you should always be ready to

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further editions of Mrs. [Hester] Chapone's *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, addressed to a young lady* (2 vols., London, 1773) appeared between 1774 and 1859 (excluding non-London editions).

[23] *Aphorisms on Education: Selected from the works of the most celebrated English, French, and Latin writers, on that subject: And intended as a Vade-Mecum for Parents, Guardians, Preceptors, Governesses, &c.* (London, 1800), pp. 88-89.

exert yourself'.[24] This emphasis was echoed by Hannah More who reminded her readers that, far from being used to 'catch the eye of the multitude', accomplishments were to be

> exerted in the shade, to enliven retirement, to heighten the endearing pleasures of social intercourse, and to embellish the narrow but charming circle of family delights. To this amiable purpose, a truly good and well educated young lady will dedicate her more elegant accomplishments, instead of exhibiting them to attract admiration.[25]

So much emphasis was laid by conduct writers on the importance of the family in this context because young women were thought to be prone to vanity and an uncontrollable desire for admiration. Of those girls who let their accomplishments 'lie dormant, till the arrival of a stranger gives [them] spirit in the performance', Chapone observed, 'you may be sure that vanity is the only motive of the exertion'.[26] A desire to 'astonish the public' was to be shunned by young women, argued Erasmus Darwin, because performances of accomplishments which 'consist in an exhibition of the person… are liable to be attended with vanity, and to extinguish the blush of youthful timidity; which is in young ladies the most powerful of their exterior charms'.[27] In a vociferous attack on girls' boarding schools and their teaching of polite accomplishments, John Bennett asked:

> What is it these fair pupils are taught to pant for? Admiration. What is proposed as the highest object, the *ne plus ultra* of all their endeavours? Admiration. What are considered as the steps to it? Elegant dress, appearance, equipage, wit, smartness, dancing, singing…. With *such*

[24] Chapone, *Letters*, ii, 43.
[25] [Hannah More], *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally designed for Young Ladies* (London, 1777), pp. 134-35.
[26] Chapone, *Letters*, ii, 43-44.
[27] Erasmus Darwin, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education, in Boarding Schools* (Derby, 1797), p. 12.

> impressions, how vain and *groveling* [*sic*.] must be the heart! How full of petty *jealousies*, and paltry *competitions*![28]

Conduct writers sought to expose and condemn vanity wherever they perceived it in amateur female performance. One common criticism was of those who 'speak to their own disadvantage' from a 'desire to be contradicted. We call this *humility with a hook*, for they only stoop or affect appearing humble to hook in praise. Never let yourself be asked a second time, when the company is to be entertained with your talents; nothing is more disagreeable'. Such false humility was frequently unmasked as counter-productive, for if 'an hour must be spent in entreaties, before they shew their talents,… the pleasure of performance is far from a compensation for the trouble that company is at for the purchase of a song'.[29] Education in music might, if properly deployed, lead to the innocent delight of a familial home, but could just as easily, it was warned, encourage pernicious habits of manipulation, insincerity, vanity, pride and conceit among impressionable young women faced with the pressures of standing out in the marriage market.

Unsurprisingly, anxiety about the vanity of amateur female performers reached its peak when performance occurred in the presence of young men, at which point indirect, or even direct, warnings of sexual danger befalling unwary young women were common. This was especially so in the morality tale genre of conduct literature. To illustrate a section on flattery in her *Miscellaneous Lessons* (1782), Ellin Devis found a musical example from Aesop's fables particularly appropriate. In language suitable for

[28] A Clergyman of the Church of England [John Bennett], *Strictures on Female Education; Chiefly as it relates to the culture of the heart, in four essays* (London, [1787]), pp. 144-45.
[29] Mrs. Le Prince de Beaumont [Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont], *The Young Ladies Magazine, or Dialogues Between A Discreet Governess and Several Young Ladies of the first Rank under her Education* (4 vols., London, 1760), i, 7.

the innocence of young ladies, but laced with sexual allusion, the fable relates the story of a raven, a distinctly unmusical bird, safely perched high in a tree 'with a fine piece of cheese in her mouth'. A passing fox wishing to 'possess himself of so delicious a morsel', flatters the raven, saying: 'Dear madam,… I am extremely glad to have the pleasure of seeing you this morning: your beautiful shape, and shining feathers, are the delight of my eyes; and would you condescend to favour me with a song, I doubt not but your voice is equal to the rest of your accomplishments'. 'Deluded with this flattering speech', the raven opens her mouth, the cheese falls to the ground and the fox runs off with it, 'leaving the Raven to lament her credulous vanity at her leisure'.[30] This long tradition of depicting flattery's hold on young women as at its most powerful and dangerous in the context of musical performance only reinforced the suspicions of contemporary observers that a desire for praise and admiration of musical talent signalled at the very least a naïve and impressionable nature and at the very worst a degraded, self-indulgent and careless character on the high road to a life of vice. Such sentiments were even more directly stated in *The Young Ladies Magazine* (1760) which recounted a story of two vain and jealous sisters who compete with each other at the harpsichord to try and win the praise of a handsome young man, a celebrated connoisseur of the instrument. One of the sisters is eventually judged by the young man to be the better player, and he offers to continue her instruction in music himself. The young man's motives are far from solely musical, however, and during the course of these lessons, his flattery leads inexorably to her seduction and ruin.[31]

[30] Ellin Devis, *Miscellaneous Lessons, Designed for the Use of Young Ladies. On a New Plan* (London, 1782), pp. 27-28. Devis borrowed the version of this fable printed in R. and J. Dodsley's edition of *Select Fables of Esop and other fabulists* (London, 1761), pp. 10-11.
[31] Beaumont, *Young Ladies Magazine*, iv, 141-43.

To counter these dangerous tendencies, some even went as far as to advocate that amateur female performance should ideally take place without any audience at all, entirely for the amusement of the performer and the amelioration and regulation of her own private feelings. Chapone suggested that 'the use of both these arts [music and drawing] is more for yourself than for others' and sought to kill any nascent vanity at the root by stating that 'a high degree of excellence' was very rare in those who were not trained specifically and solely for performance, meaning that 'your own partial family are perhaps the only persons who would not much rather be entertained by the performance of a professor than by yours'. However, she emphasised that 'to have the power of filling up agreeably those intervals of time, which too often hang heavily on the hands of a woman' was of great benefit.[32] Likewise, John Bennett advocated the performance mode of 'Louisa', his fictional paragon of virtue, who 'opens every morning, and closes every day with an hymn of praise to her bountiful Creator, which is chanted, to the harpsichord, with so sweet a voice' in splendid isolation, although it is of course greatly appreciated by her family who hear her music echoing through the house.[33] In this way, the potential for female music-making to be motivated by self-interested pride or vanity is effaced.

It is also significant that Bennett chose to have Louisa sing a 'hymn of praise', as a particularly beautiful adjunct to the prayers that a virtuous young woman would be expected to utter routinely at the start and end of each day. Embedding amateur female musical performance within private religious worship and domestic piety was another common strategy in the quest to shape young women's moral characters, a task made

[32] Chapone, *Letters*, ii, 117-18.
[33] Rev. John Bennett, *Letters to a Young Lady, on a variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects, Calculated to Improve the Heart, to Form the Manners, and Enlighten the Understanding* (2 vols., Warrington, 1789), ii, 53.

more difficult by the perennial popularity of theatre love songs. Bennett lamented that 'many songs are couched in such *indelicate* language, and convey such a train of *luscious* ideas, as are only calculated to soil the purity of a *youthful* mind' and consequently recommended the performance of '*sacred*' rather than '*profane*' songs, asking 'what can be superior to some passages of Judas Maccabæus or the Messiah?'.[34] James Fordyce was equally dismayed by the tendency of young women to perform the latest 'insipid song' from 'places of public entertainment' rather than songs whose sentiments were 'elevated and virtuous' or designed to 'lift [their] hearts to heaven, [and] prove a kind of prelude to the airs of paradise'.[35] Hannah More, meanwhile, asked

> Christian parents… whether music, which fills up no trifling portion of their daughters' time, does not fill it without any moral end, or even specific object? whether some of the favourite songs of polished societies are not amatory, are not Anacreontic, more than quite become the modest lips of innocent youth and delicate beauty?[36]

Replacing the licentious songs of the theatre or some of the more suggestive folk songs with chaste oratorio arias was repeatedly advocated as a way of mitigating any corrupting tendencies of musical performance.

All of these different concerns came together in the attempt of many conduct writers to emphasise the differences in ability, purpose and status of amateur and professional female singing. Although Ann Murry suggested young women might chose to observe and follow the example of professional singers as models of vocal technique, they should always accept they 'may not be able to attain the same degree of

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[34] *Ibid*., i, pp. 234-35.
[35] Fordyce, *Sermons*, i, 260-62.
[36] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. With a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune* (2 vols., London, 1799), i, 108.

excellence'.[37] Indeed, Charles Allen argued, 'it is no shame for a young lady to be out-done in music by an opera-singer… who is a complete master of it, who has employed the greatest part, if not the whole of his time, in learning it, and gets his livelihood by practising and teaching it'. Rather, 'it would be a shame for her to be equal to [them]; because, in that case, she must be supposed to have employed more time in it, than is consistent with her learning all the other parts of a *complete education*'.[38] The idea that excellence in any one accomplishment indicated either a defective education in other areas, or a flagrant disregard of the numerous 'duties' to be performed by a young woman, was a common one. Isabella Howard, the dowager countess of Carlisle, advised, 'if your genius direct you to the study of musick, treat it as a repose from business, not as that of your life',[39] while Hannah More, accepting that 'well-bred young women should learn to dance, sing, recite and draw', nevertheless insisted that

> the end of a good education is not that they may become dancers, singers, players or painters: its real object is to make them good daughters, good wives, good mistresses, good members of society, and good christians. The above qualifications therefore are intended to *adorn* their *leisure*, not to *employ* their *lives*.[40]

More's implication, of course, is that a professional musical education necessarily disqualified its possessor from acquiring the attributes required of 'good daughters, good wives, good mistresses, good members of society, and good christians'.

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[37] Ann Murry, *Mentoria: or, the Young Ladies Instructor, in Familiar Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects: Calculated to improve Young Minds, In the Essential, as well as Ornamental Parts of Female Education* (Dublin, 1779), pp. 7-8.
[38] [Charles Allen], *The Polite Lady: Or, a Course of Female Education. In a Series of Letters, From a Mother to her Daughter* (London, 1760), p. 24.
[39] Countess Dowager of Carlisle [Isabella Howard], *Thoughts in the form of Maxims Addressed to Young Ladies, on their first Establishment in the World* (London, 1789), p. 90.
[40] [More], *Essays*, p. 133.

This attempt to distinguish professional and amateur performance intensified towards the end of the century, signalling increasing fears that such boundaries were collapsing as amateurs became too eager to emulate their professional idols. This anxiety found its most forceful expression in More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) in which she declared: 'it must be owned, that… the life of a young lady… now too much resembles that of an actress; the morning is all rehearsal, and the evening is all performance' the worst effect of which was that 'the excessive commendation which the visitor is expected to pay for his entertainment, not only keeps alive the flame of vanity in the artist by constant fuel, but is not seldom exacted at a price which a veracity at all strict would grudge'.[41] This daily round of performance was corrosive of female character and virtue through its incitement of vanity and destructive of wider morality through the forced insincerity of the polite audience. Only by restoring the barriers between the amateur and the professional performer and thereby constraining the performance of accomplishments to their proper sphere, could female propriety be protected and their virtue secured. By portraying the ideal amateur female performer as the only type of female music-making that accorded with feminine propriety, the conduct writers effectively excluded professional female performers – the 'other' against which they defined their amateur ideal – from the gender norms of propertied society, or at least set very specific terms upon which they might be accepted.

Gauging quite how influential and widely-read the views of conduct writers were is of course rather difficult. On one hand, numerous editions over several decades of some of the most popular works indicate that such books were regularly placed into

[41] More, *Strictures*, pp. 105-06.

the hands of young girls by anxious parents.[42] On the other, there is evidence to show that many of the specific points of advice they contained regarding musical performance were clearly being ignored. Nancy Mace's important study of sheet music publications entered at Stationers' Hall reveals that amateur musicians bought popular songs from the pleasure gardens and theatres in far greater numbers than works of a religious or moralising nature, evidently ignoring the recommended musical diet for a young lady given by the conduct writers.[43] Clearly, caution is required in accepting the views of conduct writers as indicative in any straightforward sense of the thoughts and attitudes of young women to musical performance, although they may, perhaps, have corresponded more closely with the attitude of their parents. However, the influence of similar ideas about the rules governing virtuous and proper amateur female performance are readily found in sources famously far from parental control: novels. Stereotypically the quintessential literary genre of the young eighteenth-century woman of means, the presence of such ideas and attitudes in novels further suggests that these notions were widely influential in shaping attitudes towards female performance at all generational levels of propertied society.[44] Furthermore, by placing female musical performance within scenes imitative of real-life social occasions, these novels describe in more detail some of the precise behaviours that young women were encouraged to pursue or avoid when it came to musical performance.

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[42] See note 22.

[43] Nancy A. Mace, 'The Market for Music in the Late Eighteenth Century and the Entry Books of the Stationers' Company', *The Library*, 7th series, 10/2 (2009), pp. 167, 170-71, 175.

[44] The links between conduct literature and the novel have been discussed more generally by Kathryn Sutherland, 'Writings on education and conduct: arguments for female improvement' in Vivien Jones (ed.), *Women and literature in Britain, 1700-1800* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 25-26. Sutherland bases her argument on those of Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York, 1987) and Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago, 1984), see especially p. 38.

The amateur ideal in novels

Scenes of female amateur musical performance recur frequently in novels from the second half of the eighteenth century. It was one of the most powerful devices novelists could use to describe quickly and powerfully the characters of the women who inhabited their stories. Those who conform with the amateur ideal, as described in contemporary conduct literature, are the virtuous heroines whose romantic fulfilment, strictly in accordance with the rules of courtship and propriety, is the driving force of the novel's plot. Those who stray from the amateur ideal frequently behave improperly in other social situations, or, in the worst cases, conduct scandalous liaisons with inappropriate men in flagrant disregard of parental authority. A comparison of two novels – *The History of Miss Delia Stanhope* (1767) and *Hadleigh Grove; or, The History of Sir Charles Davers, and The Fair Jessica* (1773) – and the very different music scenes they contain, reveals the ways in which amateur female musical performance could be deployed in novels to send not-so-subtle messages about female characters. The point of this exercise is not so much to argue that these novels specifically influenced the behaviour of their young female readers, but rather to use them as evidence for the existence of underlying assumptions about amateur female performance; the fact that they were written in this way demonstrates that their authors knew that certain female musical behaviours would be interpreted as signs of inner character and virtue (or its absence) by their readers.

In *Hadleigh Grove*, the reader is presented with a musical scene that corresponds closely with the amateur female ideal as advised by many conduct books:

> The evening was concluded in the same happy manner as it begun. After supper, Lady Oswald intreated Miss Holgate to favour her with a song, the dear girl complied with a chearfulness that was quite enchanting; all was ease and gaiety, those who could sing required only to be once asked, no complaints of colds, no hoarseness so peculiar to good singers reigned among them; without wishing to excite either envy or admiration, each strove to encrease the general happiness. Miss Chetwyn in her turn, warbled forth the most melting strains; in some particular airs, she excelled any I ever heard; on being encored
>
> "A dawn of hope my soul revives."
>
> I observed her fine eyes glistening with tears, but she went through the song with grace and spirit. I need not tell you I suppose, that your Elmira complied with the customs of the manor, nor that she received a thousand compliments on her exhibition, particularly from the gallant Colonel.[45]

Miss Holgate and the other young ladies, requiring 'only to be once asked', comply 'with chearfulness' when requested to sing; there are no false excuses 'so peculiar to good singers' made in order to extort praise from male listeners. Although there are potential suitors present in the form of the 'gallant Colonel', the young ladies are not seized with a desire to exhibit themselves and their talents, but sing to comply with the request of quasi-matriarchal authority, with no wish 'to excite envy or admiration' among them. Flattery and the admiration of the colonel are not their objective, but rather a mutual desire 'to encrease the general happiness' of this domestic circle. The song that Miss Chetwyn selects, a pleasure garden song by Thomas Arne,[46] though hardly an oratorio aria, nevertheless emphasises the value and rewards of constancy in love, chosen by the

[45] *Hadleigh Grove; or, The History of Sir Charles Davers, and The Fair Jessica. A Novel* (2 vols., London, 1773), i, 23-24.

[46] There are two versions of this song. It appears in the 'musical drama' *Don Saverio* by Thomas Arne (see *Don Saverio. A Musical Drama. As it is Perform'd at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane* (London, 1750), p. 14 where it is sung by a male character Alonzo, about his long-lost lover, Emilia). The second version is described as a 'new song sung in the publick gardens' of unknown date (*The Dawn of Hope. A New Song Sung in the Publick Gardens* (n.p. [London?], n.d.) text only), but which changes the text slightly, this time to imply a female subject singing about her long-lost lover, Damon. There is also an additional verse in this version, which appears to have been the more common of the two and can also be found in at least three other vocal score versions designed for domestic performance. Although it is not clear which version Miss Chetwyn is singing, it seems most likely to be the 'feminised', domestic version.

author to communicate hidden information about Miss Chetwyn's own situation to be revealed by the later plot. Though not religious, these are perhaps close to the 'elevated and virtuous' sentiments that James Fordyce was so eager to see young women absorbing in their music. Her tears as she performs indicate her feminine sensibility, her sincere appreciation of these moral sentiments, and the correspondence of the situation in the song with her own in the novel. Most significant is the reward that these virtuous young women receive for this correct musical behaviour: Elmira, without seeking to obtain them, receives a 'thousand compliments' from the young colonel on her performance. This is a vision of amateur perfection and exemplary femininity: demure, restrained, but obliging and capable of enlivening and entertaining polite company in domestic settings. These characters have read their conduct books closely, absorbed the guidelines contained therein and, as the plot demonstrates, the same feminine virtue that rendered their musical performance so pleasing and proper will see them safely through to eventual happiness, successful marriage and fulfilment in life.

By contrast, the music scene in *The History of Miss Delia Stanhope* is filled with vanity, flattery, jealousy and competition:

> One of the Misses, unwilling to conceal any of her accomplishments, began humming, after dinner, to let us know she could sing; the request was made, a violent cold, absolutely hoarse, the usual preface, many difficulties to enhance the favour, but at last obliged us, or rather herself, for I cannot say much for her performance ---- Her example was followed by the other Ladies ---- Miss *Charlton* sings very prettily, but too affected ---- I am not fond of singing without musick, yet I knew I should have been accused of airs had I refused --- Mr. *Montague* appeared in raptures, made me many delicate compliments on the sweetness of my voice, and looking tenderly on me, gave us a convincing proof that his own was far more worthy of encomiums, while with an easy manner, being pressed to it, he obliged us, in his turn, with half a verse of my favourite song ---
>
> With *Delia* ever could I stray,

> Admire, adore her all the day.
>
> We could prevail for no more - - He complained of the shortness of his memory, and taking Miss *Charlton*'s hand with a gay air, begged she would finish it for him --- Was it in nature to refuse! --- The girl was in extasy at this little distinction --- Cast a look of triumph at me, and performed ---à mervielle [*sic*.].[47]

Rather than waiting to be asked by the proper authorities, the young ladies here are so eager to display themselves that they hum to draw attention to their abilities and extort a request for a song, a technique also used by one of the more vain and silly minor characters in a later scene in *Hadleigh Grove*.[48] The manipulative nature of these humming 'Misses' is demonstrated by the string of excuses that then follow the forced song request. Rather than acting from a desire to 'encrease the general happiness', this young lady acts only to oblige herself and is so consumed by the desire to show off that she is unaware of her own lamentable lack of ability. Indeed, throughout the novel these young women are portrayed as consumed by a desire to display themselves. At the start of the story, Delia, forced through lack of money to retire to the countryside and missing the pleasures of the city, believes there to be little point in playing her guitar or spinnet for her own amusement, as the conduct books recommend, asking instead 'for what purpose should I endeavour to improve accomplishments, which I shall now have no opportunity of displaying?'.[49] Competitive self-display to win the admiration of the desirable Mr Montague is their only motive, encouraging a spiteful envy between the women expressed in looks 'of triumph' at their rivals when favoured by male praise. Indeed, their addiction to male flattery is signalled by Miss Charlton's 'extasy at this little distinction' offered her by Mr Montague, while the sexual danger of this male

[47] *The History of Miss Delia Stanhope. In a series of letters to Miss Dorinda Boothby* (2 vols., Dublin, 1767), i, 48-49.
[48] *Hadleigh Grove*, i, 181.
[49] *History of Miss Delia Stanhope*, i, 4.

attention is suggested by the song that Montague chooses to sing which signals quite overtly his desire for Delia.[50] Far from being embarrassed by it, she actually seems to be rather pleased by such distinction.

That this type of female musical behaviour is symptomatic of a wider culture of vanity and display is signalled by the activities and opinions of these characters elsewhere in the novel. Delia reveals her spirit of competitiveness with her female rivals by confessing that all the trouble she takes over her finery, make-up and fashionable dress is not really designed to capture as many male hearts as possible. Her real aim is to possess 'the dear pleasure of exciting envy' among other women for, speaking for her whole sex, Delia notes, 'Envy is what we, one and all, love to excite'.[51] Her desire for flattery revealed by the music scene is also demonstrated to be highly dangerous by the later plot in which Delia narrowly escapes being sexually assaulted by her drunken lover.[52] This culture of vanity, competitiveness and dangerous susceptibility to flattery displayed by these women, which their style of musical performance plays a very significant role in signalling, is in stark contrast to the culture of propriety, restraint and diffidence cultivated by the women of *Hadleigh Grove* in their music-making.

Notions of the ideal female amateur can also be seen elsewhere in contemporary novel-writing, signalling both their strength and pervasiveness. The height of conduct book propriety, for instance, is epitomised by Mrs. Mordaunt in Sophia Briscoe's novel *Miss Melmoth; or, The New Clarissa* (1771), who, asked by her husband to entertain a post-prandial private gathering, 'took a book of Handel's oratorio songs', which would have pleased writers like John Bennett, and sings, 'with a voice softened to the utmost

[50] This song appears to be entirely fictional.
[51] *History of Miss Delia Stanhope*, i, 34-35.
[52] *Ibid*., ii, 66-70.

melody', 'Would custom bid the melting fair' from Handel's *Susanna*, the observer-narrator Henry Clayton stating that 'she never appeared to such advantage as on that day'.[53] The aria dwells upon Susanna's sense of propriety, virtue and conjugal felicity with her husband Joacim,[54] a theme Mrs. Mordaunt is presumably seeking to echo and which is not lost upon her husband who, in response to her singing, is described as 'all rapture'.[55]

By contrast, in the *History of Lady Julia Mandeville* (1763) by Frances Brooke, Miss Westbrook sings 'a tender Italian air', rather than an oratorio aria, as a thinly-veiled means of achieving her purpose of seducing Harry Mandeville, addressing her song to her victim 'in a manner, and with a look' that reveal 'her stile is *l'amarose*'.[56] Significantly, Brooke makes the link between this form of self-display and sexual self-assertion and a defective education, noting that her mother was too concerned with 'composing a treatise against the immortality of the soul' and placed herself 'above the little vulgar cares of a family', leaving, as the author sarcastically puts it, 'so unimportant a task as the education of an only child', to a 'French chamber-maid, who, having left her own country on account of a *faux pas* which had visible consequences', was hardly a suitable person, Brooke implies, to 'instill [*sic*.] the principles of virtue and politeness' into the mind of a young woman.[57] The results of such a faulty education are evident in her musical behaviour, a theme also strongly developed by many of the conduct book writers encountered earlier.

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[53] Sophia Briscoe, *Miss Melmoth; or, The New Clarissa* (3 vols., London, 1771), iii, 283-84.
[54] See *Susanna. An Oratorio. As it is Perform'd at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden* (London, 1749), p. 5.
[55] Briscoe, *Miss Melmoth*, iii, 284.
[56] [Frances Brooke], *The History of Lady Julia Mandeville. In Two Volumes* (2 vols., London, 1763), i, 45.
[57] *Ibid*., i, 43-44.

On some occasions, the language of conduct writers can be seen to influence directly the phrasing of novels in their discussions of this subject. In *The Artless Lovers*, an anonymous novel published in 1768, the protagonist Miss Lucy Wheatly relates her disappointment at receiving only a 'bow, accompanied by a gentle sigh' from her male auditor, in response to her musical performance. This provokes a long self-examination of her vanity for desiring a more enthusiastic response, phrased in language that closely echoes conduct writers:

> What poor, vain creatures are we, after all? Early admiration is certainly the most destructive thing in the world to a woman: accustomed to that we are never satisfied without continual flattery, more indeed than we are intitled to; though what we receive is, probably much more than we deserve. A desire to excel is, however, laudable; without such a propensity we should never be excited to make a progress in any studies.
>
> But why should I wish to be admired for my singing? Is it a talent of any use to myself, or to any other living creature? I should rather wish to be admired for those qualities which may render me beneficial to my friends; yet music is, without doubt, a pleasing and innocent amusement: one must have relaxation now and then: one cannot always keep the mind on the stretch.[58]

Many of the key themes of the ideal female amateur – the condemnation of female vanity, the dangers of flattery to female character, the proper purpose and use of singing as a 'pleasing and innocent amusement' for 'relaxation' – are neatly recounted here. Indeed, Lucy Wheatly is depicted as in a position similar to that of many of the young female readers of the novel, trying to work out how (or indeed, whether) to apply the teachings of conduct books to the challenges of everyday life and social engagement. Although, as we have seen, conduct books and novels explored the question of amateur female musical performance from different angles, the messages they projected were

[58] *The Artless Lovers. A Novel in a Series of Letters from Miss Lucy Wheatly in Town, to Miss Annabell Grierson in the Country* (2 vols., London, 1768), i, 109-11.

often strikingly similar and reflected the set of assumptions which underpinned understandings of the proper and improper use of female musical ability in propertied society.

The amateur ideal in the social life of propertied society

However, is there any evidence that young ladies in the late eighteenth century (as opposed to their fictional counterparts) reflected and acted upon the advice of conduct books in their musical performance? Contemporary commentary on such events is frequently rather superficial, with detailed and perceptive accounts of an occurrence as commonplace as amateur female performance actually something of a rarity. One such perceptive observer, however, was the gentleman amateur composer and performer, and prolific diarist, John Marsh (1752-1828), whose 'History of my private life' is an unrivalled source of information about metropolitan and especially provincial musical life in the late eighteenth century.[59] The son of a naval captain and trained as a lawyer, in 1781 he inherited a large estate at Nethersole in Kent, which in that year produced an annual income of over £900, allowing Marsh to neglect his legal practice and focus all of his extraordinary energy upon musical activities.[60] He played a crucial role in establishing or reviving concert series in the provincial towns in which he lived, primarily Salisbury, Canterbury and Chichester, enlivening their concerts by arranging performances from some of the most renowned professional musicians whose

[59] John Marsh, *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752-1828)*, ed. Brian Robins (Stuyvesant, 1998). Because of the immense size of the original manuscript, the printed edition of the diary has been rather heavily, and sometimes frustratingly, abridged, including sections of some of the passages cited in what follows. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to consult the originals, which are in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

[60] Brian Robins, 'Marsh, John (1752-1828)', *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18113> accessed 15 Jan. 2013. See also Marsh, *John Marsh Journals*, pp. 246-47 for a facsimile of a table of Marsh's income from the Nethersole estate from the original manuscript. His total income in 1781 was £924 14*s*. 3*d*.

acquaintance he acquired on his many musical trips to the capital, while also taking part in many performances himself. He was thoroughly versed in music theory and practice, composing almost forty symphonies during his lifetime and numerous smaller works, a rate of composition equal to, if not exceeding, many contemporary professional composers.[61] An astute observer of different types of musical performance and their associated conventions, Marsh's social position at the centre of an extensive network of touring professional musicians stretching out from London across southern England, while also being a gentleman of leisure and engaging in the social visiting and musical parties that oiled the wheels of propertied society, made him familiar with the social world of both the female professional and the female amateur, and makes his diary a particularly useful source for exploring the reality of amateur female performance in provincial England.

In early January 1779, Marsh attended a musical party at the house of Dr Hancock in Salisbury which was attended by the '4. Miss Browns' who had arrived in Salisbury from Stamford, Lincolnshire only a few weeks before. Dr Hancock was clearly a man of some influence in Salisbury society since Marsh notes that the young ladies had only to be 'recommended to the notice of Dr Hancock' before being 'soon visited by the principal families of Sarum'.[62] At a public concert on 7 January, as Marsh records, the Miss Browns had made their '1st. appearance in public', which, a few days later, was followed by an invitation to a musical party at Dr Hancock's. Marsh was excited by the prospect of this party, because 'these ladies were recommended to Dr Hancock… as being very musical, some of them singing delightfully' and Marsh looked forward to

[61] See the catalogue of compositions by Marsh, compiled by Brian Robins: Marsh, *John Marsh Journals*, pp. 765-74.
[62] *Ibid*., p. 190.

making such a 'valuable acquisition to our musical society'. However, Marsh was to be disappointed, as, after the doctor made the expected proposal to 'set them going at the piano forte',

> it came out that the eldest only played thoro' bass, that Miss E. neither played or sung (or rather did not chuse to do either) that Miss Jane only sung a little ballad or two but did not play, the only good player being Miss Mary the shy one, who requir'd so much entreaty & was afterwards so frighten'd in what she did play, that the Dr. began to complain of being deceiv'd by [the recommendation of] Dr Lucas.[63]

At first sight, this would seem to be a case of false excuses designed to elicit excessive male fawning and enhance, through deceitful humility, any praise the performer might receive following their performance. But, on closer inspection, it would appear that this was almost certainly not the case. Marsh, an astute observer, makes it clear that it was not false modesty, but a very real shyness on the part of Mary in particular (a feature of her character that he comments on elsewhere in his journal).[64] Though his friend the doctor amusingly rants 'in his blunt way' at Dr Lucas who has deceived him in his account of the girls' abilities, Marsh is more perceptive, noting that a few days later at another musical party he encountered the two youngest girls and 'found that tho' Miss Eliz'h did not chuse to exhibit herself, yet she seem'd to understand & pay great attention to the music, w'ch induced us to give her credit for knowing more of the matter than she chose to profess'.[65]

Mary's shyness and Elizabeth's choice not 'to exhibit herself' were understandable given the situation these young women found themselves in. They were new arrivals in the polite, musical society of Salisbury and had yet to find out how their

[63] *Ibid*., p. 191.
[64] *Ibid*., p. 190.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 191.

musical talents compared to those of other young women in the town. They were at Dr Hancock's which, as Marsh makes clear, was a venue at the heart of local musical society, a place where amateur performers' reputations could be made and, all too easily, lost. To launch themselves too soon into a display of their talents, seeking for applause, could easily backfire if they found that what was thought exceptional ability in Stamford was but a mere trifle in Salisbury. To have done so would have opened them up to the charge of vanity and attention-seeking. Far better to wait, attend the social circuit of music parties, as Marsh encounters Elizabeth doing, and then judge how best to deploy their musical skills to greatest advantage. In addition, the girls are clearly seeking to cultivate a reputation for strict propriety, Marsh noting the general observation made by the company at Hancock's musical party that 'both in coming into & going out of the room they went exactly according to their seniority', evidently an unusual piece of behaviour which caused comment, but a carefully-staged moment of decorum on the part of the Miss Browns, to signal to their new acquaintances their proper upbringing.[66] This conscious display of propriety indicates that the Browns thought very carefully about exactly how and when to display themselves and their talents to public gaze. A few months later, in March, the Misses Brown clearly felt more at ease in Salisbury society and as Marsh notes, when he went with Miss Hancock to drink tea with them 'by ourselves', all four young ladies, 'notwithstanding the reservedness' they had earlier displayed, made a very admirable musical display, 'Miss Mary [playing] one of Bach's concertos (without being so much frighten'd as she was at Dr Hancock's)'.[67] Clearly, they felt less intimidated by this more private visit at a time when they had had at least a few

[66] *Ibid*., p. 191.
[67] *Ibid*., p. 193.

months to establish themselves and their reputations in Salisbury society, than they did when first thrust into the limelight of Dr Hancock's music room.

This passage from Marsh's journal indicates that the set of rules governing amateur performance laid out in conduct books and inventively deployed in novels, evidently shaped the behaviour of young women such as the Miss Browns, even if we need to be highly aware of context in order to interpret accurately quite how this careful control of display could manifest itself in different ways in a variety of social situations, and in this case, in the very specific context of a family of daughters making their debut as newcomers in a relatively small, but musical, town such as Salisbury. Not only can we discern amateur ideals in the behaviour of the Browns, but Marsh's perception of the Miss Browns' strategy, particularly in his observations of Elizabeth's evident, but concealed, musical knowledge, also demonstrates that he was fully aware of the social strategy the young women were pursuing and was fully versed in the rules governing amateur female performance.

However, although he is more sympathetic and understanding of their position, Marsh also shares Dr Hancock's frustration at the young women's refusal or reluctance to play. The consternation of Hancock is extremely significant, in that it reminds us that not everyone in late eighteenth-century propertied society felt the amateur ideal and the rules laid out by conduct writers to be important. Indeed, they may not even have been aware of them. For musical men like Dr Hancock, it was much more important to be able to enjoy a good performance. They were hardly concerned with the niceties governing when a young woman should or should not display her talents, before whom and for what purpose. They had no personal investment, as a father or potential husband might have, in protecting the character or reputation of the young female performer and failed

to see why, if a young woman could sing well, she should choose not to. It is hard to assess the scale of what we might call the 'pragmatic' approach to female musical performance in the late eighteenth-century. Given the dominance of the opposing approach in conduct literature, novels and, as we have seen, social reality, it is perhaps best to characterise the pragmatists as a small but significant group of musical connoisseurs, individuals whose desire to enjoy good music was stronger than their investment in maintaining the boundaries of 'proper' feminine behaviour in polite society. In essence, the difference was between those in late eighteenth-century society for whom amateur female music-making was primarily a social tool – a sign of wealth, prestige and feminine propriety – and those for whom the enjoyment of music was an end in itself, not a means to some other social goal. If the evidence considered here is anything to go by, there were rather more of the former than of the latter, though, as we should carefully note, it is the latter, men such as John Marsh, who were far more likely to record for posterity the musical world of the late eighteenth century.

The amateur ideal and the professional singer

Having examined the amateur ideal, as encapsulated in conduct books, novels and diaries, that pervaded the minds of the members of late eighteenth-century propertied society, we are now in a better position to understand why audiences approved and disapproved of different performance styles and behaviours among professional female singers. There are some difficulties in exposing the attitudes and responses of audiences to professional female singers, however. In the first place, the main set of sources for exploring audience opinions are the newspapers, whether

through reviews of concerts and theatre productions, or more directly in the form of poems and letters to the editor about particular singers. Many of those who wrote the reviews were not themselves part of this social elite and consequently had less familiarity with and investment in the amateur ideal than other members of the audience whose views, though undoubtedly expressed on the night in the form of applause or stony silence, went, for the most part, unrecorded for posterity. Secondly, and more importantly, professional female singers themselves were not part of this propertied class. As much as they might socialise with and even become just as wealthy as their elite patrons, professional singers were in no sense of equal social status to the amateur female musicians who came to hear them. The moral character of professional singers was, in this sense, unimportant to their audience. This is not to say that such negative assumptions about professional singers were not strongly and deeply held by these audiences, but simply that, because they posed little threat to the preservation of feminine propriety within elite society, such views might only rarely need to be expressed, on occasions, for instance, where there was a danger that female amateurs might be corrupted by the bad example of professional female singers. In essence, the sources we have available can only tell us part of the story, because so much of what was commonly understood at the time had no reason, or no venue in which, to be directly stated or recorded.

Nevertheless, without an awareness of how the amateur ideal lay at the back of the audience's minds when listening to professional female singers, it would be impossible to interpret correctly comments on the performances of professional female singers in the late eighteenth century, such as those written about Caroline Barclay which opened this chapter. In the mind of her admiring, poetically-inclined fan,

Barclay's display of fear and diffidence during her stage debut brought her closer to this cherished amateur ideal. If the key notes of amateur female performance were self-effacement, restraint of self-expression, rejection of self-display from any motive of vanity, and suspicion of the effect of flattery and excessive praise on the female character, professional female singers, who performed for large, anonymous audiences, displayed themselves and their talents for money, and were desperate to be showered in praise and applause could only be thought to bear a faint resemblance to the virtues of the amateur ideal if, as Barclay did, they showed an evident reluctance towards their task. Despite the fact that the King's Theatre was hardly the place where late eighteenth-century audiences should look if they wanted to encounter the blushing amateur performer, the appeal of this discourse was so strong that it structured responses to female performance wherever it was encountered, rendering Barclay's garbled and ropey – indeed, amateurish – performance far more pleasing, to the poet at least, than if she had stunned the audience with confident, professional aplomb. Of course, there may well have been men like Marsh's friend Dr Hancock in the audience who were disappointed at their time and money being wasted upon this incompetent performance. Time and again, however, in reviews of professional singers, qualities such as modesty, diffidence, fears and nervousness were searched for, their presence taken as a sign of feminine propriety and moral character, their absence indicating a corrupted character and a disgusting vanity and immorality.

In October 1796, for example, Sarah Second, an established concert singer, with a virtuous reputation as a performer of Handel oratorio, made her debut as a singer-actress as Emily in *The Woodman* at Covent Garden. Her performance was somewhat disappointing, however, a failure that the reviewer of the *Whitehall Evening Post* excused

by stating that 'she was evidently much impressed by the terrors naturally incident to a modest and diffident character'.[68] Second was no doubt nervous at the prospect of whether this career-move would work, and was anxious to maintain her reputation as a 'modest and diffident character', but, as an established performer who had sung before large audiences for over a decade, it was presumably not a fear of performance and the public gaze that held her back, but perhaps simply inexperience at projecting her voice in as vast a theatre as Covent Garden, the inaudibility of her voice being the main criticism of the reviewer. The strength of the amateur ideal was such, however, that, while we might explain Second's failings in such ways, this reviewer, and no doubt many of the audience, felt it to be the result of a nervousness before the public gaze that was 'naturally' the product of a virtuous feminine character.

Similarly, in February 1789 Ann Cantelo performed at the Professional Concert at the Hanover Square Rooms, London's most prestigious concert venue. For an unknown reason she did not perform quite at her best, 'struggling', as the reviewer of the *Morning Chronicle* put it, 'with fears that evidently depressed her powers'. However, the audience, taking these 'fears' to be a sign of virtuous femininity, greeted her performance with 'a reception which modest, unassuming manners, joined with sterling merit, will ever experience from a British audience. The applause was liberal indeed'.[69] By this date, Cantelo was an experienced performer, having sung at the Hanover Square Rooms in 1783 and 1784, as well as before an audience of thousands in Westminster Abbey at the Handel Commemoration later that year.[70] Apparent nervousness on the

[68] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 15-18 Oct. 1796.
[69] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 4 Feb. 1789.
[70] See reports on these performances: *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 27 Mar. 1783; *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 27 Mar. 1783; *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, 24-26 Apr. 1783; *Public Advertiser*, 20 May 1784; *Bath Chronicle*, 3 June 1784.

concert platform may have been, therefore, a deliberate act put on by Cantelo to exploit the audience's assumptions about what signalled a 'modest, unassuming' character, or, more simply, such commentary reflects the tendency of an audience, infused with amateur ideals, to look favourably upon isolated instances of bad singing as signs of the inner virtue and propriety of a singer's character, rather than as a professional failure. Quite where the balance lies between the agency of the singer in shaping their own image and the structuring discourses affecting the audience's ways of viewing and listening is hard to tell, but it would appear that both conspired in creating a highly virtuous reputation for Cantelo throughout her career. In 1795, one journalist, in a feature article on Cantelo, now Mrs. Harrison, commenting upon her appearance, noted that she had pretty eyes, but 'her natural modesty is such, that they hardly ever "*quit the ground!*"', indicating the kinds of physical on-stage behaviour that singers could use to signal their 'natural modesty', in ways that, it is worth noting, would have met with the approval of conduct writers advising young ladies of propertied society on correct deportment when receiving applause and compliments following their own performances. In the same article, these qualities of 'natural modesty' were associated by this journalist with her respectable reputation, the product both of excellent musical ability, but also 'the prudent line of conduct that she has steadily persevered in', as well as with the virtuous conjugal felicity that she enjoyed with her husband and fellow professional singer, Samuel Harrison.[71]

Perhaps even more revealing is what happened when audiences felt such modesty and diffidence to be lacking. In the 1780s, during her visits to London, the German soprano Gertrud Mara took the musical world by storm. Unrivalled in her

[71] *Tomahawk Or Censor General*, 21 Nov. 1795.

position at the top of the female singing profession, at least until the debut of Elizabeth Billington in 1786, Mara was certainly not the type of performer to become easily nervous. Indeed, it was over-confidence and pride that were deemed to be her faults. Following one performance at the Concert of Ancient Music on 2 May 1785, Mara left the orchestra and came to sit with the audience for the remainder of the concert, an act which, the reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* noted, was 'not relished by the subscribers, to whom diffidence has charms, though seemingly unknown to her'.[72] At another performance a few weeks later, the *Morning Chronicle* was again disturbed to observe Mara noisily making her way up to the orchestra, during the final cadenza of the aria of the previous performer, Miss Abrams, an action which was 'not to the credit either of her feelings or understanding'.[73] In interrupting Miss Abrams in this manner, Mara broke many of the cardinal rules of the amateur ideal. To her audience, it signalled her inflated pride and vanity that she would dare to interrupt another performer mid-song, implying as it did a presumption that she alone was the star attraction that the audience had come to see. It also introduced a spirit of rivalry and competition between performers, behaviour vigorously chastised by conduct book writers and which contributed so much to the unpleasantness of the music scene in *The History of Miss Delia Stanhope*.

These disagreeable examples of what was thought to be the natural consequences of excessive adulation upon the female character could readily be dismissed if Mara could be considered as the socially-inferior daughter of a German violinist, lacking the polite education and refinement of a member of British propertied society. As noted earlier, many of these negative behaviour traits received little comment because, when

[72] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 4 May 1785.
[73] *Ibid.*, 18 May 1785.

executed by social inferiors on a concert platform or theatre stage, they posed no threat to the normative gender ideals of propertied society. Mara, however, sparked comment and condemnation precisely because, by leaving the orchestra to sit among the audience, she sought to raise herself to equality with those who patronised the Concert of Ancient Music. This action raised the stakes considerably, in that it forced the audience to decide whether Mara's vanity, pride and competitiveness – her infringement of the amateur ideal of propertied society – could be accepted as socially permissible among people of their own rank and status. Fearing perhaps the corroding influence such an acceptance might have upon the characters of their own daughters, unsurprisingly the audience responded in an extremely hostile fashion, leading to a public castigation of Mara that threw her reputation into the shade for almost an entire year. The following season, in February 1786, Mara was still having to issue public apologies, explanations and attempted justifications for her actions the previous spring, trying to erase the charges of 'pride or affectation', as she put it, that had pursued her during the previous year.[74]

Elizabeth Linley, Ann Catley and the amateur ideal

The cases of Second, Cantelo and Mara represent specific instances and particular moments in their careers, although set against the background of a longer-term context. In order to see the full extent of the influence of the amateur ideal on the public images of singers and audiences' responses to them, however, it is worth comparing two very different singers, Elizabeth Linley and Ann Catley, in greater depth and over the whole of their careers.

[74] *Ibid.*, 3 Feb. 1786.

Linley and Catley represent opposite poles on the spectrum of professional female singers' careers in the late eighteenth century. Linley was the most celebrated oratorio singer of the early 1770s, one newspaper describing her as 'undoubtedly the best Oratorio (or sacred) singer that at present appears in public',[75] while Fanny Burney, after hearing her sing in an oratorio at Drury Lane, noted 'the whole Town seem distracted about her. Every other diversion is forsaken – Miss Linley alone engrosses all Eyes, Ears, Hearts'.[76] However, for all its extraordinary intensity, her professional career was short-lived, all of her public singing engagements being brought to an abrupt end by her marriage, on 13 April 1773, to Richard Brinsley Sheridan.[77] Linley is especially noteworthy as one of the first and most successful early examples of the new late eighteenth-century phenomenon of the 'public singer'; she never acted in a dramatic production, but instead benefitted from the burgeoning range of concert series and oratorios appearing during the 1760s and '70s. As we shall see, this divorce of the singer from the actress had significant consequences in the type of reputation and public image that Linley could develop and, in particular, her relationship to the amateur ideal.

By contrast, Catley began as a singer at Marylebone Gardens in 1763, but quickly developed a career as a singer-actress in Dublin before transferring back to London in October 1770.[78] From then on until her retirement in 1782, except for a few trips to

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[75] *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post*, 6-9 Mar. 1773.

[76] Frances Burney, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Lars E. Troide (4 vols., Oxford, 1988), i, 249.

[77] The only exception being a performance at the University of Oxford's degree ceremony that summer in the Sheldonian Theatre, witnessed by James Beattie, who was in awe of her 'amazing powers', see *James Beattie's London Diary 1773*, ed. Ralph S. Walker (Aberdeen, 1946), pp. 68-69. Interestingly, she appears not to have taken a fee for this performance, as attested by a letter from one of the concert organisers to the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 10 Aug. 1773. For further biographical information, see Suzanne Aspden, 'Linley [Sheridan], Elizabeth Ann (1754-1792)', *ODNB,* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25364> accessed 15 Jan. 2013.

[78] See Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'Catley, Ann (1745-1789)', *ODNB,* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4895> accessed 15 Jan. 2013.

Dublin and Edinburgh and some long bouts of illness, she was the leading singer in the company at Covent Garden theatre and exceptionally popular, her performances in *The Beggar's Opera* especially always attracting 'prodigious houses',[79] while her return, after a long illness, to Covent Garden in February 1780 produced such a crowded house that her opening night descended into a riot.[80] In contrast to Linley, whose career path was rather innovative, Catley represents a reasonably typical, if highly successful, singer-actress in a mould that had been established with the restoration of the theatres and the arrival of the first female actresses in the late seventeenth century. In their different ways, both were highly professional figures, who had received specific training in their craft, possessed extraordinary talent and skill and were often paid vast sums for their performances. But despite their evident professional status, it is clear that their very different relationships to the amateur ideal of those members of propertied society who attended their performances were crucial in shaping how they were perceived and often, though not always, how they were portrayed in the press.

The best place to start examining the contrasts between them in this context is through a letter from Richard Brinsley Sheridan to Thomas Linley, Elizabeth's father, that is about the career of her sister Mary, also a professional singer, but which makes reference in the course of its argument to both Elizabeth Linley and Ann Catley.[81] The letter, dated to May or June 1775, is extraordinarily long – over thirteen pages in the printed edition – and consists of a series of vehement arguments put forward by Sheridan against Thomas Linley's acceptance of a contract for Mary to become a singer-

[79] *General Evening Post*, 28 Sept.-1 Oct. 1776.
[80] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 5-8 Feb. 1780.
[81] Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. Cecil Price (3 vols., Oxford, 1966), iii, 293-307.

actress at Drury Lane theatre under the management of David Garrick. In the course of his passionate tirade, Sheridan makes a series of insightful comparisons between the roles of 'public Singer' and singer-actress, observations which are especially revealing because, as a newly-renowned playwright heavily involved in the theatre world and husband of one of the most famous professional concert singers, he was well-placed to observe how audiences responded to and thought of different types of female singer.

Sheridan's argument is that the career of a public singer was not far removed from the amateur performance ideal of what he calls 'the Higher Ranks of People',[82] while the working conditions of the singer-actress continually and necessarily drove her further away from it. Sheridan portrays concert singers, and particularly those who were daughters of professional musicians, such as Elizabeth and Mary Linley, as simply undertaking their proper familial duty. 'The Daughter of a Musician', he writes, 'having Talents to benefit her Father in the same Profession, treads only in the Path in which she was born. Her appe[a]rance in Public is natural and not unexpected', and '[s]he is evidently the Pupil of, and under the Wings of her Parent', a situation he describes as 'comparatively *private*'.[83] This emphasis on filial duty, parental oversight and comparative privacy aligns the public singer closely with an ideal amateur performer. Unlike the singer-actress, Sheridan argues, the public singer, in the eyes of her elite audience, possesses 'no Passion for becoming a Spectacle, no low Vanity of being the unblushing Object of a Licentious gaping Croud'.[84]

Meanwhile, the singer-actress diverged markedly from these ideals. According to Sheridan, no woman could ever desire to expose herself upon the theatre stage without

[82] *Ibid*., p. 296.
[83] *Ibid*., pp. 295-96.
[84] *Ibid*., p. 296.

an 'evident Inclination and Passion to obtrude herself into a conspicuous Scene of all that's *indelicate*, *immodest*, *immoral*'.[85] Once on the stage and established in her profession, such women would find whatever scraps of modesty and feminine propriety they had left were rapidly eroded away by the environment in which they found themselves, and the tasks they were required to perform. Whereas a concert singer like Elizabeth Linley might spend her career singing 'elevated and virtuous' oratorio arias, trusting that 'if she be in herself good, modest, and well bred – *there* is her Character – and the Part she may always appear in', a young actress was forced to cast off her 'modesty', for 'it certainly does not belong to the Profession' and instead study 'Lessons of Vice and Passion'.[86] The demure diffidence expected of an ideal amateur performing in her drawing room was consequently entirely antithetical to the life of an actress:

> if the Resolution to face an Audience i[n] an *assumed* Character, does not at once deprive a woman of all the out-works of Virtue – *Bashfulness* and *Reserve*, it is certain that a very little Practice does radically relieve her from two Qu[a]lities so evidently calculated to embarrass her Performance.[87]

Far from singing chaste oratorios, a young singer-actress must 'retail loose innuendos in Comedy, or glow with warm Descriptions in Tragedy; and in both… be haul'd about, squeez'd and kiss'd by beastly pimping Actors!'. Worst of all would be the necessity of 'a Girl's making a Shew of herself in Breeches' on the stage. Such exposure to a world in which 'everything round them is unchaste' could not fail to corrupt their feminine delicacy; 'like Wretches who work in unwhol[e]some Mines', Sheridan wrote, 'their

[85] *Ibid*., p. 296.
[86] *Ibid*., pp. 296-97.
[87] *Ibid*., pp. 296-97.

senses are corrupted in the operation of their Trade'.[88] They were, in almost every sense, he concludes, the antithesis of the amateur ideal of female performance.

Sheridan makes it absolutely clear that such opinions were those of propertied society specifically. Part of the reason why the singer-actress was so far from the amateur ideal was because her audience was, according to Sheridan at least, in general not drawn from the ranks of this social stratum. 'The Theatre', lamented Sheridan, 'is at present deserted by all the Higher Ranks of People – The Mob are the Rulers in it' and, in his opinion, it was they who had brought the vulgarity of 'Miss *Catley*' to triumph over her more decorous rival actresses.[89] 'Stage Singers necessarily and speedily grow out of Estimation with the Politer Ranks', he advised, 'therefore once on the Stage look for no Particular attraction or advantage in them for Oratorios' for which their degraded characters would be deemed unfit and improper.[90] By framing his argument in this way, Sheridan makes clear his understanding of just how pervasive and influential amateur ideals were in shaping responses to professional female singers among the 'Higher Ranks' of the musical public.

Rather than trust too much to Sheridan's polemical opinions, however, evidence of the influence of amateur ideals in responses to Linley and Catley's performances can be found elsewhere, especially in the press. From this, it quickly becomes apparent that many aspects of Linley's career coincided, as far as possible for a professional performer, with the amateur ideal. In the first place, Linley's specialism in oratorio arias brought her into line with the recommendations of numerous conduct writers encountered earlier. Indeed, her power to move her audiences through her singing of sacred texts was the

[88] *Ibid*., p. 297.
[89] *Ibid*., p. 296.
[90] *Ibid*., p. 304.

foundation of her virtuous reputation; only someone who truly believed and felt such religious sentiments in her own heart could perform so convincingly. One correspondent of *St. James's Chronicle*, entranced by Linley's oratorio performances, wrote: 'we are convinced that the Soul is in unison with the divine Offices it is engaged in, and exults in… the Praises of its God'.[91] Another newspaper correspondent declared her a '*Celestial Virgin*',[92] and this theme of Linley as a quasi-saint found a further outlet in her portrait as St. Cecilia, patron saint of music and Christian martyr, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1775, in which she is seated at the keyboard, playing as if transfixed by a divine vision emanating from the parted clouds, while a pair of cherubim sing by her side.[93] In her performance, Linley embodied the recommendations of the conduct writers that women should perform only those songs whose sentiments are 'elevated and virtuous' and evidently concurred with John Bennett that nothing could be 'superior to some passages of Judas Maccabæus or the Messiah'.

In harmony with the virtuous content of her performances was the manner in which she performed and her stage behaviour, which, as the opinions of contemporary commentators suggest, were felt to display many parallels to domestic amateur singing. Throughout her career, she often sang duets with her sister in concerts organised, promoted and overseen by their father. Although evidently a public event, this familial music-making, cited by Sheridan in his letter, had evident resonances with patterns of domestic music-making among propertied society, reflecting the values and behaviours of the audience back at them in a highly pleasing manner. One commentator in the

[91] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 10-13 Apr. 1773.
[92] *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post*, 6-9 Mar. 1773.
[93] The painting is now part of the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor, curated by the National Trust. A reproduction of it can be found in Alan Chedzoy, *Sheridan's Nightingale: The Story of Elizabeth Linley* (London, 1997), black and white plates inserted between pp. 146 and 147.

Middlesex Journal felt that it was this familial bond that was the secret of their musical success: 'These two ladies know their *fort*; - in duettos they appear in uncommon perfection; - a perfection only attainable by two singers most cordially affected one towards the other, and practising together'. Importantly, this author noted that 'they break into no incongruous fancies to excel, but their graces are concerted to set off, one another', demonstrating that the sisters rejected any spirit of rivalry, competition or personal vanity in their performance, instead creating a harmonious balance of mutually-supportive musical endeavour.[94]

Furthermore, like Sarah Second or Ann Cantelo, Linley did not hide, or may even have deliberately revealed, her nervousness in public performance. One correspondent in the *Morning Chronicle* wrote of Linley's appearance in an oratorio performance at Drury Lane: 'last night was the trial of your fame. I could see you were apprehensive, from the apparatus on your right hand; I pitied you'. A display of trembling before the 'royal box, and… the painted countenances around it', signalling a fear of making an exhibition of herself in public, indicated her inner femininity and virtue and her reluctance at being the object of such an intimidating gaze, winning her the pity and sympathy of at least this correspondent.[95] Linley carefully cultivated this demure stage presence, which, while not thought to indicate an under-confidence that might hinder her performance, signalled her admirable feminine diffidence and lack of vanity or lust for self-display, praise and admiration. After attending her performance in *Alexander Balus* at Drury Lane in 1773, Fanny Burney, a perceptive and well-placed commentator on the comparative qualities and behaviour of professional singers, describing Linley's

[94] *Middlesex Journal or Universal Evening Post*, 9-11 Mar. 1773.
[95] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 15 Mar. 1773.

stage presence, noted that, despite her stunning beauty, which might have encouraged an unpleasant vanity and exhibitionism from other women, 'her Carriage is modest & unassuming, & her Countenance indicates diffidence, & a strong desire of pleasing; a desire in which she can never be disappointed'. It was this display of humility and modesty in her stage behaviour, this sense in which, as Burney put it, she was 'unconscious of her charms, & diffident of her powers', that proved so appealing to Linley's audiences.[96] It led one correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle* to state that, in her performances, 'Miss Linley's look, manner, and appearance, are much above her business'.[97] As this makes clear, Linley appealed to the members of her audience because her modesty and diffidence had prevented her sinking into the vain and conceited character traits that were felt to be the natural consequences for any woman who displayed her talents in public.

While Linley might, therefore, be seen as a public performer who came as close to the amateur ideal as it was possible to be, Catley was quite the opposite. Whereas Linley confined her repertoire primarily to the non-dramatic, sacred oratorios of Handel, Catley's consisted almost exclusively of those '*indelicate*' and '*luscious*' theatrical love songs that John Bennett so despised. One of Catley's most famous songs was the sexually-suggestive 'The wanton God, that pierces hearts' in the character of Euphrosyne in Thomas Arne's masque, *Comus*. The song consists of advice from Euphrosyne to a lovelorn fellow nymph, encouraging her to reject the value of constancy and instead treat love in a more free, easy and promiscuous fashion, concluding: 'All I ask of mortal

[96] Burney, *Early Journals*, i, 250-51.
[97] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 2 Mar. 1773.

man, / Is to love me - whilst he can'.[98] Catley, in a 'bold and comic manner', normally accompanied her performance of this song with gestures 'which served to explain the sense of the poetry, and give it a full *gusto*'.[99] This was very far from the chaste, 'elevated and virtuous' sentiments of the ideal amateur's performance. Consequently, when she attempted, in the spring of 1773, to sing oratorio, her audiences were left unconvinced. Her specialism in a more licentious mode of musical performance or, as the *European Magazine* put it, 'certain neglects of decorum in her general line of acting', meant she was 'ill suited to the solemnity' of oratorio performances, especially when pitted against 'the more chastised deportment' of Linley at the rival theatre.[100]

Just as audiences had read the nervousness and diffidence of Second, Cantelo or Linley as signs of inner virtue, so Catley's boldness on stage was interpreted as indicating its total absence. One audience member and amateur poet applauded her beautiful voice and 'soft strains', 'the boast of musick, and the charms of song', but felt her performance was ruined by the fact that, unlike Linley, Catley was 'to [*sic*.] conscious of her power to please' and 'in wanton airs, pert gestures, aukward strides, / Each common form of decency derides, / And strives in looks lascivious, to surpass' her fellow actresses. It was Catley's over-inflated sense of her own skills, the product of the flattery of continued fame and applause, that led her to become over-confident and take liberties that transcended the boundaries of decency and propriety and indulge in indelicate and distasteful competition with other actresses to plumb the depths of vulgarity. The poet concluded by advising the remedy: '*Be modest* – and th'applauding world is thine'.[101] One

[98] *Comus. A Masque. As it is Acted at the Theatres-Royal in Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Altered from Milton* (London, 1777), p. 28.
[99] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 31 Oct. 1777.
[100] 'Theatrical Journal', *The European Magazine, and London Review* 16 (Oct. 1789), pp. 299.
[101] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 2 Nov. 1772.

commentator in the *St. James's Chronicle* agreed: 'Miss Catley's… Performance has been, as usual, without Taste, Judgment, or the least Degree of that Modesty by which Ladies in every Situation and Character captivate Beholders', a clear reference to her failure to accord with the amateur ideal of feminine decorum in performance in polite society.[102] 'We think Miss Catley should not be suffered on any Stage', declared the paper in its next issue, 'which does not profess to put Modesty out of Countenance, unless she is considered to be exhibiting a Lesson to the Ladies, that the fairest Form, the most elegant Figure, and the most enchanting Talents, may lose their Effect, and become disgustful, when they are unattended by Decency and Modesty'.[103] Catley was so far removed from the amateur ideal that she became a lesson in precisely what not to do; as this writer implies, amateur female singers should take heed that performance, if not tempered by modesty and restraint, must always be considered 'disgustful'. Evidently appointing itself the champion of public morals, the *St. James's Chronicle* continued to berate Catley:

> If our public Entertainments are thus to be Lessons of Immodesty, our Wives and Daughters, who have recourse to them, will soon get rid of the little Virtue they have left. No Man who would not wish his Child to be such as Miss Catley appears to be in Principle and Conduct, should ever permit that Child to run the Risque of seeing and admiring her on the Stage.[104]

The opposition between Catley's performances and the amateur ideal could not be more forcefully stated.

What made this worse was the fact that Catley did not appear to distance her own personality from the boisterous, voluptuous and licentious characters in which she specialised. Whereas a virtuous actress might be expected to recoil at having to play such

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[102] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 3-5 Oct. 1776.
[103] *Ibid*., 5-8 Oct. 1776.
[104] *Ibid*., 26-29 Oct. 1776.

characters, or indeed, find herself simply incapable of doing so convincingly, Catley took to them with ease, suggesting to audiences that in fact, what they were seeing was not an act at all, but simply exhibitionism; 'she always comes on Stage in her own Character', complained one newspaper commentator.[105] She also became associated with a series of stock gestures, facial expressions, slapstick manoeuvres, and singing techniques classified by one critic as 'Catleyisms', which she used, regardless of the different characters she was meant to be portraying.[106] The only conclusion was the somewhat shocking idea that Catley actually enjoyed making a spectacle of herself.

When, therefore, stories circulated about Catley's supposed sexual misdemeanours, contemporaries were hardly surprised. A woman who was prepared to exhibit herself in such a fashion on stage must possess a character so uninhibited and degraded that sexual promiscuity was to be expected. Lurid tales were printed of her method of acquiring new lovers. One recalled how, while in Ireland, she supposedly cross-dressed as a soldier, insulted a fellow officer's sister, was challenged to a duel, but later revealed her true gender and hoped the officer would allow her to be a 'woman of honour' and keep her promise of giving 'any satisfaction he should demand' – a request he was only too happy to oblige.[107] Another, also recording her supposed adventures in Ireland, recounted the story of one Dublin clergyman who, attempting to organise a charitable concert, requested Catley to '*give him a night* for that purpose in one of the public gardens', to which Catley was reported to have replied that

> from the nature of her present connection… she cannot… *give the Dean a night*: She begs leave, at the same time, to acquaint him, should this

[105] *Ibid.*, 26-29 Oct. 1776.
[106] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 1 Oct. 1773.
[107] *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, 24-26 Dec. 1771.

> connection be dissolved, she does not know any Gentleman of the Cloth she would sooner indulge, but hopes that decency will prevent the Dean from fixing on a *public garden* for the rendezvous.[108]

Not only was Catley portrayed as sexually predatory, she was also thought to possess a high degree of autonomy over her career, dictating when and for how much money she would sing. Whereas amateurs were instructed to play only when requested, and Linley was perceived to perform at the behest of her father and to earn money for her family, Catley developed a reputation for fierce, self-centred independence in her dealings with theatre managers. One anecdote, recalling a visit of a theatre manager to Catley's home to try to resolve a dispute about her pay, recorded Catley's response to the manager: 'You know whether you have a mind to give me the money I ask, or not. I am none of your fine ladies, who get a cold or a tooth-ach, and can't sing. If you have a mind to give me the money, say so; my mouth shall not open for a farthing less. So, good morning to you'.[109] Catley's ability to challenge the power of male managers in her plain-speaking, business-like manner was behaviour far from the ordinary experience of most women in the higher ranks of society. What is most interesting about this passage, however, is the way in which it stresses Catley's professionalism as a performer. She asserts she is not one of 'your fine ladies', by which she might mean other performers, but could equally well be referring to female amateurs, who make excuses not to sing. She is quite clear that she offers a professional service, for which she must be paid the price she demands. That price was rumoured to be very high indeed; Catley was frequently depicted as possessing a quite unfeminine relationship with money, verging on accusations of greed. The *General Evening Post* in 1770 reported that, dissatisfied with

[108] *London Chronicle*, 8-10 Aug. 1776.
[109] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 28-30 Mar. 1780.

an offer of two hundred guineas from David Garrick for a season in London, she negotiated a contract for three hundred with George Colman instead.[110] The implication for the reader is that to be a professional singer necessitated taking a distinctly unfeminine control over one's financial affairs and relationships with male authority figures. Such stories about her sexual self-assertion, her autonomy and her relationship with money, though often rather ludicrous and not, perhaps, designed to be strictly credible, nevertheless found currency because they were the kinds of character traits that readers expected to find in such an unabashed performer as Catley. By emphasising the way in which her unfeminine mode of performance was thought to encourage unfeminine conduct in real life, they once more reinforced the well-established notion that the manner of female musical performance could be read as a straightforward indicator of the inner qualities of the performer, and, by doing so, underlined Catley's distance from the amateur ideal.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Catley's career is the extent to which she divided public opinion. Evidently, her behaviour placed her far beyond the boundaries of the amateur ideal of female performance of propertied society and, as we have seen, she was castigated for her failure to conform with these ideals. Indeed, just as in Sheridan's letter, for many she functioned as the 'other' against which to define what appropriate female performance should be. However, it is quite clear that this was the opinion of only one part of her audience. Unlike Linley, whose audiences at oratorios and concerts where ticket prices were very high were almost all from propertied society, Catley played to a far more diverse audience at the patent theatres, where the 'one shilling mob' dominated the upper gallery and who were joined, at half time, by those

[110] *General Evening Post*, 20-23 Oct. 1770.

paying 'half price' or 6*d*. to see the second half, often a musical afterpiece in which Catley might take the lead – a long standing tradition at the patent theatres. Although it is important to remember that 6*d*. was by no means a trifling sum and might be around a third of a worker's daily wage, it did open up theatrical entertainments to a much wider social constituency.[111] Such individuals, while they might stretch to the occasional theatre visit, could hardly afford the extremely expensive pianofortes, sheet music and music lessons required to establish their daughters as amateur female musicians and hence had very little reason to engage with the amateur ideal and its codes of conduct. Furthermore, even those who were proponents of the amateur ideal in other contexts might well have relaxed their expectations upon entering the theatre, where a degree of playful transgression was to be expected, and even relished.

This meant, in turn, that some sections of the audience responded to Catley's performance quite differently. One especially interesting set of 'DRAMATIC STRICTURES' in the *General Evening Post* described how Catley indulged a vain desire of showing-off in her musical performances, 'introducing the random excesses of her own fancy into the best airs… at the moment in which she expects that this display of what she falsely imagines *taste*, is to excite our universal admiration'. This critic, clearly upset

[111] Estimating wage rates is, of course, rather complicated. Contemporary estimates by Joseph Massie (1759) of average annual family incomes give figures of 27*l*. 10*s*. (or approximately 1*s*. 5*d*. per day) for a London labourer, while Patrick Colquhoun's (1801-03) figure for the annual wage of a labourer (though his 'labourer' category is not the equivalent of Massie's) is 31*l*. (or approximately 1*s*. 8*d*. per day), see Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 20-21, Table 2.1 in which Hay and Rogers reproduce the revised tables of Gregory King, Massie and Colquhoun originally produced by Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson in 'Revising England's Social Tables 1688-1812', *Explorations in Economic History* 19 (1982), pp. 393, 396-97 and 400-01. For a modern economic historian's estimates, see Charles H. Feinstein's table of average weekly earnings for labourers in the agriculture, building, mining and manufacturing, transport and storage, domestic service and armed forces sectors by year 1770-1882, 'Wage-earnings in Great Britain during the Industrial Revolution' in Iain Begg and S. G. B. Henry (eds.), *Applied Economics and Public Policy* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 194-95 (Table 8.3). His figures, although they apply to Great Britain as a whole and do not take account of potentially higher wages in London, show average weekly earnings to be 7*s*. 2*d*. in 1770-72, rising to 11*s*. 10*d*. by 1798-1802, although inflation undoubtedly eroded most of this growth.

on purely musical grounds that she should take 'uncommon liberties with her composer', but also disgusted at this cheap attention-seeking display to win applause, clearly represents the opinions of polite society infused with amateur ideals. However, he notes that 'her imperfections are generally looked upon by the injudicious as the actual result of superior judgement, or superior talents, and distinguished with applause, with a downright turbulence of applause' by 'the herd of play-house frequenters'.[112] Although he blames this primarily on the lack of musical judgment of this section of the audience, in many ways it was also because these individuals, not possessing (or temporarily setting aside) the amateur ideals of propertied society, did not have the same negative disposition towards such showy displays on the part of a female performer. Similarly, the reporter for the *St. James's Chronicle* lamented:

> we think alarming Proofs have been given of the Depravity of public Taste, Principles and Morals in the crouded Houses which have attended Miss Catley… [she] exhibits a Multitude of assured, wanton and libidinous Grimaces, to the great Diversion of a profligate and ignorant Audience… [and she] secures Applause by some unexpected Proof of the Goodness of her Voice, by some impudent Action, or some indecent Attitude.[113]

This journalist's dismay that Catley's stage behaviour was winning torrents of applause from the 'mob' demonstrates clearly that the theatre, unlike the concert hall, was far less securely the domain of the polite amateur ideals of propertied society when it came to professional female performance. Similar distaste was voiced in February 1777, when Catley's boisterous slapstick – her 'taking of Mr. Mattocks by the nose, and distorting her features' – though, according to one newspaper report, it 'may set the galleries in a roar', '[could not] but make *the judicious grieve*' at the principles of feminine decorum being so

[112] *General Evening Post*, 29 Sept.-1 Oct. 1772.
[113] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 26-29 Oct. 1776.

thoroughly challenged by the collusion of Catley and the galleries to fashion a less polite style of entertainment.[114]

Importantly, some journalists were on Catley's side, signalling what was noted earlier that the newspapers did not universally or consistently replicate a view based upon the amateur ideal. One reporter in the *Morning Chronicle* in October 1776, for instance, thought her boisterous performance as Juno in *The Golden Pippin*, which provoked 'hearty and incessant laughter' from her audience, did her 'infinite credit', noting with utter incomprehension the 'feeble hiss that was occasionally begun at the end of her songs',[115] presumably from the more high-minded and polite clientele in the boxes, disgusted by the inelegance and indecorous manners of an actress who happily 'boxes off Master Jove' from the stage to 'draw down the noisy *bravo* of the gallery Gods'.[116] Nevertheless, Catley's boisterous impoliteness clearly appealed both to those groups within the propertied elite who discarded whatever commitment they had to polite amateur ideals upon entering the theatre, and to those, crammed into the cheap seats, who had never been exposed to those amateur ideals in the first place. The fact that this alternative audience existed and clearly had quite different priorities when it came to assessing the performance of professional female singers (at least in theatrical contexts), is highly significant because it brings into sharper focus the limited influence, or indeed irrelevance, of the amateur ideal in shaping responses to female singers among large sections of the theatre audience, or indeed in other venues for professional female singing in late eighteenth-century London beyond the oratorio and concert hall.

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[114] *General Evening Post*, 1-4 Feb. 1777.
[115] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 16 Oct. 1776.
[116] *Ibid*., 27 Jan. 1777.

Conclusion

In exploring responses to Catley, we have, therefore, arrived at the boundaries of the influence of the amateur ideal. Yet, apart from in the theatres, the amateur ideal dominated late eighteenth-century responses to professional female singers. Expressed in conduct books and novels, such ideals shaped how audiences thought about the performance of music by women and its connections with their definition of feminine propriety. They had a clear influence over everyday social behaviour and amateur female performance among the propertied elite of late eighteenth-century Britain, but also clearly shaped the performance style, on- and off-stage behaviour, and the representation in the press of many professional female singers. As the example of Catley shows, their sway was not universal and varied depending on cultural venue. The theatre-going public, more diverse than that which attended the subscription concerts, offered alternative sets of criteria for assessing female musical performance, entirely unconcerned with the amateur ideals of the social elite. Moreover, many of the elites, too, were less concerned to see their polite ideals upheld in the playfully transgressive world of the theatre than they were amid the solemnity of an oratorio in a concert hall. This viewpoint has been only imperfectly recorded in newspapers, but it was, nevertheless, a very real and dynamic force that allowed performers like Catley to become rich and famous in a notably different style to performers like Elizabeth Linley. It attests to the vibrancy and dynamism of the impolite culture of the eighteenth-century described by Vic Gatrell and Simon Dickie.[117]

[117] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2006) and Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2011).

Equally noteworthy, however, were the opinions of John Marsh's friend Dr Hancock, unable to see the point of the web of rules governing amateur female performance created by other members of his own social group, and rather more interested in simply enjoying a good musical performance. In his eyes and those of others like him, timidity and diffidence in professional female performers were more likely to be an irritating obstacle to an evening's enjoyment of music than a reassuring, exemplary display of feminine propriety in the public sphere. Dr Hancock or John Marsh are perhaps early examples of a nascent sub-set of propertied society, a sort of musical cognoscenti, whose successors were to bring about a great deal of change in redefining the meaning and purpose of professional female musical performance in the early nineteenth century, a process which forms the subject of the next chapter. But though they challenged and disrupted the grip of the amateur ideal over the image of the professional female singer, they failed to undermine completely the dominance of the amateur ideals of elite audiences throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and beyond. The attitudes laid down in the eighteenth century proved remarkably tenacious and continued to shape the careers of female singers for generations to come.

Chapter Two

From 'flippant dolls' to 'serious artists'? Changing attitudes towards professional female singers in the first half of the nineteenth century

In the early nineteenth century, the amateur ideals that had structured audience and press responses to female singers in the eighteenth century, at least in the milieu of propertied society, were increasingly challenged by new representations of the female singer as a professional artist. Commentators on the musical world, writing in specialist music periodicals, sought to differentiate more strongly between amateur and professional music-making, especially by women. Consequently, they argued that the performance of professional female singers needed to be assessed using a different set of criteria to that governing amateur performance, one derived from a newly-articulated sense of the professional artist. This situation was brought about by wider changes in early nineteenth-century society which affected the image and self-understanding of the music profession as a whole, particularly the rise of the 'artist' and the trend towards greater professionalization. However, this narrative of change needs to be qualified in two important ways. Firstly, this chapter will demonstrate that even the champions of the female professional artist were still on occasion hesitant about just how comfortably professionalism and artistry sat alongside their conceptions of respectable forms of femininity. Secondly, it will argue that these new attitudes towards female singers were on the whole relatively narrowly confined to the pages of specialist periodicals. Older views of professional female singers, inherited from the eighteenth century, continued to

find advocates elsewhere in the press. In short, this chapter seeks to trace the emergence of a significant new voice in public debate about female singers, one with far-reaching implications, but which did not simply displace older ways of thinking. It is a story of diversification, rather than sweeping or uncontested change.

The argument of this chapter is, therefore, intricately bound up with the development of the early nineteenth-century press, in particular the emergence of periodicals specialising in news and reviews of the musical world. Earlier music periodicals had been mostly devoted to disseminating new printed music for amateur performance, though from about 1760 they also began to include articles on topics of largely technical interest such as music history, musical lexicography and reviews of newly published compositions.[1] Nineteenth-century music periodicals were quite different; the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* (1818-30, hereafter *QMMR*), modelled on the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, contained only letterpress and no printed music.[2] It was joined soon after by the *Harmonicon* (1823-33), each issue of which contained two sections of equal length devoted to letterpress and printed music.[3] They were designed for a mixed readership of musical professionals and amateurs eager for news and reviews of events in national musical life, rather than simply seeking to collect new music.[4] More precise studies of the readership of such

[1] Leanne Langley, 'The English Musical Journal in the Early Nineteenth Century', PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1983, pp. xx-xxi, 18-31 and Leanne Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', *Notes* 46/3 (1990), pp. 587-88, especially note 16.

[2] Langley only mentions the *Edinburgh Review* (1802) as an influence (Langley, 'English Musical Journal', pp. 50-51, 231; Langley, 'Musical Press', p. 588). Richard Kitson, however, citing Peter Le Huray and James Day (eds.), *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 331, suggests that the *QMMR* drew on German precedents as well (Kitson, *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review, 1818-1828* (Ann Arbor, 1989), p. ix). The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* was established in Leipzig in 1798.

[3] Langley, 'Musical Press', p. 588.

[4] Langley, 'English Musical Journal', pp. xx-xxi, 51, 219-20. Langley describes the non-professional part of the musical journals' readership as 'educated, professional upper and upper-middle class, musically discriminating, and socially alert' (p. 51).

journals are yet to be undertaken, but it is clear that the balance between professionals and amateurs varied between periodicals. The *QMMR* and *Harmonicon*, for instance, appear to have targeted the informed amateur heavily involved in musical life, the successors of men like John Marsh or Dr Hancock perhaps, as well as professionals. Later on, periodicals became more specific to certain groups, though never exclusively; the *Musical World* (1836-91) or *Musical Examiner* (1842-44), targeted a more professional readership for instance, while the *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* (1844-present) focused on a more mixed audience.[5]

The appearance of this dedicated musical press reflects new ways in which amateurs and professionals, performers and audiences, interacted with a national, and increasingly international, musical culture. The range of topics covered in such periodicals expanded to include discussion and analysis of the status of the music profession; musical training; different styles of composition and performance; the development of musical taste; correspondence from readers; reviews of performers and composers, especially in the form of short biographies; as well as traditional topics such as music history and theory and reviews of published compositions and books about music.[6] They also provided a forum in which a new figure, the professional music critic, could emerge. In the 1820s, men like Richard Mackenzie Bacon, the founder of the *QMMR*, and William Ayrton, the editor of the *Harmonicon*, had other interests and activities beyond writing about musical life – as a provincial newspaper editor and an opera-house manager, respectively.[7] They are best thought of as specialist music

[5] Langley, 'English Musical Journal', pp. 219-220 and Langley, 'Musical Press', pp. 588-89.

[6] See L[eanne] L[angley], 'Musical press' in Iain McCalman (ed.), *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832* (Oxford, 1999), p. 615.

[7] See John Warrack, 'Bacon, Richard Mackenzie (1776-1844)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1006> accessed 24 May 2013, John Warrack, 'Ayrton, William

journalists, heavily involved in the musical world and its concerns, but not yet full-time music critics earning a living solely from their musical writings. By the 1840s, however, men like James William Davison, editor of both the *Musical World* and the *Musical Examiner*, increasingly worked as full-time music critics.[8] It is important when reading their work to be aware, therefore, that the role of the critic was in formation in this period. Arguments about the seriousness of music as a pursuit and the respectability of the music profession (especially its female members) clearly need to be interpreted as, in part, an attempt by music journalists to secure their own social position, cultural authority and respectability.[9]

The 'specialist' periodicals, however, were not the only forum in which reviews and discussion of female musicians appeared. A wider 'general' or 'non-specialist' press remained, in terms of volume and readership, the most substantial venue for discussion of female performers. Commentary on female singers occurred in other types of specialist periodical – those focused on the theatre, for instance – in periodicals of a general nature, such as the *Athenaeum* or the *London Magazine*, and, most frequently of all, in the newspaper press. Circulation of these forms of media, particular in the case of the newspapers, was far higher than that of the specialist music periodicals. While a periodical like the *Harmonicon* struggled to reach a circulation of 1,000 for each issue, and the *Musical World* might claim a figure of 5,000 by the mid-1840s, a daily paper such as

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(1777-1858)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/950> accessed 24 May 2013 and Langley, 'English Musical Press', pp. 195-210 and 285-317. Bacon became the proprietor of the *Norwich Mercury* in 1804 and its editor from 1816. William Ayrton was a founder member of the Philharmonic Society in 1813 and was the manager of the King's Theatre for the season in 1817 and was its music director (under John Ebers's management) in 1821.

[8] See John Warrack, 'Davison, James William (1813-1885)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7301> accessed 24 May 2013 and Richard Kitson, 'James William Davison, Critic, Crank and Chronicler: A Re-evaluation' in Bennett Zon (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies: Volume 1* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 303-10.

[9] See Langley, 'English Musical Journal', pp. 37, 112-18, 151-52.

The Times sold some 26,000 copies, giving an idea of the differing scale of readership.[10] Copies of specialist periodicals might well have been passed around a social circle, or borrowed from an institution such as choral society.[11] Some were available in specialist circulating libraries, especially in the capital.[12] Furthermore, the readers of such periodicals were clearly among the most active and influential participants in musical life. Even allowing for this, however, the 'non-specialist' press undoubtedly shaped perceptions of the musical world among a far wider proportion of society on a more frequent, often daily, basis.

This chapter will argue that, generally speaking, these two types of media contained different approaches to professional female singers, but the reality was often more complex than this simple division would suggest. Firstly, neither the 'specialist' nor the 'non-specialist' groups can be thought of as articulating a single or always coherent position on professional female singers. Contradictory voices appeared within both camps. Secondly, it would be wrong to draw the dividing line between these two types of media too sharply. Many 'non-specialist' publications reprinted articles that had first appeared in the 'specialist' press, and vice-versa.[13] Moreover, writers in 'specialist' periodicals also contributed to 'non-specialist' publications, including, for instance, Bacon's regular 'Report on Music' column in the *London Magazine*, William Ayrton's

[10] See *Ibid*., pp. 169, 171-72, 185-86, 190.
[11] *Ibid*., pp. 189-90.
[12] *A Catalogue of Willis & Co.'s Royal Musical Circulating Library* (London, n.d. [*c*.1840]), pp. 202 (*The English Musical Gazette or Monthly Intelligencer* vols. 1-6) and 209 (*The Musical Magazine* vols. 1 and 2); *Supplement to the Catalogue of the Universal Circulating Musical Library* (London, 1855), p. 884 (*QMMR*) and 885 (*Musical World* for 1854); *Catalogue of Ewer & Co.'s Universal Circulating Musical Library* (London, 1860), pp. 412-13 (*Musical World* 1836-1860 and *The Musical Times* vols. 1-6). A brief investigation of non-specialist circulating libraries suggests that specialist music periodicals were not stocked by such organisations, but without further study this is not comprehensively established.
[13] See, for instance, a letter from a correspondent to the *Harmonicon* on 'Italian and English Singers' reprinted in *The Kaleidoscope: or, Literary and Scientific Mirror* 11/573 (21 June 1831), p. 408; or a letter from 'Musicus' on 'Professionals and Amateurs' to *The Times*, reprinted in the *Musical World* 18/39 (28 Sept. 1843), p. 328.

contributions to the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Examiner*, or Davison's work as music critic for the *Saturday Review*, *The Graphic*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and, most importantly, *The Times* for over thirty years.[14] There was, therefore, an important amount of cross-fertilisation and exchange between writing in specialist periodicals and other forms of publication. Yet while these barriers were permeable, this chapter makes the case that drawing a distinction between 'specialist' and 'non-specialist' forms of media is a useful way of articulating the relationship between developments in the media and the emergence of rival centres of gravity within the diverse contemporary debate on the musical world and female singers in particular.

New voices: the emergence of the female musician as 'professional artist'

It was in the first decade of the nineteenth century that musicians in Britain first began to be described as 'artists'. An examination of the word's use in newspaper press reviews suggests that earlier usage had been, on the whole, confined to describing producers of the visual arts of painting, drawing or sculpture.[15] Around 1800, it appears to have taken on broader connotations and was applied not just to musical performers, but also to actors, ballet dancers, playwrights and composers, among others. In many of these instances, and particularly in relation to musicians, it was used to describe

[14] Bacon's column in the *London Magazine* lasted from 1820 to 1825 (Leanne Langley, 'Bacon, Richard Mackenzie', *Grove Music Online* (via *Oxford Music Online* website), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01725> accessed 24 May 2013; Ayrton contributed to the *Morning Chronicle* between 1813 and 1826 and *The Examiner* from 1837 to 1851 (Warrack, 'Ayrton'); Davison held the post of music critic at *The Times* between 1846 and 1879 (Warrack, 'Davison' and Richard Kitson, *The Musical World, 1836-1865* (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. xiii-xiv).

[15] It could also mean something akin to the word 'inventor' in modern English, as in: 'A scheme has lately been devised by a German Artist, for supporting life for a very considerable period under water…' (*True Briton*, 3 Apr. 1799).

foreigners, such as the impressive list of 'accomplished artists', all of whom were stars of the Italian opera, who performed at a private concert and ball hosted by Emma Hamilton in 1806.[16] Similarly, the particularly extensive coverage of the debut of the prima donna Angelica Catalani in London the same year appears to have been especially influential in promoting this usage of the term.[17] This foreign connotation led some commentators to view the term in a highly pejorative light. One commentator in *The Satirist* in 1810, who placed the word in quotation marks and italics to underline its alien nature, complained that these 'exotic "*artists*"', whose only claim to fame was their 'foreign origin or superior depravity', not their musical skill, were preventing 'native talent' from flourishing; so pernicious was their effect, he reasoned, these 'artists' were in all likelihood Napoleonic spies.[18]

Although, as we shall see later, the term never lost its foreign overtones, in the less suspicious post-war cultural climate, it shed most of its pejorative meanings and became instead a positive word to describe the desired status of all professional musicians, British and foreign. This was especially so among contributors to the new specialist music periodicals, such as the *QMMR* and the *Harmonicon*. In their articles, they outlined the personal characteristics required of a musical 'artist', thereby creating a

[16] In part, the change in usage of the term appears to have stemmed from its use as a metaphor to describe performances in the other arts, as in a review of a concerto by Johann Peter Salomon in the *True Briton*, 20 Mar. 1798: 'Like a judicious Artist, he blended light and shade so as to produce the most striking and interesting effect'. It was used in its new, non-metaphorical sense to describe (among others) the actress Sarah Siddons (*World and Fashionable Advertiser*, 17 Nov. 1787; *The Times*, 7 Oct. 1803), the ballet dancers Monsieur Didelot (*True Briton*, 6 May 1797), Prosper-Didier Deshayes and his wife (*Morning Chronicle*, 24 July 1805), the actor John Philip Kemble (*Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 26 Nov. 1800), and an anonymous female playwright (*The Times*, 11 Dec. 1805). Its first application to a musician in the British press was to the composer Niccolò Piccinni in *The Telegraph* (4 Jan. 1797) and later to the German composer, Peter Winter, in *The Times* (26 Mar. 1804). It was first used to describe musical performers in relation to Emma Hamilton's private concert featuring the stars of the Italian opera, reported in the *Morning Chronicle* (30 Oct. 1806).

[17] See *Morning Chronicle*, 15 Dec. 1806; 12 Feb. 1807; 7 Mar. 1807.

[18] 'Foreign Singers', *The Satirist* 7 (Dec. 1810), pp. 576-77. This writer was not alone in suspecting foreign artists of espionage, see the *Morning Chronicle*'s defence of Catalani and her husband (13 Jan. 1807) from this charge.

standard of comparison against which they believed all professional musicians should be measured. For instance, one essayist in the *Harmonicon* wrote that a musician

> must have a mind sufficiently acute and extensive to embrace and compare an infinity of analogies, not apparent to ordinary minds; and imagination sufficiently ardent to seize firmly upon its subject, sufficiently fertile to represent it under every kind of image; a soul sufficiently capacious to grasp every object, and sufficiently impassioned to embrace all those points that have any analogy with it; but, above all, he must have a heart, tremblingly alive to all the tenderness, as well as all the impetuosity of the passions; it is thus only that his works can be informed with native fire, and breathe life and identity. It was not from heaven that the spark descended which gave life to Galatea – enkindled by the genius of the artist and by love, the creative flame burst forth from the heart of Pygmalion.[19]

This romantic notion that rare inner qualities of 'mind', 'imagination', 'soul' and 'heart' were the identifying features of the true musical artist and vital for the production of great art was strikingly new. Prior to the early nineteenth century, musical excellence had been conceived as a craft-like skill, in which genius lay in the deft arrangement or reproduction of sounds to produce particular effects upon the passions. In theory, therefore, the difference between a professional and an amateur was one of degree of training, not one of kind. As the purpose of music came to be understood as the expression of the interior emotion of the composer, interpreted by the performer, so there developed an emphasis upon the necessity of possessing the inner qualities – the 'fund of deep feeling and exquisite sensibility' – that facilitated this powerful self-expression.[20] Consequently, critics increasingly assessed the merits of musicians according to the extent to which they demonstrated their possession of these rare qualities in their performances. The man of letters and music specialist Egerton Webbe,

[19] 'On Musical Expression', *Harmonicon* 2/19 (July 1824), p. 128.
[20] *Ibid*., p. 129. On these changes in general, see Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present* (London, 2009), pp. 71-121.

writing in the *Musical World* in 1837, declared: 'one of the very foremost propositions respecting performance [is] that it must proceed of *feeling*, or is nought… Excellence in any performance will be the direct offspring of feeling'.[21] The personality type and heightened sensibility of the 'artist' became the ideal to which all professional musicians should aspire and which was vital for their success. A secondary effect of this was to separate musical 'artists' from the rest of society, or what was referred to as the 'crowd of common minds'.[22]

As well as emphasising the need for musicians to possess an artistic temperament, these periodical writers underlined the rigorous training, extensive knowledge and hard work musicians had to undergo to achieve success. To be a professional musician, insisted one correspondent of the *QMMR*, required intensive and prolonged labour:

> I am very much misinformed if in the education necessary to reach eminence a public singer can employ less than three hours a day for three or four years in the practice of solfeggi, during which period, almost as much time must be given up to the practice of the piano forte, and this merely confers the power of accompaniment and some knowledge of harmony. Italian must also in a degree be mastered.[23]

Another wrote that:

> a really good player on the pianoforte cannot have passed for many years, less than four hours daily in serious practice. If to this be added the cultivation of a voice to anything like perfection, two hours more must be given up to study. No musician can be considered to have reached any general knowledge of art, who is not theoretically acquainted with the laws of harmony, which at least will require one hour more for a year or two, even to obtain what is requisite to judicious accompaniment. Thus then seven

[21] Egerton Webbe, 'Our Musical Wants. – No. III', *Musical World* 6/73 (4 Aug. 1837), pp. 114-15.
[22] 'On Musical Expression', p. 128.
[23] Audi Alteram Partem, 'To the editor', *QMMR* 7/27 (1825), p. 289. 'Solfeggi', normally spelt *solfeggio*, was a pedagogic technique consisting of the repetition of vocal exercises of musical scales and intervals in different keys.

> hours of severe mental exertion must be daily consumed, and few minds are capable of attention to any purpose for a longer period. Nor should I set any very high value upon a singer's knowledge, who was not versed in the Italian language and in Italian music.[24]

Furthermore, the musician was expected to cultivate a wide knowledge of the other arts in order to inform their own performances. 'The truly great singer', wrote one contributor to the *Musical World* in 1836,

> (and by "great," we do not imply the accomplisher of difficulties, but the one who can appreciate and develop the poetry of the composer)… is a kindred spirit with the poet… or with any other imaginative creator… [T]he musician, in whatever department of the art or science he may be placed, will derive equal, if not greater benefit, from a cultivation of the higher branches of poetry, with an appreciation of the delicacies in design, and pictorial composition.[25]

Alongside possessing a natural artistic temperament, the professional training of a successful musician therefore required diligent practice and the careful study of music theory, languages and the literary and visual arts. This emphasis on the rigours of professional training was again part of a wider trend in early nineteenth-century society towards professionalization as a means of enhancing the reputation and respectability of a particular form of employment.[26]

This emphasis on temperament and training also led to a desire to differentiate more strongly the music-making of professionals from that of amateurs. 'Amateurs are perfectly unconscious of the time, labour, fatigue, and perseverance it costs to obtain

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[24] Vetus, 'To the editor', *QMMR* 1/3 (1818), p. 290.

[25] 'A Hint to Singers', *Musical World* 1/3 (1 Apr. 1836), pp. 43-44.

[26] Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London, 1995), especially pp. 174-99. She concludes: 'Making a living from the arts remained, therefore, a disorganised occupation. Interestingly, however, it was coming to be interpreted in professional terms. Clearly, the absence of self-regulatory organisations did not preclude such an identification' (p. 186). On the music profession specifically, see Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford, 1985) and Deborah Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians, 1750-1850: A Profession of Artisans* (Cambridge, 2001), who reach similar conclusions about the strong desire for professionalization, even if such goals were never truly achieved.

even the rudiments of skilful *professional* execution',[27] declared one correspondent of the *QMMR*, while another argued: 'To sing finely is the labour of a life – it is the business, the daily bread of a professor – it is the occasional study or casual amusement of the amateur. The one pursues the art regularly, systematically, and sedulously, under great advantages; the other very rarely indeed follows it either with constancy, method or earnestness, and under every disadvantage'.[28] A third suggested that many upper-class amateurs deliberately rejected following the artist ideal because it would be demeaning to their leisured status to be associated with something that required such diligence: 'A person of rank or fortune ought not to play or sing like an artist – such is the received axiom – such an accomplishment implies labour, strength of mind, perseverance, and a thousand estimable qualities, which ought only to belong to professional *people*'. Amateur performance, in this correspondent's opinion, was not about creating great art, but instead about demonstrating social status through a self-conscious performance of a leisured attitude to life, or what the correspondent calls 'this monstrous affectation of taking no care in any thing, in order to shew that they have the command of every thing'.[29] The single greatest flaw of amateur performance, according to these writers, was to use music as a tool to particular social ends, such as reinforcing class status and power, rather than desiring to engage with it on a deeper, more meaningful artistic level.

The purpose of these writers was, therefore, twofold. In the first place, they wished to delineate the qualities of the 'professional artist' as the ideal to which musicians should aspire and against which their performances should be assessed. This

[27] Audi Alteram Partem, 'To the editor', p. 289.
[28] Vetus, 'To the editor', *QMMR* 4/13 (1822), p. 1.
[29] Spectator, 'To the editor', *QMMR* 6/22 (1824), pp. 180-81.

was evident in their reviews of performers which evaluated the extent of their observance of these artistic ideals. One review of Rosamunda Pisaroni observed that:

> The deportment of voice – the purity and uniformity of the tone – the noble simplicity of the declamation – the accurate articulation both of syllables and sounds – the gradual melting and assimilation of tone from the most powerful messa di voce to the softest pianissimo – always in keeping and never violent – the retention of legitimate and the rejection of meretricious ornament – and lastly, the power of bending all these elements to the changeful purposes of expression, declare at once the mind, the training, and the experience of the gifted artist.[30]

Secondly, they pointed out the impossibility of amateurs achieving these ideals and the consequent incommensurability of professional and amateur musical performance. Long articles appeared in the *QMMR*, with titles such as 'On the differences in the singing of professors and amateurs', which took each aspect of vocal performance in turn, and detailed (in almost every case) the impossibility of amateurs performing to professional standards.[31] Amateurs had always been differentiated from professionals, but the rise of the 'artist' and wider social discourses of professionalization came together in the early nineteenth century to create a strengthened sense of the very different styles and purposes of these two types of music-making.

The arguments put forward by these commentators on the musical world were framed principally in relation to the situation of male professional and amateur musicians. However, they also had important implications for how these commentators in music periodicals described amateur and professional female musicians, often in ways very different to those explored in chapter one. In agreement with writers like Hannah

[30] 'The King's Theatre', *QMMR* 10/38 (1828), pp. 269-70.
[31] 'On the differences in the singing of professors and amateurs. To the editor', *QMMR* 6/23 (1824), pp. 318-23.

More and Mary Wollstonecraft at the end of the eighteenth century, though with very different motivations, these commentators saw the primary purpose of amateur female performance as the display of physical and social attributes with an eye to success in the marriage market.[32] Reflecting on the mediocre performance of two young ladies at a private concert at a nobleman's house in London in the 1820s, one correspondent of the *QMMR* explained their failings by pointing out that, far from being instructed for the purposes of artistic, skilful performance, 'both these young ladies had been trained for display'. Their motive for pursuing music, he wrote, was 'the charm which attends the exhibition of talent to a large circle, and (as connected with it) the effect such display may have upon the future fortunes of the musician', i.e. their marriage prospects.[33] Their audiences were not there to assess their performances from an artistic standpoint, but instead read them as signs of the expense of their education, and consequently their wealth and social status. Amateur performance of this kind also permitted male admirers to gaze at the physical charms of the performer for prolonged periods of time in a way which would be socially unacceptable outside of the context of performance.

The purpose of amateur female performance was therefore anything but the pursuit of art. Its ulterior motives were vigorously satirised in the specialist music periodicals. The *Musical Examiner* printed a sketch of 'Lord Augustus Seraphine', a pretentious musical amateur, who no sooner declares 'that he would marry no woman who was not as great an amateur as himself' than he is 'assailed with such a strange medley of noises' from his 'unmarried female friends': 'one stormed him with bravuras – another besieged him with ballads – a third was for being celestial, and affected Handel

[32] See pp. 41-42.
[33] Vetus, 'To the editor', *QMMR* 1/4 (1818), p. 421.

and the sacred style'. Pushing his satire further, the author draws a parallel between this musical frenzy of female 'display' in the hope of an aristocratic marriage and urchins scrabbling to climb a greasy pole at a country fair desperate to reach the bowl full of money at the top. The impoverished children are 'regardless of the peals of merry laughter from the by-standers, which always increases to a hurricane of merriment at every slip or failure in the greasy ascent', which, following the parallel, is the normal response from those who have the 'pleasure' of listening to such dire amateur female performances.[34] There can be no artistic merit in such performances, this satirist asserts, when they are put to such purposes; all the connoisseur can do is try to stifle his laughter.

Evidently, these writers viewed the musical world from a completely different angle to that of the late eighteenth-century propertied society audiences explored in chapter one. Rather than an amateur ideal dictating negative or at least suspicious responses to professional public female performance, for these writers an ideal of professional artistry rendered amateur performances by women disappointing, if not laughable, while female professionals were to be supported and admired for their confidence and creativity as artists and public figures. Far from judging the extent to which their performances conformed to social expectations about respectable femininity, female singers were now subject to rigorous professional assessment. Reviewers explained the bad singing of a debutante not as the result of the diffidence of a delicate female, but as a sign of faulty professional training or lack of skill:

> Miss Austin's voice is a high *soprano* of tolerable power, and moderate compass. The upper portion of the voice is decidedly the best, although some

[34] 'Miscellaneous', *Musical Examiner*, 2/74 (30 Mar. 1844), p. 502.

> of the tones are shrill and harsh, which is the result of overstraining, a fault of which Mr. Welsh has been guilty with several of his pupils. The lower part of the voice is very poor, and the middle tones are feeble, and it is altogether deficient in expression and sweetness. Everything appears to us to have been sacrificed for the purpose of straining this lady's voice to E, with an anxious flirting to get acquainted with the note above it… The facility of her execution is considerable, but her enunciation is very indistinct; and as is the case with all voices overstrained, the lady frequently sings out of tune – SHARP.[35]

Technical excellence and emotional expression were the twin hallmarks of the professional artist; searching for such qualities now formed the basis of the critical assessment of female singers. In response to the singing of Emma Lucombe, one typical reviewer in the *Musical Journal* wrote:

> We would ask this young lady who is her instructor? has she one? if so, we would advise her by all means to get a better; if none, she should lose no time in procuring one; her nasal twang is offensive, and her general style faulty. She must sing more from the chest, and less from the head, endeavouring better to blend the two registers, e'er she can hope to improve; and as a parting admonition, we would have her to remember, that *expression* is the very soul of music.[36]

Using the same criteria, but in a more positive vein, one critic in the *QMMR* wrote of Miss Povey:

> Her natural organ is fine, powerful and considerable, and she is proceeding soberly and by just degrees to excellence. Her tone is pure, rich, and sweet in its quality, and with as much brilliancy as consists with fullness. Her compass is extensive, and the notes are equal and alike throughout – thus proving the judgement with which her voice has been formed. Its volume is ample, and sufficient to fill the spacious void of Drury-Lane… How far her imagination ranges, or how deeply imbued her mind may be with the poetry of art, a subordinate station in the theatre forbids her to disclose,

[35] [Editorial], *Musical World* 12/95 (24 Oct. 1839), p. 398.
[36] 'Sacred Harmonic Society', *Musical Journal* 1/14 (7 Apr. 1840), p. 222.

though the reviewer expressed a confident hope that future opportunities to display such talents would soon present themselves.[37] In his eyes, her careful cultivation of her voice, a superlative technique and a clear potential to express the 'poetry of art' marked out Miss Povey as a truly meritorious professional artist.

The distance between this model of female musical professionalism and the amateur ideal can be seen most clearly in responses to Gertrud Mara. Condemned in the reviews of her performances examined in chapter one for vanity and over-confidence, she was praised in the highest terms by Bacon in the *QMMR*. He described Mara as the consummate female professional, who had made the 'purest enunciation' and the 'most precise intonation' the 'study of her life' and had consequently achieved a flawless technique. She combined this with a strong 'sensibility' for her art, ensuring 'every thing that she did was directed to the heart: her tone, in itself pure, sweet, rich, and powerful, took all its various colourings from the passion of the words', making her singing 'the most touching language of the soul'. For these reasons, Bacon, in marked contrast to his late eighteenth-century forebears, placed Mara 'at the very topmost summit of her profession' transcending all her competitors 'in the loftiest attributes of art'.[38]

These commentators evidently applied very different criteria, derived from an ideal of the professional musical artist, rather than the diffident and modest young lady amateur, in their assessment of professional performance. Moreover, the achievements of the new generation of female singers emerging in the 1830s and '40s, they believed, were attributable to their pursuit of this ideal. In the same editorial in which he had rejoiced at their transformation from 'flippant dolls' into 'serious artists', the editor of the

[37] 'Sketch of the state of music in London, June 1821', *QMMR* 3/11 (1821), p. 385.
[38] 'Madame Mara Nee [*sic*.] Schmelling', *QMMR* 1/2 (1818), pp. 171-72.

Musical World, outlining 'the causes which have produced this group of female excellence', argued:

> The principles of musical education are now better understood; the cultivation of feeling as well as science is more insisted on; instruction is earlier imparted and more solid in its kind than it was formerly; all these things have contributed in a degree to the superiority of our living vocalists. Many of our young lady singers are excellent players on the pianoforte, and derive from that source an insight into harmony and a perception of effect that they would else want; all of them are diligent concert-goers and attentive listeners to musical novelties of various kinds (the most improving habit that can be adopted by any one in quest of a *style*)… Of such a mode of artist-life, English singers have now discovered the profitable secret; and by retaining an ideal perfection constantly before them – waking and dreaming to music – cherishing the art with passion – they frequently reach a great refinement of both expression and execution.[39]

It was because the ideal of the professional artist now shaped how young female singers were trained and how they thought about themselves and their work that both their status as women in public life and the quality of their performances had improved dramatically, at least in the opinion of this editor. It is equally evident from his arguments that, in his view, female singers should be judged by critics and the public solely according to the degree of their success at pursuing this 'mode of artist-life'. There is, moreover, no suggestion that this lifestyle might compromise the femininity or respectability of these women.

This affirmation of the life of the professional artist as the pattern for all female singers to follow is the clearest sign of the new attitudes towards female singers emerging in the specialist music periodicals in the first half of the nineteenth century. It represents a very important development in the history of professional female singers, signalling as it does the emergence of a quite different understanding of the relationship

[39] [Editorial], *Musical World* 11/65 (28 Mar. 1839), pp. 189-90.

between a female singer and her audience and the purpose and value of professional female music-making. However, looked at more closely, the picture is significantly more complicated than such comments might suggest. Particularly when comparing representations of English and foreign female singers, it becomes clear that even in specialist periodicals tensions remained between a sense of respectable femininity and professional artistry. Furthermore, comparing attitudes towards the importance of the body, physical attractiveness and sexuality in female musical performance in the specialist and general press reveals the limited extent of the influence of these new ideas about female professional musicians. The next two sections of this chapter will examine this complexity and thereby develop a precise analysis of the nature, extent and impact of these new attitudes.

Tension and ambivalence: the professional artist, national identity and femininity

As we have seen, writers in specialist periodicals in this period increasingly emphasised the importance of the possession of an artistic temperament as the basis for excellent musical performance. In part because of this emphasis on inner disposition and emotional self-expression, notions of perceived differences in national emotional temperament played an increasingly significant role in shaping responses to and writings about musical performances. For instance, one critic, writing in the *QMMR* and calling himself 'an Englishman born and bred', declared he was unable to evaluate properly the performance of the leading prima donna Giuditta Pasta because he was 'quite sure that Englishmen do not feel, even by natural constitution, as Italians feel' and that 'almost the entire musical language of the passions is different in the two

countries'.[40] Most importantly, this emphasis in musical discourse on national emotional temperament meant the facility and intensity with which singers of different nationalities were able to express emotions through music came under close scrutiny in the specialist press. Although this contrast applied to all musicians, both singers and instrumentalists, male and female, as this section seeks to show, it was at its most intense in relation to female singers. This was because the bold and powerful emotional and dramatic self-expression required of the 'artist', especially in operatic performance, was felt by some writers in specialist periodicals to sit uncomfortably alongside the emotional restraint associated with respectable femininity in wider society. Some criticised English female singers for a perceived reluctance to give free rein to their emotions in performance, arguing that this reserve prevented Englishwomen from being true musical artists and in particular blocked the development of a national opera to rival that of the Italians.[41] Others praised English women for the propriety of their singing, not wishing a desire for female artistry to come at the price of female respectability. Though this ambivalence lessened somewhat between the 1810s and 1840s, the debate about national identity reveals with particular clarity the persistent tensions between femininity and professional artistry in the minds of writers in the specialist music periodicals.

During the 1810s and 1820s, critical reviews of the performances of female singers were increasingly phrased in terms of a dichotomy between the 'chaste' style and 'coldness' of the English and the 'impassioned', 'vehement' or 'dramatic' style of the

[40] 'Madame Pasta', *QMMR* 6/22 (1824), p. 217.

[41] 'English' and 'Italian' are here used (following the conventions of contemporary debate) to refer to all singers from the British Isles and all foreign singers at the Italian opera, respectively. In reality, many 'English' singers came from non-English parts of the British Isles, while singers like Maria Malibran (Spanish by descent and born in Paris) were aligned with the 'Italians' simply through their performance in opera.

Italians caused by differences in 'nature' or 'temperament'. Quite which style was favoured depended in part on the genre of performance and the personal taste of the reviewer, but their varying opinions also reveal a sense of tension between specifically English codes of femininity and professional artistry. For instance, the critic of the *QMMR* admired the powerful performance of the prima donna Maria Malibran as Ninetta in Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* in which she 'abandons herself to the feelings of the moment, so tumultuous, so overpowering… All this, we say, is done with a fidelity, energy and truth, that can only proceed from the deepest feeling as well as the most pregnant imagination of the scene'. This ability of Malibran and other Italian singers to communicate, with exact verisimilitude, the most extreme forms of passionate emotion to their audiences through their music and acting demonstrated, in the opinion of this writer, the 'exuberance of genius' of this 'artiste' and her 'mastery over an art which is the eloquent, varied and expressive language of [the] passions'.[42]

Those who were swept away by the dramatic force of Italian performers often found English female singers rather lacking in fervour. One review of the English soprano Catherine Stephens, also in the *QMMR*, read: 'Her taste is pure and her general manner exceedingly chaste. Granting her these attributes, we have never perhaps heard a singer who moved the high affections less, yet did so little to reprehend… we doubt whether the warmth of feeling and fertility of imagination which are indispensable to perfect dramatic performance are inherent in Miss STEPHENS's nature'. Far from being a problem particular to Stephens's 'nature' alone, the reviewer felt this was a common problem among English female singers in general: 'There is a coldness of conception which derogates from the effect of all they do', he complained, and cited the opinion of

[42] 'Madame Malibran', *QMMR* 10/39 (1828), pp. 324-25.

'a man of eccentric but strong feeling and admirable musical judgment, concerning a female singer of eminence (in justice however to Miss STEPHENS not concerning her), "there she stands, as insipid as a boiled pig, whether singing *I know that my Redeemer liveth, or an Italian bravura*"'.[43]

At the same time, however, the exuberant emotional temperament of the Italians, despite giving their singing its seductive power, was sometimes felt by English critics to lead them into 'excess' and 'extravagance'. 'The very essence of Italian singing', wrote another correspondent of the *QMMR*, is

> that it is *dramatic*… they aim at seeming *to be* (as nearly as possible) the person they suppose to be singing, and to identify in themselves all the passions by which that individual is represented as being influenced. To this grand end they are incited by their naturally more ardent temperament… They are not in the least shocked by what the English would deem extravagance. Their feelings, on the contrary, lead to excess; - they give way to their emotions – and their object being to affect in the most forcible degree, they use the means which impulse prompts.[44]

While admiring their capacity for passionate self-expression, therefore, it was felt by some to be all too easy for Italians to get carried away by their attempt to capture the extremes of emotion, often with shocking, disconcerting or implausible results. Consequently, some preferred the more restrained style of English female singers. 'Miss TRAVIS', read one review in the *QMMR*,

> indicates rather the decent and becoming rigour of feminine modesty in the picturings of her imagination… than any degree of heated, enthusiastic, or theatrical CONCEPTION… Her singing is… plain, sensible, and that of a gentlewoman… there is always to be commended a purity and sobriety, a graceful and dignified reserve, which is at all times grateful to the national estimate of character and manners. The excess into which extraordinary

[43] 'Miss Stephens', *QMMR* 3/9 (1821), pp. 60-62.
[44] Anglicus, 'On the differences between Italian and English manner of singing. To the editor', *QMMR* 4/16 (1822), pp. 401-02.

> genius is always betrayed will astonish, often enrapture, and almost as often endanger its supremacy by violence or disgust, but there is a softness and sweetness, a charm truly pervasive, and one that always pleases. Of this talisman, Miss TRAVIS is the mistress.[45]

These positive and negative portrayals of both Italian and English singers demonstrate a marked ambivalence about the compatibility of English femininity and the more passionately expressive forms of musical artistry. This can be explained from a variety of angles. It is worth noting that all of these extracts are taken from issues of the same periodical, the *QMMR*, a few years apart. While this helps to underline the range and ambivalence of opinions on this issue, there are particular reasons why the *QMMR* engaged with this question to such an extent, while other contemporary periodicals, particularly the *Harmonicon*, remained largely silent on this topic. Richard Mackenzie Bacon, who, as well as editing the *QMMR*, also contributed many of its articles (even at times posing as a variety of fictional correspondents), was the father of a professional female musician, Jane Bacon.[46] Evidently, this gave him a heightened awareness of the relationship between female artistry and feminine respectability and may have proved a stimulus to the inclusion of so many articles on this topic. While Bacon's particular circumstances perhaps affected the themes of debate in the *QMMR*, the range of opinions expressed in its pages would seem to indicate that it is still largely representative of the texture of debate among the inner core of the musical public, which included particularly keen amateurs such as Bacon, supportive of the professionalism and artistry of musicians, but nevertheless concerned by questions of respectability and feminine propriety.

[45] 'Miss Travis', *QMMR* 1/4 (1818), p. 471.
[46] Warrack, 'Bacon'; Langley, 'English Musical Journal', pp. 208, 240-41.

Furthermore, the relationship between femininity and artistry was not the only tension at work; in part, these conflicting statements also reflect perceived differences in the performance styles required for Italian opera or dramatic music, and English oratorio or concert music. Stephens's 'coldness' was perceived as more of a hindrance in her attempts to sing in theatrical productions than in concerts, while the 'reserve' of Deborah Travis, an oratorio specialist, was an important part of her success on the concert platform. The differences between Italian and English female singers were therefore partly explained by the contrasting demands of the genres and national schools of music for which they had been trained. 'The theatre is the scene for the display of passion', wrote one commentator in the *QMMR*, 'In the chamber and the orchestra the feelings must be restrained, and even subdued'.[47] Another admitted: 'Passion there is so little in English music, that we may affirm, without the hazard of contradiction, that no English female in our day has evinced any force of expression that will compare with the high Italian dramatic singers… Deep intense passion is only to be learned in the dramatic school, and the English have no dramatic school'.[48] In this sense, it was the absence of a tradition of English-language through-sung opera (on the Italian model, rather than that of the English 'ballad opera') and the importance instead of the more restrained, non-dramatic Handelian oratorio tradition that had brought about this state of affairs. Much might therefore depend on the taste of the critic, those championing Italian opera (or the need to create an English high operatic tradition) despairing at the limitations and timidity of English singers, while the partisans of oratorio praised their restraint. Moreover, the differences in national emotional temperament used by many critics to

[47] 'Mademoiselle Sontag', *QMMR* 9/36 (1827), p. 483.
[48] An Englishman, 'Foreign instruction and English judgement. To the editor', *QMMR* 8/32 (1826), p. 410.

explain the varying national performance styles were equally applicable to male as well as female musicians.

Nevertheless, the striking references to 'feminine modesty', the singing of a 'gentlewoman' and the 'graceful and dignified reserve… grateful to the national estimate of character and manners' in the review of Travis betrays the fact that demonstrations of emotional restraint in female musical performance possessed a particular significance. 'In this, indeed, our singers are truly national', wrote one reviewer in the *QMMR*, 'their reserve accords with English notions of feminine manners, and we would not, for any consideration, trespass upon an opinion which is perhaps one of the great conservators of our morals and our happiness'.[49] Though English male musicians' performances, conforming to the national stereotype, might be similarly 'chaste', such comments make it unmistakably clear that maintaining this emotional reserve had important and specific connotations for female musicians. Time and again, critics expressed concern that if English female singers displayed a similar emotional 'extravagance' to their Italian counterparts, they were at risk of transgressing English standards of feminine propriety regarding emotional expression. The English, one correspondent of the *QMMR* explained,

> are certainly neither so warm in temperament nor so advanced in art as [the Italians] are… [We] are shocked at dramatic vehemence [which] appears to us somewhat allied to what is coarse and unbecoming, particularly in our female singers. Our vocalists seek only to move or agitate the mind gently. There is therefore at the very outset, an essential difference as to the end proposed, which in the instance of the natives of this country, sets limitations upon manner, that the Italians neither feel to be necessary nor care to

[49] 'Miss Paton', *QMMR* 5/18 (1823), p. 192.

> observe. They esteem us cold and spiritless; - we esteem them violent and given to excess. The discrepancy begins with nature and ends with art.[50]

If English female musical artistry was to be compatible with conceptions of feminine delicacy and avoid what was 'coarse and unbecoming', this critic suggests, it had to be a very different kind of artistic endeavour to the 'dramatic vehemence' favoured by the Italians. English conceptions of appropriate female emotional self-expression, according to these commentators, placed severe limitations upon the ability and willingness of English female singers to pursue the most compelling and moving artistic performances:

> The English… study to subdue their feelings, and chasten and repress every exterior symptom of the workings of the soul. Passion, high passion, is the life and soul of Italian singing… An Italian woman never employs a moment in considering what her auditors will think of *her*. She delivers herself up wholly, solely, and entirely to the rising emotions… On the contrary, I am very apt to believe that the first consideration of an English woman is the reserve which her auditors may think necessary to the delicacy of the English character. This consideration disturbs and divides, if it does not annihilate, her sensibility. She dares not indulge in "the noble rage" which art demands in order to enable us to move the affections of others.[51]

This correspondent's impatience with those who 'may think' reserve necessary for feminine delicacy at the expense of the 'demands' of art is palpable, implying that some in British musical life wished that English female singers might unleash their emotions and become true artists like their Italian counterparts. Other auditors clearly felt quite differently, however, and it was their anxiety about the dangers of specifically female emotional expression through art that had, in his opinion, produced the 'coldness', 'reserve' and 'modesty' traceable in the performances of English female singers as a form of defensive response. According to these critics, it was not just that

[50] Anglicus, 'To the editor', p. 402.
[51] Mediator, 'Gran gusto. To the editor', *QMMR* 7/27 (1825), pp. 286-87.

English female singers had been trained in the restrained conventions of oratorio rather than the dramatic passions of the opera, nor was it simply that a national emotional tendency applicable to both genders equally limited their ability to unlock their own emotions. Rather, these factors were combined with a powerful English sense of the particular importance of emotional restraint to feminine propriety in a way which placed limits upon the notion of English female artistry.

In part, the reasons for this lay in the development of Italian opera as a genre in the early nineteenth century. As the dominance of the castrati waned in Italian operatic writing after 1800, so the role of the prima donna and the centrality of female characters in libretti increased.[52] In particular, these new roles called for dramatic emotional expression of extraordinary and sometimes harrowing intensity and the performance of acts that did not square easily with conventional English notions of appropriate female behaviour. The roles of the leading prima donna of the 1820s, Giuditta Pasta, for instance, included Norma, Medea and even Otello. While it was (just) permissible for an Italian woman to contemplate the murder of her children (Norma), actually murder her children (Medea) or stab a supposedly unfaithful lover (Otello), there are clear reasons why English women might have felt distinctly reluctant to portray such roles.[53] Even Pasta's performance pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable on an English stage. Dressed as the vengeful Moor, with black make-up,

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[52] Susan Rutherford, *The Prima Donna and Opera, 1815-1930* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 4-5, 9-18 and 162 and Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss, 'Introduction' in Rachel Cowgill and Hilary Poriss (eds.), *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2012), pp. xxxi-xxxii.

[53] For plot summaries, see articles by Simon Maguire and Elizabeth Forbes, 'Norma', Scott L. Balthazar, 'Medea in Corinto' and Richard Osborne, 'Otello (i)' in Stanley Sadie (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, accessed via *Oxford Music Online* website <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O903486>, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O903212> and <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O003768> accessed 10 July 2013. Pasta's first London performances of these roles were in 1826 (Medea), 1828 (Otello, though she had performed as Desdemona in 1824) and 1833 (Norma).

> she seized *Desdemona*, while endeavouring to escape the vengeance of *Otello*, by the hair, drew her back to the bed, and poignarded her. Some of the spectators, and those not a few, considered her whole deportment to have exceeded the effects which can be readily borne, and to touch upon the very verge of disgust. We cannot however but incline to the opinion that it was a magnificent display of feeling and power.[54]

The clear discomfort of at least some of the audience at this scene indicates that such a portrayal by an Italian woman, while controversial, might be explained away as the result of Pasta's naturally more fiery Italian temperament, a product of 'excess' that could reassuringly be dismissed as foreign and no threat to the bounds of English feminine propriety. However, the audience would perhaps have been carried far over the 'verge of disgust' had this same scene been acted by an English singer, for by doing so, the supposedly natural emotional restraint of English women as a whole would thus be exposed as a fiction.

Still more problematic was the way in which the tendency of Italian female singers to deliver themselves up 'wholly, solely, and entirely to the rising emotions' was thought to affect not just their on-stage, but also their off-stage, behaviour, generating an image of caprice, wilfulness and sexual self-assertion quite different to the conception of the 'chaste' and 'cold' personalities of English female singers. Shortly after another highly convincing performance in Otello, this time as Desdemona, in the spring of 1828, a notice containing a thinly-veiled attack on Pasta's own marital fidelity was posted in *The Times* (by mistake, and the editors quickly apologised): 'Madame Pasta, towards the latter end of March, will appear in a new opera, "La Sposa Infidele," composed expressly for her by Micheroud', a reference to gossip about a supposed illicit liaison between

[54] 'Sketch of the state of music in London, 1828', *QMMR* 10/37 (1828), footnote to p. 70.

Pasta and her singing teacher.[55] The implicit assumption made by audiences was that emotional exuberance on stage led to failed marriages, unconventional lifestyles and scandals in the private lives of these singers.

In this context, the audible emotional restraint and 'feminine modesty' in the performances of English singers such as Catherine Stephens or Deborah Travis was intended to signal conformity with notions of feminine propriety. One critic noted that 'the natural elegance and unaffected modesty of [Stephens's] deportment' exhibited 'a character of mind too strictly feminine to admit of a dazzling display of powers'.[56] Strikingly, one critic compared the English and Italian styles of performance to the codes of emotional restraint necessary for happiness in domestic life:

> To the Italians belong passion, force, transition, variety, and general splendour. To the English, sensibility tempered by an invariable sense of propriety, purity, delicacy, and polish… the one lies as it were beyond, the other within the range of our natural domestic pleasures. Italian music is now also much more voluptuous than English, and its execution must partake of its intrinsic qualities.[57]

While Italian performances might be admired, they must always remain exotic and far from the secure moral safety of 'natural domestic pleasures'. Although not without resonance for the behaviour of male singers, this comparison between English musical restraint and domestic virtue carried particular significance for female singers. Styles of performance, and of emotional expression in particular, were clearly believed by contemporaries to signal inner moral qualities. It was for this reason that, as critics noted, the 'first consideration' of English female singers, unlike their Italian

[55] *The Times*, 20 Mar. 1828, see 21 Mar. 1828 for the apology from the editors. 'La Sposa Infidele' translates as 'The Unfaithful Wife'. 'Micheroud' should read 'Micheroux', one of Pasta's singing teachers.
[56] 'Miss Stephens', *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* 5/54 (June 1821), p. 162.
[57] Anglicus, 'To the editor', p. 407.

counterparts, was 'the reserve which [their] auditors may think necessary to the delicacy of the English character'.

By the late 1830s, however, there was a growing impatience among critics with English female singers' tendency to let concerns about propriety and emotional reserve stifle their creativity and self-expression as artists. The editor of the *Musical World*, in the same article in which he rejoiced in the transformation of English female singers from 'flippant dolls' to 'serious artists', went on to suggest that the change was not quite as complete as he would like and that this prim emotional restraint was to blame:

> Whatever maidenly reluctance there may exist to the profession of dramatic singing, it is that alone which draws out the finer qualities of expression – which warms with impulse, and by the influence of situation renders a singer truly *great*. We may be pleased with the fine taste of concert-singing, but it will be a "holy, cold," sort of pleasure, compared with that we should experience from one who has warmed a natural genius by the fire and enthusiasm of the drama. Our young ladies seem more disposed to put on surplices and sing in cathedrals, than to be invested with the romantic charm of the theatre… English girls know more of 6/5 and 9/4 than of the dramatic method of being handsomely encircled in the arms of a lover; what "looks and tones,"… such a situation demands; what language should be addressed to a tyrannical father or a faithless inamorato – in fact the whole circle of passion, which far more instructs the human heart in expression that either 6/5 or 9/4, is known to them only by theory… The frigid, formal, perpetually conscious state of mere concert-singing, leaves three parts of the natural feeling in a state of hopeless torpidity.[58]

The demands of the new artistry – to express, for instance, the passions of the lover, the oppressed daughter or the betrayed spouse – clearly did not sit well with certain audience-members' desire that English female singers' performances should draw upon the restrained and chaste emotional experiences expected of women in the context of normal domestic felicity. As long as approaches to professional female singers were

[58] [Editorial], *Musical World*, 11/65 (28 Mar. 1839), p. 191. 6/5 and 9/4 are musical time signatures; the first is theoretically impossible and the second is very unusual.

framed in reference to codes of appropriate domestic feminine behaviour, English female singers would remain 'frigid, formal [and] perpetually conscious', unable to fulfil the new expectations of the musical artist as the communicator of all the 'fire and enthusiasm' of dramatic emotion. In part, the more forthright condemnatory tone of this passage stems from the fact that it was written in the *Musical World*, a periodical which Leanne Langley has argued had a readership primarily composed of the music profession, rather than the mixture of professionals and amateurs from propertied society typical of the readership of periodicals like the *QMMR*.[59] It could therefore adopt a more rigorously professional outlook which necessarily distanced it from anxieties about the relationship between female professional musicians and gender codes. The editor's comments are also clearly motivated by a frustration at the absence of an English tradition of high opera and a desire to see one develop. But they also reflect a slow evolution in thinking about female singers as professional artists by the 1840s, which replaced the ambivalence expressed by earlier writers in periodicals such as the *QMMR* with a more forthright declaration of the compatibility of femininity and expressive musical artistry in the new mould, or even more radically, the articulation of the irrelevance of traditional codes of feminine behaviour to critical approaches to female singers altogether.

The much less ambivalent tone of the *Musical World* signals the consolidation of a new approach to the female singer as professional artist. Early Victorian critics writing in these specialist periodicals were very far removed from the amateur ideals of the majority of late eighteenth-century critical responses to female singers. However, this critic's frustration at the slow pace of change in the behaviour of and responses to

[59] Langley, 'Musical Press', p. 588.

professional female singers indicates the limited influence of these new ways of viewing these women. Although the views found in specialist periodicals were crucial in catalysing change in the musical world, there remained a great deal of ambivalence and tension in thinking about female professional singers in wider society. Many highly influential older attitudes were recycled, adapted and even strengthened. It is to exploring the differences between specialist periodical criticism and wider press responses to female singers that we now turn.

The aural and the visual: contrasting approaches in the specialist and general press

Despite some persistent reservations, writers in the specialist music press in the first half of the nineteenth century in general advanced the case for viewing female singers as professional 'serious artists' rather than as the 'flippant dolls' of an earlier epoch. Looking beyond the specialist press, however, it is clear that not every commentator on the musical world thought in this way, reflecting a wider divergence in opinion among different types of audience within the musical public in this period. One way of assessing how influential the new ideas about female singers espoused by the specialist critics were is by examining a single, but revealing, question: how important did various writers think the visual aspects of performance – particularly physical attractiveness and sexuality – were when assessing and reporting on female singers? If professional musical performance was defined, as the specialist writers advocated it should be, as the communication of powerful interior emotion in a deeply serious and meaningful manner, then the attractiveness of the performer was of minimal importance. The skill with which the voice was manipulated to express emotion should be the real

focus of critical interest. If, on the other hand, female performance in particular was perceived as the enjoyment of a beautiful feminine object, then both the aural and visual qualities of that object were of relevance to the reviewer.

This latter view was typical, specialist writers argued, of approaches to amateur performance, which they branded as inseparably bound up with a culture of feminine 'display' of physical beauty as much as (if not more than) musical skill in order to achieve success in the marriage market. An appreciation of the physical attractiveness of the singer was an intrinsic part of the evaluation (at least by potential suitors) of the amateur performer. However, the application of such attitudes to professionals, they argued, was highly damaging, encouraging of a view of such women as little more than 'dolls' effectively prostituting their physical charms before a paying crowd of spectators, rather than using their musical talents to move their audiences. By arguing thus, they were challenging approaches to professional female singers inherited from the late eighteenth century. As we saw in chapter one, Richard Brinsley Sheridan characterised the situation of the professional female singer of the 1770s, especially those working in the theatre, as 'the unblushing Object of a Licentious gaping Croud'.[60] Other evidence from the late eighteenth century suggests that gazing was just as important as listening, at least among male audience members. Horace Walpole, gossiping about the performances of the famously beautiful Elizabeth Linley in the presence of King George III, noted that his majesty 'ogles her as much as he dares do in so holy a place as an oratorio',[61] while the physician and gentleman-about-town, Sylas Neville, attended the

[60] See p. 72.

[61] Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with the Countess of Upper Ossory*, ed. W. S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace assisted by Edwine M. Martz (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (series ed. W. S. Lewis), vol. xxxii, London, 1965), p. 106.

Handel Commemoration in 1784 and reported in his diary: 'Madame Mara has an exquisite voice of great power and variety, but is very ugly. Miss Cantelo has a sweet voice & a very pretty person', implying the two aspects, visual and aural, were necessary to a full assessment of a female professional singer.[62]

By the early nineteenth century, changes in understandings of the purpose of musical performance (at least among a certain section of the musical public) had rendered such an approach to evaluating female singers at least irrelevant, if not vulgar and disreputable. For specialist music critics eager to improve the respectability of the music profession, and thereby elevate the moral value and seriousness of their own endeavours to evaluate them, commentary on the physical attractiveness of female performers, despite its evident continued importance to their public success, had to be at least minimised, if not effaced or sublimated altogether in their reviewing of their performances. In an article entitled 'First Lines of Vocal Criticism' in the opening issue of the *QMMR*, Richard Mackenzie Bacon outlined his six criteria upon which he proclaimed he would base all his assessments of singers in his new periodical: 'Intonation', 'Conception', 'Tone', 'Elocution', 'Science' and 'Execution'.[63] In the majority of the reviews of performers in his periodical, Bacon rigidly followed his scheme, with each criterion being assessed in turn in clearly separate paragraphs.[64] He made very little reference to the importance of physical appearance or the body when assessing singers, except in regard to how they used their vocal anatomy. This was a clear statement of Bacon's belief that critical priorities needed to change in favour of an understanding and

[62] Sylas Neville, *The Diary of Sylas Neville 1767-1788*, ed. Basil Cozens-Hardy (Oxford, 1950), p. 321.
[63] 'First Lines of Vocal Criticism', *QMMR* 1/1 (1818), pp. 72-75.
[64] *Ibid*., pp. 78-103; 'Mara, Billington, and Catalani', *QMMR* 1/2 (1818), pp. 164-90.

assessment of musical performance as the deployment of meticulously trained vocal skill in order to elicit strong emotional effects through musical sound alone.

Specialist reviewers might still comment on the physicality of the singer, but this was always with the clear purpose of assessing the quality of their artistic performance. For instance, critics carefully observed the body in order to evaluate vocal technique, as Bacon's diagnosis of some of the faults of Angelica Catalani illustrates: 'It was perceptible to closer observers that the exertion was so vast as to excite the muscular powers of the head, throat, and chest into very violent action. In the execution of passages the under jaw was in a state of continual agitation, in a manner too, generally thought incompatible with the production of pure tone from the chest, and inconsistent with legitimate execution'.[65] Similarly, the *Musical World* discussed the physical basis for common problems with vocal technique, describing the desirable 'L'Argentina' or 'silvery' voice which was produced 'by the free vibration of one or more laminæ or membranes moved by the air' in contrast to the unpleasant 'Voce Nasale or Nasal Voice' which was a consequence of 'the lower part or root of the tongue rising in contact with the soft pallet or roof of the mouth, and thus forcing a part of the sonorous air to pass, and, consequently, resound through the naval cavities'.[66] Column inches that had once been taken up with discussions of a singer's figure were now given over to extensive analysis and comparison of her vocal technique and style.

Figures and physical beauty were certainly not ignored, but such discussion was now framed with clear reference to the use of the body, and particularly the physical expression of emotion in the face and gestures, as an enhancer of the drama of musical

[65] 'Madame Catalani', *QMMR* 1/2 (1818), p. 187.
[66] 'Considerations on the Art of Singing', *Musical World* 9/32 (9 Aug. 1838), p. 244.

performance, rather than simply as desirable or attractive. At first sight, Bacon's comments on the twenty-year-old debutante Mary Paton seem very much in the vein of sexualised commentary on female singers: 'She is beautiful in her person and features. She is above the middle height, slender, and delicately formed; her dark hair and eyes give animation and contrast to a clear complexion, and sensibility illuminates every change of sentiment that she has to express, whether it sinks into softness or bounds into vivacity'. Furthermore, he writes: 'let no one imagine that these endowments are matters of indifference in a singer, (particularly a dramatic singer,) or can be separated from the effects of the mere voice'. This would appear to suggest that attractiveness was still a crucial part of a female singer's qualifications. As Bacon's hints to the dramatic uses of facial expression indicate, however, this was not simply an enjoyment of the body as an object of desire, but instead as a vehicle for intense emotional communication. Bacon explains: 'How much of CATALANI's fascination is derived from her most exquisite indescribable accompaniments of face and gesture? No one can look upon MADAME RONZI DE BEGNIS without the instantaneous perception that her features and even her slightest movements present a complete index, graduating and determining the feeling by which she is influenced and excited'.[67] Doubtless audiences still found the beauty of these women deeply alluring, but Bacon was suggesting to them that their bodily expression should be seen as an enhancer of the emotional communication of their musical performance rather than simply as a display of beauty for their gratification.

This sense of the body as a 'complete index' of feeling is also present in Bacon's review of Rosamunda Pisaroni, who was so unattractive that he declared: 'Look at her, and you exclaim, this woman can have no feeling'. Nevertheless, Bacon continues: 'she

[67] 'Miss Paton', *QMMR* 5/18 (1823), p. 192.

will not have sung six notes before it is perceptible that she is all sensibility – that she is a model of devotion to her art, and tremblingly alive to every breathing of passionate expression'.[68] Bacon's approach to evaluating Pisaroni's performance was quite different to that of the 'Licentious gaping Croud' that Sheridan described. Audiences, according to Bacon, were not there simply to enjoy the visual and aural beauty of a singer's performance, but instead to feel the passions of the music, captured by the composer and expressed primarily through the sound alone that the singer produced. If physical beauty had a role, it was in predisposing the audience to empathise with the singer's emotions as displayed on their countenances, as he states is the case with Paton, Catalani and Ronzi de Begnis. Commentary on the physical attributes of female singers had a place in specialist criticism, but its sexual connotations were effaced in favour of the precise observation of vocal technique or its role in aiding dramatic emotional communication. The absence of physical beauty, moreover, was not to be considered a bar to effective musical performance which, as in the case of Pisaroni, could be achieved through aural effects alone.

Perhaps the most telling sign that writers in the specialist periodicals were challenging the amateur culture of feminine 'display' came not from their commentary on singers, but from their advocacy of the violin as an instrument for women. The violin had traditionally been shunned as an instrument for female performers because of the supposedly awkward and ungraceful physical posture involved, especially in energetic bowing. Instruments appropriate for women were those that required as little vigorous movement or unusual posture as possible, such as the piano or harp. The delicate and gentle movements of the arm and the otherwise static face and torso required for these

[68] 'The King's Theatre', pp. 268-269.

instruments were felt to display the female body to best advantage. The limitation of women to piano, harp, or singing, reveals more clearly than perhaps anything else that female musical performance was intricately bound up with a culture of the display of feminine beauty and grace.[69] Strikingly, writers in both the *QMMR* in 1818 and the *Musical World* in 1839 challenged this by calling for women to take up the professional study of the violin. Bacon described the aversion towards female violinists as 'nothing but a prejudice' and the violin as 'an instrument peculiarly fitted to [female] habits, delicacy of taste, sensibility and perseverance'.[70] More emphatically, a correspondent of the *Musical World*, responding to the views of 'your anti-young-women's-playing-the-violin-at-all sort of people', asked whether:

> we are to expect grace in every act and habit of a lady's life, and call on her to reject every thing that may be thought inconsistent with it? Our modern respected fair one may, like Eve, have "heaven in her eye," but really, looking at some of the offices which we are content to thrust upon her, it seems rather too much to insist that she shall also, like our original mother, have "grace in *all* her movements." Is there grace in making a pie, or cutting bread and butter, or darning a stocking?[71]

Wealthy amateur females, of course, did not make pies, cut bread or darn stockings and so were able to maintain their leisured lifestyle and the continual performance of feminine grace and poise. Professional working women, however, in the exertion of their practical skills could not be expected to maintain this supposed ideal of graceful femininity. Furthermore, what mattered most was not how a woman looked while performing a task, but the results she produced, be that a tasty pie, a well-mended stocking or the beautiful sounds of a well-executed musical performance. 'The grace

[69] Rutherford, *Prima Donna*, p. 49. Richard Leppert, *Music and image: Domesticity, ideology and socio-cultural formation in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 147, 154-62.
[70] 'Mara, Billington, and Catalani', footnote to p. 171.
[71] 'Female Performers on the Violin', *Musical World* 12/72 (16 May 1839), p. 34.

which belongs to violin-playing', wrote the commentator in the *World*, 'is audible rather than visible, residing in the effect more than in the means; nor ought we to be such cormorants of pleasure, as to demand that the person who is filling our ears with rapture shall, at the same time, be enchanting to the utmost our eyes'.[72] These were far-sighted views; the advent of women as performers on the violin in large numbers was not to come until the second half of the nineteenth century.[73] Such arguments, however, forcefully emphasise the turn from the visual to the aural in assessments of female musical performance within the pages of the specialist music periodicals.

Elsewhere in the press, however, assessing the physicality of singers remained paramount. A critic in *The Drama: or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine* in 1821 wrote of Catherine Stephens as 'certainly not regularly beautiful, but her fine eyes, the pleasing expression of her countenance, the natural elegance and unaffected modesty of her deportment, and her air of perfect simplicity, form an admirable introduction to her exertions as a singer, and excite the most intense interest of the beholders'.[74] Similarly, one commentator in *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* in 1817 wrote of her: 'In person Miss Stephens is extremely pleasing. Her countenance, if not beautiful, irresistibly commands the regard and admiration of the spectator by its placid and good-tempered expression. These feelings are inexpressibly strengthened by the evident diffidence which pervades all she says and does'.[75] The importance of Stephens's visual impression on her audience is underlined by these comments. Furthermore, it is particularly interesting that such impressions were perceived to be 'inexpressibly strengthened' by

[72] *Ibid*., pp. 34-35.
[73] Paula Gillett suggests this did not occur until the 1870s, see 'Entrepreneurial Women Musicians in Britain: From the 1790s to the Early 1900s' in William Weber (ed.), *The Musician as Entrepreneur, 1700-1914: Managers, Charlatans and Idealists* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2004), p. 199.
[74] 'Miss Stephens', *The Drama: or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine* 1/3 (July 1821), pp. 108-09.
[75] 'Miss Stephens', *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* 1/1 (Jan. 1817), p. 4.

her 'diffidence' and 'unaffected modesty', equally evident to the viewer in her 'deportment'. The idea of female professional performance as a visually-pleasing display of feminine beauty, grace and propriety demonstrates that the notion of assessing female professional performance through the lens of amateur ideals had not vanished with the turn of the century, but still shaped public responses to female singers in important ways.

In some writing, it was clear that the physical attractions of the performer were viewed as equally, if not more, important to securing their success with the London public. Anticipating the arrival in London of Henrietta Sontag, a German soprano whose beauty had been widely reported throughout Europe, one writer in the *Athenaeum* wondered whether: 'should we escape the fascination of [her] voice… yet shall we not yield to the charms of bright and playful eyes, of lips that rival the rose-bud, an angel's countenance, and a figure modelled after the Graces', demonstrating the power such physical attractions were thought to possess over contemporary audiences.[76] The author of one contemporary British account of Sontag's performance in Berlin, which circulated widely in the press, noted the unenthusiastic critical response to her singing, but wrote: 'My own disappointment at her performance, however, was not very considerable after all; for I could have listened to her warblings, and looked at her beautiful person, for ever'.[77] It is important to remember that both Stephens and Sontag were stage- and

[76] 'History of Henrietta Sontag', *The Athenaeum* 24 (15 Apr. 1828), p. 375.

[77] The quotation is taken from a manuscript of Augustus Granville's book, *St. Petersburgh. A Journal of Travels to and from that capital; through Flanders, the Rhenish provinces, Prussia, Russia, Poland, Silesia, Saxony, the Federated States of Germany, and France* (2 vols., London, 1828), lent to the editors of *The Athenaeum* who printed an extract from it as 'Madameoiselle [*sic*.] Sontag – The Beautiful Opera Singer', *The Athenaeum* 22 (8 Apr. 1828), p. 347. However, when Granville's book was eventually published, the section quoted above (vol. i, p. 288) was slightly altered to read: 'My own disappointment at her performance, however, was not very considerable after all; for I could have listened to her warblings, such as they were, for ever'. The

concert-singers, a career path which undoubtedly rendered physical attributes of greater importance than was the case with concert-singers. Nevertheless, there is a clear difference between the style of commentary on the body in relation to dramatic performance by female singers in specialist periodicals and that of the general press. Whereas Bacon had argued for and analysed the body's use as a 'complete index' of feeling and an aid to expressive performance, the comments examined above tend to imply an enjoyment of the visual beauties of female singers for their own sakes.

This divergence in styles of appraisal of female performance increasingly led writers in the specialist press to be severely critical of audiences who continued to view singers in this light. For instance, one satire of fashionable audiences in the *Musical World* in 1836 mockingly advised that 'Ladies should never fail to take particular notice of the female singers' dress; and when they disapprove of them, they should boldly and loudly say so; and should their countenances not please them, there is no law against their saying in an audible manner, "what a fright!" "what a figure!" "I am sure I shall not like her singing, she is so ugly," &c. &c.'.[78] Intriguingly, the worst culprits for an excessively visual appreciation of singers in this passage are female rather than male, though it seems unlikely that the *Musical World* satirist intended to imply that male viewers were any less visually-oriented than their female companions, or their eighteenth-century forebears. Rather, this gendering of the visual mode of evaluating female singers as a feminine trait is a further sign of its dismissal by music critics as superficial and inferior to the masculine rigour of their purely aural judgements.

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account was also printed in the 'Extracts from the Diary of a Dilettante', *Harmonicon* 6/5 (May 1828), pp. 111-12.

[78] D ♭ , 'Concert Audiences', *Musical World* 4/41 (23 Dec. 1836), p. 13.

The scale and significance of the differences between these two methods of appraising female musical performance was most clearly expressed, however, in a confrontation in print between James William Davison, editor of both the *Musical World* and the *Musical Examiner*, and the music critic of the *Morning Post*, Charles Gruneison, in 1844. The year before, *Punch* had begun a satirical onslaught on Gruneison, whom they nicknamed 'Jenkins', with a series of articles and cartoons attacking him for hypocritical social snobbery in his writing about the Italian opera and its audience.[79] From mid-1844, Davison, writing in both of his periodicals, took up the baton from *Punch* and accused Gruneison of a wide range of critical failings in his musical reviews for the *Post*. Significantly, prominent among Davison's criticisms of this 'Amateur Critic' was a condemnation of his tendency to dwell on 'the persons and attire of female artists instead of their talent'.[80] *Punch* had already made fun of Gruneison's supposed obsession with attractive female performers through a couple of cartoons. One featured 'Jenkins at Home' (**Figure 1**), in the background of which a print of a shapely ballerina with very prominently exposed legs hangs on the wall. Another, 'The Post Conversazione' (**Figure 2**) described a party in Jenkins' garret, at which 'the room was adorned with drawings of the divinities attached to the *Post*'s Narrative, or, in other words, portraits of the ballet-girls, sent from Ackermann for the purpose of review, and after being spoken of as worthy of a *cadre d'or* in the most *recherché* of *boudoirs*, stuck up and fastened with ordinary gum on the walls of Jenkins's garret'.[81] The cartoon itself depicts a party of gentlemen inspecting one of the latest prints of a ballerina. Of course, physical attributes were even more important for ballerinas than for female singers, but because the object

[79] See *Punch, or the London Charivari* 4 (1843), pp. 126, 146, 176, 196, 206.
[80] J. W. D. [James William Davison], 'An Amateur Critic', *Musical World* 19/50 (12 Dec. 1844), p. 404.
[81] *Punch, or the London Charivari* 4 (1843), p. 156.

of their admiration is a static print and not an actual performance, there can be little sense in which these men are admiring the performer's technical skill or physical dexterity. Instead, it is her beauty and, most especially, her legs that are the subject of their gaze, epitomising the reduction of the female performer to an object of visual pleasure.

Criticism of this tendency to evaluate female performers based on their appearance alone was taken up by Davison with enthusiasm and extended to attack Gruneison's reviews of singers as well as dancers. This was not an accusation without grounds: in a review for the *Post*, for instance, Gruneison wrote of the 'debutante' Miss Birch that she 'has *la beauté du diable – la jeunesse*, but she has also a fine organ to accompany her *physique*', her musical skills evidently playing a secondary 'accompanying' role to her physical attributes.[82] Disgusted by the 'evident pleasure' Gruneison took 'in allusions of this nature', Davison complained:

> he is for ever at the person, or the dress, or the legs, or something of the kind, of the singers and dancers whom he criticises. In the unfortunate *Post*, he had a violent diatribe against a middle-aged lady, for singing in public *with a bare neck*; - she was (for Jenkins) *trop decollettée!* Poor Grisi's person is attacked in last week's *Britannia*. Why even Jenkins must grow old – he cannot *for ever* preserve the grace and agility which are evident in the portrait of him published by *Punch*'.[83]

In Davison's opinion, Gruneison's expectation that all female singers must be young nubile nymphs, not wrinkled or fat, embodied a faulty approach to music criticism and by extension to the purpose of female musical performance. In exasperation, Davison asked: 'why not, then, Jenkins, leave the necks, and legs, and dresses of the *artistes*

[82] *Morning Post*, 3 Apr. 1844. This is not the more well-known Charlotte Ann Birch, but instead her sister, Miss E. Birch.

[83] 'Jenkins Again', *Musical Examiner* 2/92 (3 Aug. 1844), pp. 711-12. Giulia Grisi (1811-1869) was a famous Italian soprano, while the *Britannia* was another periodical for which Gruneison served as music critic.

(*phrase de Jenkins*) to take care of themselves, and try to say something about their talents as performers, whatever they may chance to be?'[84] Intriguingly, the term 'artiste' is labelled as Gruneison's own, but the use of the French form of the word rather than 'artist' or the even more sober 'performer' is intended by Davison to imply that Gruneison is more preoccupied by the superficial fripperies, glamour and physical allure of such figures than their serious critical evaluation.

For Davison, and other critics writing in specialist music periodicals, Gruneison was merely one example of a pernicious trend in mainstream music criticism in the mass circulation newspapers. 'Jenkins is a type', wrote Davison, ' – a great moral principle – pervading and invading all moral principles… let not any one imagine, when we point out Jenkins here, or Jenkins there, that we allude to *him* – invisible, insignificant *him*. We point at the mighty spirit of modern humbug, observable in the infinitesimal atom of pure Jenkins, which is mixed up in the mass of abomination, that constitutes the soi-disant criticisms of the above-mentioned journals'.[85] Significantly, Davison portrayed the style of criticism practised by Gruneison as outdated. He quite deliberately noted in his satirical biography of Gruneison that 'Jenkins Greeneyeson' was born 'sometime in the eighteenth century', suggesting his critical approach was more in line with that explored in chapter one, and far from the modern standards the *Musical World* and *Examiner* were trying to propagate.[86] In the end, Gruneison was dismissed from his job at the *Post* (or chose to leave, depending on whose account is to be believed) and Davison instantly

[84] *Ibid*., p. 712.
[85] 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 19/33 (15 Aug. 1844), p. 272.
[86] J. W. D., 'An Amateur Critic', p. 403. For his part, Gruneison labelled the critics of the *Musical World* as a 'younger generation' (*Morning Post*, 8 Feb. 1844).

claimed victory for his campaign and that of *Punch*.[87] Yet while this episode clearly demonstrates the strength and assertiveness of new critical approaches to professional female singers in the specialist periodicals, Davison's frustration at the 'mass of abomination' that filled the newspapers underlines his own sense of the restricted sphere of their influence.

What this evidence reveals is that, despite their vehemence and prominence, the new critical approaches outlined in the specialist periodicals were simply one among many competing frameworks for assessing female musical performance in the first half of the nineteenth century. The specialist periodicals did have an important role in contributing a crucial new critical voice and shifting the terms of the debate by the 1840s, especially within the environs of the musical world of professionals and the keen amateurs. These were not the only people, however, who engaged with professional female musical performance in this period. Furthermore, circulation figures of newspapers such as the *Morning Post* remained far higher than those of the specialist periodicals. Although, as has been noted, many critics, including Davison, contributed to the more mainstream press, their influence had clear limits and older ways of viewing female singers persisted.

Conclusion

During the first half of the nineteenth century it became possible to think of female singers as fully professional, as artists, and as a legitimate, respectable presence in public life. The purpose of professional musical performance was redefined, as were

[87] See Q., [Editorial], *Musical World* 19/37 (12 Sept. 1844) p. 299; 'Dissolution of Jenkins', *Musical Examiner* 2/97 (7 Sept. 1844), p. 776; and Q., 'The Last of Jenkins', *Musical Examiner* 2/98 (14 Sept. 1844), p. 788.

the status and characteristics required of its practitioners. Amateur and professional music-making, particularly by women, were consequently conceived to be very different activities with totally dissimilar goals. This resulted in a new way of evaluating the performances of professional female singers according to a set of criteria derived from ideas of the 'professional artist' rather than the 'ideal amateur'. Professionalism and artistry were no longer thought to be incompatible with femininity; the presence of such women in public life was not a cause for disquiet or suspicion, but should instead be celebrated.

While this was an important development, it by no means represented a complete or sudden shift in attitudes. As we have seen, there remained persistent anxiety, even in the specialist music press where these new ideas found their strongest advocates, about how far English female singers should pursue professional artistry. Furthermore, attitudes to professional female singers were quite different in other sections of the press, demonstrating clearly that the novel views expressed in the specialist periodicals did not dominate early nineteenth-century commentary. In short, new and significant voices advocating remarkably innovative ideas about female artistry, publicity and professionalism appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century, but they were only one strand of a complex debate. Their effect is best characterised as opening up a new world of possibility for female singers, facilitating a far greater diversification of styles of female professional musical performance and the range of possible responses to it.

This was an important development in public discourse about professional singers, but in order to see more fully how influential these new ideas were in shaping the circumstances of female singers' lives and careers we need to explore in detail

several examples of particular singers, the choices they made and the challenges they faced. Turning to specific examples from the everyday life and operation of the musical world allows us to identify with greater precision the contexts and social groups in which these new ideas were taking hold or being challenged. Furthermore, the change outlined in this chapter was not a one-way process in which professional music journalists single-handedly brought about a reformation of the musical world through the power of the pen alone. The actions of the singers themselves and the audiences who responded to them were vital in provoking and consolidating these changes. Recovering the agency of singers and audiences in this period is a crucial part of explaining these developments. For these reasons, the next three chapters will examine closely the experiences of six professional female singers. Each takes some of the major themes of this chapter as its starting point and seeks to explore the extent to which these changes can also be traced in the interactions between singers, their audiences and the press. It will thereby map out in more detail the pattern of change in the lives, careers and attitudes towards female singers in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Figures 1-2



OUR "JENKINS AT HOME."

Figure 1 'Our "Jenkins at home"' in *Punch, or the London Charivari* 4 (1843), p. 146, accessed via <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951001914544c;view=1up;seq=992> on 17 May 2013.



THE POST CONVERSAZIONE.

Figure 2 'The Post Conversazione' in *Punch, or the London Charivari* 4 (1843), p. 156, accessed via <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951001914544c;view=1up;seq=1002> on 17 May 2013.

Chapter Three

Virtuous maidens and cross-dressed libertines: Catherine Stephens, Eliza Vestris and the public image(s) of professional female singers, *c*.1810-1830

Female singers in the early nineteenth century operated in a world in which their professionalism and artistry were often in tension with the prevailing valorisation, especially among propertied society, of female privacy, domesticity, diffidence and modesty. The public's perception of the relationship of a professional female singer to such ideals – whether it be one of compliance or transgression – was vitally important in determining their success and popularity with different sections of the early nineteenth-century musical public. In an era of increasing diversification in the musical world, the friction between competing images of the female public performer and the respectable domestic woman was more or less evident and problematic depending on the type of singer and the audience for whom she performed; not all members of the early nineteenth-century musical public were heavily invested in the cult of domesticity, and others argued that respectability and publicity were perfectly compatible provided that female singers behaved in certain ways. In this context, female singers needed to project a public image of their private character: a series of hints, inferences and sometimes much more direct statements designed to send a clear message about the type of woman they were to their target audience.

In order to illuminate this process, this chapter will examine the very different public images of two singers, Catherine Stephens and Eliza Vestris, and observe the

ways in which their strongly contrasting projections of their private characters led to their success with different sections of the early nineteenth-century musical public. They are particularly informative case studies because, unlike other more specialised female singers, their careers stretched across theatrical, concert and oratorio performance, although they experienced markedly different degrees of success in combining a stage and concert career. This chapter argues that the reasons for Stephens's success and Vestris's failure in this regard lie in the very different public images that they developed. Exploring which audiences in which venues preferred Stephens's model of the female singer's personality to that of Vestris offers an opportunity to map the variety of attitudes towards professional female singers in this period and their social constituencies. It allows us to contextualise some of the discursive changes explored in chapter two by examining in more detail the relationships between singers and their audiences.

A singer's public image – the projected impression of her private character and personality – was a multimedia phenomenon. For stage- and concert-singers such as Stephens and Vestris, it was formed from a combination of the types of roles they played in the theatre, the visual images that circulated of them, the songs they became famous for singing, and (most obviously) the gossip that circulated about their private lives and behaviour. Each of these methods of personality projection will be examined in this chapter in order to reconstruct the various facets of the public image of both singers, before examining how their very different public images structured their careers and relationships with their audiences in important ways. An underlying theme is the degree of agency singers possessed in shaping their public images. It was, after all, a matter of great commercial concern to them to maintain their popularity through such means, but

while a singer might try to project a particular impression of her personality, it could all too easily be disrupted by alternative images circulating in the press. Nor was it by any means certain that these projected images would be interpreted by audiences as the singer intended. Consequently, a public image was generated by a continual process of negotiation between singer, press and audience. Developing, maintaining and controlling a public image was a challenging business for a professional female singer, but one which reveals much about how the musical world functioned in the early nineteenth century and the various types of female singer that could achieve success within it.

Playing a role

Of all the elements that contributed to building the public image of a professional stage-singer, the types of roles that they performed were the most fundamental. For the most part, Stephens played leading female characters who embodied traditional feminine virtues, especially filial duty and affection, and constancy to lovers. In particular, she specialised in a series of 'virtue in distress' characters, passive victims of male brutality in need of a hero to rescue them, hence emphasising, to contemporary eyes, an appealing vulnerability.[1] This was not exclusively the case; some of her other

[1] Such roles include: Emma in *Broken Promises* which she performed at the English Opera House (Lyceum Theatre) in July 1825, and for which no printed script has survived, but a plot summary is provided by *The Times*, 6 July 1825; Agnes in J. H. Amherst, *Der Freischutz, or the Seven Charmed Bullets; A Melo-Drama, in Two Acts* (London, n.d.); Bertha in J. R. Planché, *Hofer, The Tell of the Tyrol; An Historical Opera, in Three Acts* (London, [1830]); Mandane in Pietro Metastasio, *Artaxerxes. An English Opera. As it is Performed at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden* (London, 1763); Diana Vernon in J. Pocock, *Rob Roy Macgregor; or, Auld Lang Syne. An Opera* (London, 1826); Ophelia in William Shakespeare, 'Hamlet, Prince of Denmark; A Tragedy, in Five Acts; as performed at the Theatres Royal Covent Garden and Drury Lane' in Elizabeth Inchbald (ed.), *The British Theatre; or, a Collection of Plays, which are acted at the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane, Covent Garden and Haymarket* (25 vols., London, 1808) vol. i [each play paginated separately]; Yarico in George Colman the younger, 'Inkle and Yarico; An Opera, in Three Acts; as performed at the Theatres Royal Covent Garden and

characters take a more active role in the plot and possess a degree of witty confidence and ingenuity in achieving their aims.[2] But even in these cases, their motivations – primarily fidelity to lovers and filial devotion – emphasise their appropriately respectable feminine emotions. In general, whether helpless victims or more determined heroines, her characters were situated within a frame of reference aligned with the values of feminine domesticity, even if they were placed in extraordinary situations far from those encountered by most women in late Georgian society.

Vestris's roles, by contrast, frequently subverted this model of feminine propriety, and generally fell into two main groups. The first consisted of leading cross-dressed male roles, mostly libertines, heroes or dashing military figures, nearly all possessing some degree of romantic interest.[3] The second group were female characters, often of low social status, frequently peasant-girls or chambermaids possessing a saucy

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Haymarket' in Inchbald, *British Theatre*, vol. xx; Zelinda in Thomas Morton, *The Slave: An Opera, in Three Acts* (London, n.d.); and Zuma in Thomas Dibdin, *Zuma; or, The Tree of Health: An Opera, in Three Acts* (London, 1818).

[2] Such as Polly in John Gay, 'The Beggar's Opera; in Three Acts' in Inchbald, *British Theatre,* vol. xii; Margaretta in Prince Hoare, *No Song, No Supper: an Opera, in two acts. As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane* (Dublin, 1792); Lilla in James Cobb, *The Siege of Belgrade, A Comic Opera, in Three Acts, as it is performed at the Theatres Royal, London and Dublin* (Dublin, [1791]); Floretta in Thomas Dibdin, *The Cabinet; A Comic Opera, in Three Acts* (London, 1810); Annette in Charles Dibdin, jnr., *The Lord of the Manor, an Opera. Altered from Gen. Burgoyne* (London, 1816); Emile in C. E. Horn (composer), *Philandering; or, The Rose Queen. A Comic Opera, in Three Acts, as performed at The New Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on Tuesday, January 13, 1824* (London, 1824); and Susanna in an English version of *The Marriage of Figaro*, for which no script has been traceable. The vocal score has survived as *The Marriage of Figaro, A Comic Opera in Three Acts as performed at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden partly selected from Mozart, partly composed, and the whole adapted to the English Stage, and arranged from the Score by Henry R. Bishop* (London, n.d.).

[3] Such as Apollo in Kane O'Hara, *Midas: An English Burletta. In Two Acts. As it is performed, at the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden* (London, 1766); Arsaces in *Semiramide* for which a synopsis is provided by Richard Osborne, 'Semiramide' in Stanley Sadie (ed.) *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, via the *Oxford Music Online* website, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O904698> accessed 10 July, 2012; Artaxerxes in Metastasio, *Artaxerxes*; Macheath in Gay, *Beggar's Opera*; Don Carlos in R. B. Sheridan, 'The Duenna; A Comic Opera, in Three Acts' in Inchbald, *British Theatre*, vol. xix; Don Giovanni in W. T. Moncrieff, *Giovanni in London; or, The Libertine Reclaimed: An Operatic Extravaganza, in Two Acts* (London, n.d.); Patrick in John O'Keefe, *The Poor Soldier. A Comic Opera, in Two Acts, As it is performed at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane* (London, 1785); Paul in James Cobb, *Paul & Virginia, A Musical Entertainment. In Two Acts, as performed at the Theatres Royal, London and Dublin* (Dublin, [1800?]); Malcolm in *La Donna del Lago* synopsis provided by Richard Osborne, 'Donna del Lago, La' in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* via the *Oxford Music Online* website, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/O004007> accessed July 10, 2012.

or bold temperament, engaged in their own love-affairs behind the backs of male authority and who might also cross-dress in order to achieve their aims.[4] A few characters were shared by both Stephens and Vestris, but these were unusual, and Vestris never played any of the 'virtue in distress' roles in which Stephens specialised.[5] Taken collectively, Vestris's roles involved her in the performance of actions well outside the bounds of domestic femininity, whether seducing and duelling her way across London as Don Giovanni in *Giovanni in London* (a sequel to the Mozart opera), conversing with prostitutes as the rakish highwayman Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*, or running rings round male authority figures as the scheming chambermaid Phoebe in *Paul Pry* (one of the most popular comedies of the 1820s). As the *Theatrical Inquisitor* protested, Don Giovanni was 'a part which no female should assume, till she has discarded every delicate scruple by which her mind or her person can be distinguished'.[6] Furthermore, these cross-dressed roles emphasised and exploited the voluptuous attractions of her body. One critic in the theatrical periodical *The Drama* wrote that the particularly favourable audience response to her performance as Don Giovanni was in large part due to the fact that 'her proportions were most captivating when set off to advantage by a tight pair of elastic pantaloons'.[7] Even when not cross-dressed, her female roles tended to be attractive young women who did not shrink from expressing sexual desire and were far from prudish in their love affairs.

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[4] Such as Victoire in Thomas Morton, *The Invincibles: A Musical Farce, in Two Acts* (London, n.d.); Josephine Negretti in Planché, *Hofer*; Justine in *The Rencontre* although no printed script has survived, but a plot summary is provided by *The Times*, 13 July 1827; Pauline in Horn, *Philandering*; Phoebe in John Poole, *Paul Pry A Comedy in Three Acts* (London, n.d.).

[5] These were Annette (*The Lord of the Manor*), Lilla (*The Siege of Belgrade*) and Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*).

[6] From *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, quoted in 'Memoir of Madame Vestris (of the Theatres-Royal Haymarket and Covent-Garden)', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography, or, The Green Room Spy* 5 (Apr. 1826), p. 97.

[7] 'Madame Vestris', *The Drama: or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine* 3/7 (Dec. 1822), pp. 315-16.

These differences are especially apparent in productions in which Vestris and Stephens performed alongside one another. In May 1830, for instance, they performed in the premiere of an opera by James Robinson Planché entitled *Hofer, The Tell of the Tyrol*. The opera is set during the historical events of the pro-Austrian, Tyrolean uprising against the French-backed, Bavarian occupation of the Tyrol, led by Andreas Hofer, during the Napoleonic wars in April 1809.[8] Stephens took the role of Bertha, a peasant-girl who is carried off and molested by a pair of brutal Bavarian soldiers who threaten her with execution.[9] Her rescue is one of the major narrative threads of the plot. Beautiful, but meek and mild, Bertha's constancy to her heroic lover, Walter, and affection for her family are the principal leitmotifs of her speech.[10] It is a perfect example of Stephens's 'virtue in distress' roles.

Vestris, by contrast, played Bertha's Italian cousin, Josephine Negretti, a feisty, confident character, and a dead shot with a rifle who boldly trades insults with the Bavarian soldiers just before they abduct Bertha.[11] Frustrated at the Bavarians' sneering dismissal of her threats on account of her sex, Negretti determines to adopt male clothes, join the revolution and lead a band of female peasants, along with Walter, to rescue Bertha.[12] She plays a leading role in several of the key battle scenes, swashbuckling her way through columns of Bavarian troops.[13] Though described as a beautiful Italian peasant, the character of Negretti afforded less scope for the sexual assertiveness of some of Vestris's other female characters. Instead, her hot-blooded, bold and daring military endeavours formed the basis of the divergence from conventional femininity in this

[8] See the preface in the printed script: Planché, *Hofer*, pp. v-viii.
[9] *Ibid*., I.iii (pp. 12-15).
[10] *Ibid*., especially I.iii (pp. 10, 13), III.i (p. 30) and III.iii (pp. 35-36).
[11] *Ibid*., I.iii (p. 12).
[12] *Ibid*., II.i (p. 16) and II.iii (pp. 28-29).
[13] *Ibid*., III.i (pp. 30-32) and III.iii (pp. 35-41).

instance. Undoubtedly, however, the extensive opportunity for the revelation of Vestris's bare legs in the garb of a Tyrolean hunter, as shown in contemporary prints (**Figure 3**), underlined the sexualised nature of her performance and projected an image in the eyes of contemporaries of Vestris's own sexual self-assertion. Such comparison demonstrates the clear contrast between the largely conventional femininity of Stephens's roles and the extensive transgression of gender boundaries pursued by Vestris's characters.

Developing a particular 'line' of characters in this fashion was part of the commercial logic of the early nineteenth-century theatre, but it was also a matter of great concern for female performers eager to project particular images about their personalities to the public. This was because there was often a degree of slippage between an actress's characters and her own character, with audiences readily inferring an actress's personality traits from the roles in which she excelled, or citing an actress's unsuitable personality as an explanation for failure in certain roles. One contemporary biographer attributed Vestris's success to the fact that '[she] is off the stage the same as she is on – the same vivacious fascinating being – the same arch expression – the same easy manners'.[14] As a consequence of these perceived interconnections between an actress's roles and her personal qualities as a woman, stage-singers sought to exercise as much control as possible over the roles they played. In particular, many sought to control their performances in breeches roles, which with their flagrant disregard for normal codes of feminine bodily display seemed to indicate a brazen sexuality on the part of the actress quite inconsistent with feminine delicacy.

[14] *Memoirs of the Life of Madame Vestris* (London, 1830), p. 59, quoted in Rachel Cowgill, 'Re-gendering the Libertine; or, The Taming of the Rake: Lucy Vestris as Don Giovanni on the Early Nineteenth-Century London Stage', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 10/1 (1998), p. 56.

Stephens, for this reason, sought to influence the management's casting decisions as much as possible, continually seeking to avoid breeches roles. As a popular stage-singer, she could exercise more control than most over the management's deployment of her talents, as extant correspondence between her and the management at Drury Lane reveals.[15] However, unlike some actresses, she appears not to have possessed clauses in her contracts protecting her from male roles,[16] and on two notable occasions she was required by the management to cross-dress, once in May 1823 as Celinda in *The Travellers* and a second time in the title role of Henry Bishop's opera *Aladdin* in 1826.[17] In *The Travellers*, which is set in China, Celinda disguises herself as a page boy in order to accompany her lover, the crown-prince of China, on an educational grand tour of Europe. During his tour, the prince gets into a series of difficulties in Turkey and Italy from which Celinda rescues him (often using his/her beautiful voice to distract or confuse guardsmen, allowing the prince to escape). Celinda's identity and gender are eventually revealed and she and the prince are united.[18] Aladdin, unlike Celinda, is an entirely male role, and the opera largely follows the conventional plot of a young man tricked by an old sorcerer into retrieving a magic lamp from an enchanted cave and his subsequent adventures with the genie.[19]

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[15] See, for instance, HTC, *2009MT-28, Catherine Stephens papers, folder two, EMS to RWE, 13 Jan. 1823.

[16] Some contemporary stage-singers did manage to secure such clauses, see f. 12 of HTC, TS 999.5.7, Mary Anne Paton scrapbook (this consists of two unnumbered vols. References given here to the smaller of the two which is a neat version of the first and consists of undated MS notes possibly in the hand of JW, newspaper clippings and other ephemera relating to her career). Through some clever manoeuvring at the start of the 1823 season, Paton secured a clause preventing the management from requiring her to cross-dress, something which her parents later tried to secure for her sister Isabella and failed (HTC, MS Thr 467, Theater Autograph File, Paton folder, Mary Paton to RWE, 21 July [1825] and George Paton to RWE, 5 Aug. 1825).

[17] Only one brief summary of a contract for CS has survived from July 1823, which makes no mention of a clause exempting her from male parts, see HTC, *2009MT-28, folder two, contract between CS and RWE, witnessed by EMS, 9 July 1823.

[18] Andrew Cherry, *The Travellers; or, Music's Fascination. An Operatic Drama* (London, 1823).

[19] No script has survived. A plot summary can be found in *The Times*, 1 May 1826.

On both occasions, Stephens appears to have been reluctant to perform these roles. Regarding Celinda, her brother, who also functioned as her agent, wrote to the management at Drury Lane on 26 April 1823 to say that his sister was 'most happy in making every exertion to advantage the theatre but it is utterly impossible for her to play "Celinda" Saturday next – the Part [is too?] long, and must have some new music, with every endeavour that she can make, the earliest day, will be this day fortnight'.[20] Stephens could not refuse the part as this would break her contract and incur fines (the normal punishment for actresses who refused to perform certain roles), but her delaying tactics represent an attempt to buy time and, as her brother suggests, try and get the part re-written, perhaps removing the need for cross-dressing in the plot in the process. When *The Travellers* was eventually staged a few weeks later, James Winston, deputy-manager at Drury Lane, noted in his journal for 9 May, that 'at ten at night Miss Stephens told me she could not play in *The Travellers* tomorrow, being very ill', but that 'after some persuasion she agreed to perform in *The Duenna*', the part of Clara in that opera being a well-established and far more conventional part of Stephens's repertoire.[21] This indulgence from the management and her ability to influence the programme at Drury Lane shows the degree of leverage she possessed as a result of her fame. She did not escape the role completely, however, and *The Travellers* was briefly staged during the remainder of the month, but it did not achieve success and was quickly replaced by *No Song, No Supper* in June, with Stephens as the much more conventional character Margaretta, no doubt to her relief.

[20] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder two, EMS to J. Dibdin [Thomas John Dibdin, stage manager at Drury Lane], 26 Apr. [1823]. There is a lacuna in the text; 'is too' is a best guess.
[21] James Winston, *Drury Lane Journal: Selections from James Winston's Diaries, 1819-1827*, ed. Alfred L. Nelson and Gilbert B. Cross (London, 1974), p. 66.

Aladdin was a different case in that Stephens was never meant to take the part, but a combination of a temporary weakness in the personnel available at Drury Lane and pressure to mount the opera as early as possible in order to beat a rival production on the same subject at Covent Garden meant that the theatre's manager, Robert Elliston, turned to Stephens to take the lead role. As he explained in a letter to Winston, at a time when the exact date of Stephens's return to Drury Lane from her provincial tour was unclear: 'surely if Miss Stephens is with us and I say <u>if</u> because it must be produced immediately… she ought to play the Princess'. But if, Elliston reasoned, Stephens took the lead female role as usual, the question then became 'Where is your Aladdin[?]'. Thinking on his feet, however, Elliston also suggested a second option of giving the princess to Miss Graddon and Aladdin to Stephens with which, he wrote,

> I think she may delighted… and [if she] will "screw her courage to the sticking place" being ready for us about the middle of Nov[r]. then I would reserve the Opera and it might be a little fortune to her in the Country. It should be read to her immediately and the necessity of its production at that period pointed out to her as imperative to the interest of the Theatre'.[22]

Although Elliston clearly hoped that Stephens would be 'delighted', he draws an odd parallel, through his quotation from *Macbeth*, between the courage Stephens would require to play a trouser role and the courage Macbeth requires to pursue his murderous course, suggesting that he feared they may encounter more resistance than delight from Stephens.[23] Equally, by suggesting the money to be made from such a role in a tour of provincial theatres and by stressing the 'necessity' of producing the opera soon as 'imperative to the interest of the Theatre', Elliston, who was absent from London, was attempting to furnish Winston, who would have to break the news to Stephens, with a

[22] HTC, TS 1091.192, Robert William Elliston Papers, 1792-1826, RWE to JW, 28 Aug. 1825.
[23] The reference is to Lady Macbeth's speech to her husband in *Macbeth*, I.vii, line 60.

series of arguments to use in case she resisted.[24] Finally, his lack of confidence in Stephens's eagerness to do the role emerges further in a later letter to Winston. Following news that he might be able to engage Frances Maria Kelly to perform Aladdin, an actress whom he informs Winston, 'Mr. Soane [the author] always wished to have… for his Aladdin', Elliston quickly abandoned the plan of persuading Stephens to adopt the role (not least because it also meant the opera could be performed sooner), saying 'all the difficulty of the cast would be at an end', the only difficulty being to ensure that Stephens was not disgruntled by the presence of another leading female singer-actress in the company.[25] In the end, however, the fast-changing situation meant that Elliston's plans to engage Kelly did not come to fruition and Stephens eventually did perform as Aladdin, with her relative, Miss Johnson, making her debut as the Princess Nourmahal, on 29 April 1826.

The press response to this cross-dressed performance from an actress not known for such roles and otherwise occupying a public image much more in line with conventional femininity is revealing. *The Times* wrote of her performance:

> Miss Stephens appeared as *Aladdin*, and charmed the audience almost as much by the archness of her manners in the light early scenes, and the feeling which she threw into those of a serious character as the opera advances, as by her chaste, simple, and expressive style of singing. Her first air (a pleasing melody), "Are you angry mother? No," was enchantingly executed. It breathed the very spirit of gentleness and affection. It was enthusiastically *encored*, and the repetition, if it were possible, delighted more than the first effort.[26]

[24] RWE suffered a severe stroke in August 1825 and retired to Ramsgate for his health, from whence the letters quoted above are addressed.
[25] HTC, TS 1091.192, RWE to JW, 11 Sept. 1825.
[26] *The Times*, 1 May 1826.

Intriguingly, this reviewer makes no reference other than in the name of the character to its masculinity and instead highlights a song of filial devotion, imbued with 'the very spirit of gentleness and affection'.[27] This is certainly not the same territory as Vestris strutting about the stage as a contemporary libertine, and indicates that Stephens was very careful about the manner in which she played the character, choosing to emphasise Aladdin's youthful adolescence encapsulated in his relationship with his mother, and avoiding any associations with a fully adult masculinity.

Furthermore, the oriental context for the opera, just as for the role of Celinda in *The Travellers*, is significant. As postcolonial studies of British cultural depictions of Asian society indicate, it was common to view the oriental male as effeminate when juxtaposed with western masculinity.[28] With this in mind, it is highly significant that Stephens could perform Aladdin, a male, but culturally-effeminised, oriental role, without reviewers taking a great deal of notice, in a way which would have been impossible had she chosen, or been required, to impersonate western masculinity. Equally, from a not unrelated, but more practical, angle, there were significant differences in costuming between western and eastern male roles. Vestris's characters wore tight-fitting breeches or trousers, exposing her legs to clear view. Contemporary prints reveal that oriental male roles, such as Aladdin, or Celinda (when disguised as a page), involved loose baggy trousers and long flowing tunics and robes which almost

[27] The lyrics of the song can be found in *Songs, Recitatives, Duets, Choruses, &c. in the Fairy Opera of Aladdin, first performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Saturday, April 29, 1826* (London, n.d. [1826?]), p. 6. The verses end with Aladdin's supplication to his mother 'Be not angry with your boy; / One cross look will mar his joy'.

[28] See Ashok Malhotra, 'Performing Imperial Masculinity in British Theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century', *Cultural & Social History* 9/2 (2012), pp. 227-50. Malhotra explores this phenomenon but also notes the way in which stage depictions could destabilise this 'masculine west' and 'effeminate east' binary.

completely obscured the details of physique so prominently on show in western dress.[29] Given that the exposure of the body was often the most striking, alluring and shocking feature of Vestris's roles, it is not coincidental that the few occasions when Stephens did perform cross-dressed roles occurred in this conveniently veiled oriental context. It clearly helped Stephens to defuse the potential disrepute attached to this cross-dressed performance, as shown by the comments of one reviewer for the *Morning Post*:

> a vast deal was said before this Opera came out, about Miss STEPHENS's appearing in male attire; we have been told that when she was requested to undertake the character, she consented, with an understanding that she should not be obliged to wear an unbecoming dress. Were we not told *Aladdin* is a boy, we should by no means discover it, for so modest and proper, yet characteristic is the costume which this sweet syren wears.[30]

The reason why Stephens took such care to avoid or minimise time spent in trousers was because of the public image acquired by stage-singers who did undertake such roles. Coverage of Vestris's career in the press was swamped with references to and actual images of her legs, as a result of which she was frequently reduced to an object of sexual fascination, while her image as singer and actress took on a very different form. Periodicals and newspapers abounded with odes to Vestris's 'silk elastics' sent in by bewitched audience members or playful reviewers, one of which declared:

> Some sigh for looks with pow'r to pass
> Those silken barriers to the vision –
> Or that the silk would turn to glass –
> Sweet Cupid sanction the transition![31]

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[29] Examples of oriental male costumes from an 1823 production of W. T. Moncrieff's *The Cataract of the Ganges; or, Saving the Rajah's Daughter* are given in Malhotra, 'Performing Imperial Masculinity', Figure 1, p. 239.

[30] *Morning Post*, 10 May 1826.

[31] 'Tributary Ode to Madame Vestris' "Silk Elastics"', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography, and Histrionic Anecdotes* 6 (Jan. 1826), p. 61.

Seeking to capitalise on the obsession with Vestris's alluring body, one enterprising manufacturer of plaster-cast models set up a highly profitable line producing replicas of 'Madame Vestris's legs' from 'a little above the knee, and including the foot'. There was such a demand from the public for these models that the manufacturer's assistant stole the moulds for the legs and set up a rival business undercutting his former master. In a bid to assert the authenticity of his product, the original manufacturer claimed that Vestris had 'stood' for him to take the first cast of her legs, a claim which, if true, reveals a striking degree of complicity on Vestris's part in the material culture of sexual celebrity revolving around her.[32] Even if factitious, it is significant that Vestris had acquired a public image so beset with titillation that it could readily be imagined that such a statement might just be true.

It was this suggestion of complicity, or even enjoyment, on Vestris's part in this self-exposure that was most shocking to at least the more morally-severe sections of early nineteenth-century theatre audiences. Reviewers assumed that any truly modest female actress, forced by tyrannical managers to perform breeches roles, would visibly shrink with 'reluctance… in discharging her nauseous duties'. Vestris's confidence in such roles, however, sent out a quite opposite message: 'We could not trace this reluctance in the efforts of Madame VESTRIS, who seemed to have swathed her slender form in rolls and bandages, to fill out the garb of the character, and testified altogether that sort of ease and gaiety which, for the honour of the sex, we will deem it our duty to protest'.[33] Clearly, Stephens's reluctance to appear in cross-dressed roles was part of her wish to signal to her audiences her accordance with a strict sense of feminine modesty

[32] *The Times*, 21 Jan. 1831.
[33] From *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, quoted in 'Memoir of Madame Vestris', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography*, p. 97.

and decorum in how she displayed herself on stage. The types of roles that stage-singers became famous for playing and, just as importantly, the way in which they played them, were a fundamental means by which they could communicate to their audience a sense of their private personality and, in particular, their accordance (or breach) with conventional notions of feminine propriety.

Striking a pose

Visual images were another major means by which the public image of a singer was generated in this era. Prints of stage-singers in this period circulated widely and were either sold individually in print shops or published alongside biographical, review or gossipy articles about their subject in dramatic periodicals. Often bearing little resemblance to the actual physical features of a particular singer, they should be seen primarily as representations of what the public imagined the physical and (insofar as they captured behaviour and personality) moral characteristics of that singer to be. Because many depict their subject in the act of performance, the associations between certain types of role and a performer's personality continued to play an important part in shaping the content and meaning of these visual images. But as we shall see, visual images also offered important opportunities for singers to project images of themselves in their own character, rather than in performance, adding a new layer of complexity and sometimes contradiction to their public images.

For Vestris, most prominent, of course, were images of her in cross-dressed roles which emphasised not only the physicality of her bare or tightly-clad legs, but also a pronounced transgression of conventional feminine behaviour, whether in the form of a

beguiling and overtly-seductive sexuality when caressing the lyre as Orpheus (**Figure 4**), or a masculine boldness of gesture with her arms held high in the air grasping bottle and glass as Captain Macheath (**Figure 5**). Satirical cartoonists picked up this theme and combined it with theatre gossip to produce images suggesting this disregard for feminine social norms was carried over from the stage into real life. An image of the 'The Green Room at Drury Lane Theatre' (**Figure 6**) shows Vestris, legs on display in costume as Don Giovanni, chatting with her high society gentlemen admirers. While the costumed denizens of Hell relax in the nearby seats, and with a cross hanging provocatively in her bosom, one of the gentlemen has extracted his monocle for a closer examination of her person, emphasising her sexual display. A second cartoon (**Figure 7**) shows Vestris in the garb of a fairy wearing an extremely short dress greeting royalty with a bow (rather than a curtsey) while a finely-dressed lady in the background gasps with shock, the caption reading 'Madame Vestris singularly introduced to His Royal Highness &c.'.

The limits of the degree of control that stage-singers possessed over their public images is revealed by Vestris's attempt to project an alternative, more decorous image of herself. During July 1820, just after achieving sensational success as Don Giovanni, Vestris received an invitation from the editor of *La Belle Assemblée*, one of the leading periodicals for and about the fashionable beauties of the era, to sit for a portrait to accompany their biographical memoir of her, the front page article in their issue for July. Vestris replied to the editor that she would 'with great pleasure sit for her portrait' and would call on Miss Drummond, the magazine's chosen artist, the following day.[34] The

[34] HTC, TS 931.2, Schwalbe Actors & Actresses extra-illustrated volume, EV to 'the Conductor of La Belle Assemblée', n.d. [*c.* July 1820] [no reliable foliation].

result was a portrait of Vestris that stands in marked contrast to those produced without her oversight (**Figure 8**). Fashionably and decorously clad, without her legs on view, Vestris gazes out of her portrait appearing in the role of Regency beauty so convincingly that it is almost possible to forget that she had just shot to fame as the rakish Don Giovanni or Captain Macheath (**Figure 9**). The magazine in its article wrote that, though excellent as Giovanni or Macheath, there were 'many [characters] of sprightly females more suited to the truly feminine figure and delicate graces of Madame Vestris, whose outward appearance is that of interesting girlish youth'.[35] It is difficult to tell whether this is simply the magazine's opinion, or whether it also reflected Vestris's view of the matter. Given that she was present at the Drummond portrait's execution, she almost certainly possessed a greater degree of influence over this image than any other, which suggests that this picture most closely reflects the public image of herself that she wished to project. It was painted in the summer of 1820, when she was only just at the beginning of her dramatic career in London and was not yet so firmly typecast into the cross-dressed roles that would later become her *forte*. It perhaps indicates an attempt on her part early in her career to present herself to the public as an elegant beauty rather than a cross-dressed sex icon. Such a view is reinforced by two further images, one a second portrait by Drummond (or possibly an engraved adaptation of the first) which appeared in October 1820 (**Figure 10**), and the other an undated portrait engraved by John Cochran after an unknown artist (**Figure 11**), both of which pursue the same line of fashionable elegance so prominent in the portrait for *La Belle Assemblée*.

[35] 'Biographical Sketches of Illustrious and Distinguished Characters. Number One Hundred and Thirty-Eight. Madame Vestris', *La Belle Assemblée: or Court and Fashionable Magazine* 22 (July 1820), p. 48.

It is worth noting, however, that the Cochran portrait depicts her still in the act of dressing, hinting perhaps that this image of decorous elegance cultivated by Vestris remained rather unstable; for some, it might easily be seen as just another of the 'characters' she played, rather than representing her true self. As time went on and her career *en travestie* progressed, moreover, it became ever clearer that she possessed very little control over how her image shifted and circulated in public prints. The decorous Drummond portraits failed to hold back a flood of cartoons that pushed beyond simply pointing out Vestris's unconventional behaviour and instead presented an image of Vestris and her performances which was almost entirely reduced to erotic sexual display, subsuming all their musical and dramatic aspects. For instance, one cartoon (**Figure 12**) showed Vestris at the tailor's 'fitting on her breeches for the Character of Macheath' protesting ''Pon honour Mr. Tailor I don't think the fit is quite to the thing' to which the tailor responds 'Indeed madam they look very well upon the whole'. The secret of her success in Macheath, the cartoon implies, is the sensational suggestion that there is almost no part of Vestris's body hidden from view in her breeches roles and that this is what audiences came to see. Lusting after Vestris's body was the subject of another cartoon entitled 'MAD_M V_____S LEGS, or the real Actors in the OLYMPIC REVELS' (**Figure 13**), in which two high society gentlemen, most probably depictions of Vestris's aristocratic lovers, gaze, as if from a theatre pit among the clouds, upon Vestris's bare legs. Although a sidelong reference is made in the title to the role Vestris is presumably in the act of performing (Pandora in *Olympic Revels*, produced in 1831), the obliteration of the upper half of her body removes any sense in which her gentleman admirers might be appreciating her musical or dramatic skill. As the title implies,

Vestris's legs were the 'real Actors', the star attraction that brought her such success, and it was her body as sexual object that was really centre stage.

Further evidence for this can be found in a series of 'star' prints depicting Vestris as the apotheosis of the sexual icon. It was in this period that the term 'star' began to be applied to celebrity performers, initially quite literally, with visual images depicting their faces gazing down beatifically from the heavens. Normally, such prints revealed a beautiful face wreathed with clouds, as in the case of the 'Brilliant Star' Mary Anne Paton (**Figure 14**). A similar print for Vestris (**Figure 15**), however, shunned Paton's demure beauty, for a much more provocative image. Vestris, quite clearly naked, with a knowing smile brings a hand to mask her bosom as the clouds are just about to become too thin to preserve her modesty. Another print (**Figure 16**) ambiguously suggests clothing in the form of a shoulder strap over her left shoulder, while at the same time giving more than a hint of a dress falling down to reveal a bare breast through the parted clouds. Vestris's sexual celebrity, her reputation as what Rachel Cowgill has termed a 'female libertine', had become, in these images, the defining feature of her public image.[36]

This culminated in pointed accusations that Vestris was not just selling her skills as a performer, but quite literally selling her body to audiences and, behind the scenes, to a string of lovers, in a manner that contemporaries struggled to distinguish from prostitution. One cartoon in particular encapsulated this situation. 'The Select Vestry-Men' (**Figure 17**) depicts Vestris, in flesh-coloured breeches that leave very little to the imagination, surrounded by some of the most prominent men with whom she had been, or was rumoured to have been, intimately connected. In the background is a grand

[36] Cowgill, 'Re-Gendering the Libertine', p. 58.

façade which could be either of the London patent theatres and the scene is littered with playbills advertising her performances in the 'French Libertine' and 'Don Giovanni'. The image is particularly striking because it shows her cross-dressed as Macheath outside the theatre on the street, furthering the process of conflation between her characters' behaviour and her own personality.[37] As the lovers compete for her affections, she replies, echoing one of Macheath's airs from the *Beggar's Opera*:

> How happy could I be with either
> Were t'other dear Charmer away
> but if you'd get into the Vestry
> you first a good round sum must pay.[38]

Promiscuous desire, avarice and their inevitable result, high-class prostitution, are the not-so-subtle suggestions embedded in Vestris's words. This was a theme prominent in discussion of Vestris's reputation whether in pictorial or print form. 'In how superior a light', lamented the editor of *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography*,

> does the wretched street-walker, who sins for bread, appear to her who thus sins causelessly; and who, with the means of living in splendour and respectability, reduces herself to the level of a prostitute!... Madame VESTRIS has done more to degrade her profession, by suffering the impression to go abroad that she could be bought, than the talents of fifty such actresses could remedy.[39]

What was at stake here, in *Oxberry's* eyes, was the public image of female singers as a whole. Progress had been achieved; a public image of 'splendour and respectability' was now achievable for stage-singers who only a few decades earlier had been much more generally vilified. Vestris, however, threatened this delicate façade by 'suffering

[37] Despite the cartoon's suggestion, however, Vestris never appears to have cross-dressed in the real life, see Cowgill, 'Re-Gendering the Libertine', p. 65.
[38] The first two lines echo one of Macheath's airs in *The Beggar's Opera*, II.ii.
[39] 'Memoir of Madame Vestris', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography*, pp. 100-01.

the impression to go abroad that she could be bought'. As implied elsewhere in the same article, *Oxberry's* was not really concerned with the truth of the rumours, believing that Vestris's private life was essentially her own affair.[40] The object of the journal's protest was not so much that she engaged in such liaisons, but that she permitted, or even cultivated, such a reputation in public. This was all the more unforgiveable because it was contagious and threatened to drag the image of the entire profession of female singers down to Vestris's scurrilous depths.

This illustrates that the public images of female singers were seen by contemporaries to be defined in relation to one another, a point crucial to understanding the very different visual images that exist of Stephens compared to those of Vestris. The first important difference, which stems from the different roles that they played, is that for the most part, the images of Stephens in character which circulated in dramatic periodicals are feminine, frequently beautifully and richly costumed, and the poses and behaviours she is seen performing are much more readily consistent with feminine behavioural norms. Whether in an elegant evening gown as Diana Vernon (**Figure 18**), in a tragic pose as Mandane (**Figure 19**), or adorning herself with ribbons as the bride-to-be Susanna (**Figure 20**), all of Stephens's images in role emphasise appropriate poses, costumes, activities and emotions which accord with conventional, if staged, femininity. As a result, there is very little trace of the hyper-sexualised image of Vestris, and Stephens's beauty, as represented in these images, has a very different quality to Vestris's fleshy voluptuousness.

The same decorous femininity also pervaded Stephens's portraits as herself. One in particular which was reproduced in many forms was a painting by John Jackson from

[40] *Ibid*., pp. 99-100.

around 1822 (**Figure 21**) which shows Stephens in side profile, her head turned so that her expression of wide-eyed innocence meets the viewer's gaze, her hand protectively clasped to her bosom. What is most striking about this portrait is the music that she holds in her hand. Whereas the images of Vestris focused on her sexual celebrity to the extent that her image as musician was almost forgotten, this painting of Stephens makes it unmistakably clear that her public image was first and foremost that of a professional musician. Nor is this the only such image; others from throughout her career followed the same theme. One engraving (**Figure 22**) shows her in a classical setting, holding music in her lap and poised as if about to rise to commence a solo. In another, later portrait (**Figure 23**), a cross hangs delicately from a necklace, but unlike Vestris, whose sporting of a cross while attired as Don Giovanni in the cartoon of the Drury Lane green room seemed ironic, if not sacrilegious, Stephens's cross is the finishing touch to the image of the accomplished artist and the virtuous woman, especially if the music in her hand is an oratorio aria, perhaps about to be performed at the Concert of Ancient Music. What is most striking about these pictures is the way in which the image of the professional female musician and stage-singer is fused with a respectable, pious femininity. There appears in these images to be little tension between feminine propriety and public performance.

Both Stephens and Vestris tried, in the portraits over which they had some control, to project their desired image of themselves. Vestris, however, found her attempt to craft an image as a fashionable beauty continually disrupted by the more salacious and scandalous cartoons that were inspired by her cross-dressed roles and rumoured improper behaviour. Playing trouser roles made the more decorous feminine image she desired to maintain untenable. Stephens, meanwhile, engaged in a project to

fuse the image of the professional female musician with the respectable, pious woman, was so careful about the roles she played, and avoided trouser roles as much as possible, precisely because she feared that this would stimulate the production of images, like those of Vestris, that would jar with the public image she was trying to create.

Singing the right tune

Alongside their roles and visual images, singers also developed their public image through the songs they became famous for singing. If their performance of a particular song in one production was well-received, singers tended to perform it wherever they went, often adapting productions specifically for this purpose, until it became their signature tune.[41] Furthermore, the influence of these signature songs in shaping and disseminating a singer's public image was fuelled by the domestic music-market, where such songs would be sold with the tagline 'as sung by Miss Stephens' etc., prominently displayed on the title page to help boost sales as amateurs sought to emulate their professional idols. By capturing and echoing a particularly powerful or entertaining moment of performance by these singers, such songs reinforced perceptions of the different types of femininity they specialised in performing. Comparing Stephens's and Vestris's signature songs consequently reveals much about how

[41] Inserting favourite songs into other productions was a common practice in the early nineteenth-century theatre. In 1822, for instance, CS played the role of Dorinda inserted into a radically-altered version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (see *The Tempest: or, The Enchanted Island. Written by Shakespeare; with additions from Dryden: as compiled by J. P. Kemble. And first acted at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, October 13th, 1789* (Dublin, 1790)). *The Times*, on 28 Jan. 1822, reported indignantly that the production at Covent Garden had been 'burdened with a number of songs, duets, and concerted pieces', for Stephens and her colleagues to sing, 'which leave scarcely "a wreck behind" of the original design'. Playing Ophelia on numerous occasions in the late 1810s, CS also inserted Henry Purcell's cantata, *Mad Bess of Bedlam*, which, again, was not well received by critics (see 'Memoir of Miss Kath. Stephens, (of the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane)', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography, or, The Green-Room Spy* 2 (June 1825), p. 131). Presumably, while critics may have grumbled, the majority of the audience must have approved the practice for it to have been so common.

impressions of their personality circulated beyond the immediate theatrical context. Stephens's most famous song was the Scottish ballad, 'Auld Robin Gray', written anonymously by Lady Anne Lindsay in the early 1770s and set to music by a succession of composers.[42] It had been famous before Stephens began singing it around 1816 at the Concert of Ancient Music, but she brought it to renewed prominence in the late 1810s and 1820s, introducing it in her theatre roles, for example as Scottish heroine Diana Vernon in a performance of *Rob Roy Macgregor* in Edinburgh in November 1826.[43] The ballad, set in a pastoral Scottish landscape, tells the story of Jeany, whose true love, Jamie, goes to sea to earn enough money for them to wed. During his lengthy absence, however, Jeany's father breaks his arm and becomes incapable of work, while her mother falls ill. Jeany cannot support them, and, fearing that Jamie's ship has been wrecked, she reluctantly accepts, out of a desire to look after her vulnerable parents, the hand of the wealthy Robin Gray, who takes care of the family. Jamie eventually returns, however, ready to marry her, and Jeany is broken with grief at her fate, but accepts her situation as Robin Gray's wife and parts from Jamie for ever. The music of the version published as 'sung by Miss Stephens' is slow, poignant and lilting, abounding with distinctive 'scotch snap' dotted rhythms and plaintive simplicity. Taken as a whole, the song resonates powerfully with the 'virtue in distress' motif that, as we have seen, pervaded Stephens's dramatic characters.

It is clear that contemporaries saw the resemblance between her public image and this song. 'This ballad is peculiarly Miss STEPHENS's own', wrote the *Morning Post*,

[42] See the vocal score with piano accompaniment: *Auld Robin Gray, A Celebrated Scotch Song as sung by Miss Stephens* (London, n.d.).
[43] *Morning Post*, 7 Nov. 1826. This may not have been the first occasion upon which she had introduced the ballad into the role of Diana Vernon which she had been performing since 1818.

describing her performance of it as Diana Vernon at Edinburgh, 'no one can sing it as she does. She infuses into it a simple pathos, and at the same time a power of music that are unequalled'.[44] Similarly, at the Reading music festival in 1825, Stephens sang the ballad 'in a style peculiar to herself; it is impossible to hear her sing this without being at once enchanted by the native grace and feeling which she throws into her performance, producing a powerful and lasting effect upon the minds of the hearers'.[45] This 'powerful and lasting effect' clearly struck the Rev. W. Lisle Bowles, whose poem, 'To Miss Stephens, on first hearing her sing 'Auld Robin Gray'' appeared in the newspapers in January 1825:

> Oh! when I hear thee sing of 'Jamie far away,'
> 'Of Father and of Mither,' and of 'Auld Robin Gray,'
> I listen till I think it is Jeanie's self I hear,
> 'And I look in thy face' with a blessing and a tear.
>
> …
>
> The tear it is for summers that so blithesome have been,
> For the flowers that are all faded, and 'the days that I have seen;'
> The blessing is for thee, lassie, and may'st thou still rejoice,
> Though tenderness is in thy look, and pity in thy voice.[46]

Bowles's conflation of Stephens with the character of Jeany, and the 'tenderness' and 'pity' that he feels pervade her 'look' and 'voice', demonstrate how this song powerfully projected a particularly affecting 'virtue in distress' femininity as Stephens's dramatic and musical speciality. The fact that she could convey such emotions so convincingly formed further evidence for the inner virtue of her own character.

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[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 3 Sept. 1825.
[46] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder one, newspaper clipping from unknown source, dated 25 Jan. 1825.

Vestris's signature tune was rather different and thoroughly theatrical, in a way that Stephens's simple ballad was not. 'Cherry Ripe' was the showstopper from John Poole's comic opera, *Paul Pry*, premiered at the Haymarket theatre in September 1825.[47] Vestris's performance of it was so successful that the sheet music sold at record rates until there was 'hardly any family in London', the *Morning Chronicle* reported, 'which had not seen or heard this song', thanks in part to the appearance of several pirated editions.[48] In the opera, the song is sung by Phoebe, a saucy chambermaid, who assists her mistress Eliza to run rings round her father, Colonel Hardy, in her love intrigues. In the song, Phoebe imitates a serenade supposedly sung on a previous occasion by Harry, Eliza's lover, to woo her.[49] The lyrics echo those of a market trader crying his wares, the chorus returning to the phrase 'Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, ripe I cry, / Full and fair ones, come and buy'. The 'romantic' element to the song is conferred by the parallel drawn between the colour of the ripe cherries and the lips of the singer's lover. Charles Horn's music is an appropriately bouncy *andantino* with a catchy and jolly tune. Although Phoebe is not a cross-dressed character, this particular moment in the play, where she imitates a male lover wooing a beautiful woman, makes clear reference to Vestris's other roles in which she had played the male seducer. Intriguingly, in the printed version sold for the domestic music market, the line, 'Where my Julia's lips do smile', that showed the song was addressed to a woman, was altered to 'Where the sun beams sweetly smile' to allow a gender-neutral rendering of the text.[50] Evidently, ladies desirous of maintaining

[47] See the vocal score with piano accompaniment: Charles E. Horn, *Cherry Ripe, a Cavatina, Sung with the most rapturous applause by Madame Vestris, in Mr. Poole's popular Comedy Paul Pry* (2nd edn., London, n.d.).
[48] *Morning Chronicle*, 8 Dec. 1826.
[49] Poole, *Paul Pry*, pp. 57-58.
[50] Horn, *Cherry Ripe*, pp. 3 and 4.

a sense of decorum round the family pianoforte could not comfortably imitate Vestris's gender transgressions.

Even more strikingly, however, it also appears, from the audience reaction to the song, that Vestris's stage behaviour while singing it suggestively hinted that Phoebe was singing the song about herself (or, even more provocatively, that Vestris had dropped the mask and was singing about herself) rather than making any pretence to be a male lover. The invitation to 'come and buy', when seen in this light, made clear reference in the eyes of contemporaries to Vestris's love affairs and associations with prostitution. This was certainly the insinuation of the *Morning Post* which inquired,

> will it be believed that a cry for "*Cherry ripe*" is occasionally in the middle of the evening got up, and after certain cat-calls the Lady appears dressed in her morning costume [i.e. not in character], and to the delight of the slips warbles "*Come, my fair ones, come and buy*." This is derogatory to the respectability of a winter theatre, and we think the Manager at least bound to let the performance advertised first be got through; after that, for those who like to stay, let them have "*Cherry ripe*," and such trash in abundance.[51]

The song was even more explicitly connected with Vestris's sexualised public image in the cartoon of 'The Select Vestry-Men' examined earlier (**Figure 17**), in which a billboard just behind the figure of Vestris reads: 'Cherries ripe come my fair ones come & buy' as her eager 'customers' queue up for her favours.

The sexual subtext of 'Cherry Ripe' and the notorious public image of the singer who sung it, proved so powerful that other professional stage-singers deliberately chose to avoid singing it, or anything like it. In preparation for a concert Mary Anne Paton (Lady Lennox) was to give at the Theatre Royal at Bath in January 1830, shortly after Vestris had performed there, her husband Lord William Lennox wrote to the manager of

[51] *Morning Post*, 27 Feb. 1826.

the theatre, Mr. Bellamy, to advise him of the songs that Paton intended to sing. His wife, he wrote, 'begs to suggest as a song of Execution Importance, and untheatricall, uncherryripeicall "ah comé rapida" with all the Recitative'.[52] The other songs that Paton intended to sing – a selection from *The Marriage of Figaro*, a scotch ballad by Sir Walter Scott remarkably similar in sentiment to 'Auld Robin Gray' entitled 'Jock O'Hazledean', and 'If guiltless blood', the most famous soprano aria from Handel's oratorio about wronged female virtue, *Susanna* – indicate that she was cultivating a public image as a decorous, virtuous operatic soprano, determined not to stain her image by association with Vestris. The reference from Lord Lennox to 'Cherry Ripe' makes the importance of that song to the formulation of Vestris's sexualised public image explicit. Just to make doubly sure his wife's reputation came to no harm, Lord Lennox requested Bellamy to find rooms for them at Bath, pointedly stipulating 'not the Lodgings Vestris had'.[53] Lennox's actions underline the degree to which stage-singers' public images were frequently seen in distinction from and opposition to each other. As the examples of 'Auld Robin Gray' and 'Cherry Ripe' indicate, signature songs became emblematic of the types of femininity female singers sought to project and, through widespread dissemination via the domestic music market, possessed a significant role in reinforcing the public image of a female professional singer.

Managing gossip

While the roles, images and songs of stage-singers all contained important, but indirect, messages about the private lives and personalities of stage-singers, a substantial

[52] 'Ah comé rapida' is from *Il Crociato in Egitto*, an opera composed in 1824 by Giacomo Meyerbeer.
[53] HTC, MS Thr 467, Paton folder, Lord Lennox to Mr. Bellamy, 3 Jan. 1830.

volume of more direct information about their personal lives, both true and fictitious, circulated in the press. Because this information supposedly offered a direct insight into a performer's private character, singers made sure to behave in certain ways both on-stage and off and sought to exercise as much control as possible over how that behaviour was reported and interpreted by the press and the public. Their limited success in doing so reveals once again that the formation of a public image was a process of negotiation rather than dictation between a singer and her audience. Through her behaviour, Stephens sought to create an impression of her personality that emphasised modesty and virtue. Vestris, on the other hand, cultivated scandal and sexual intrigue and presented herself to the public with a bold confidence, thereby creating a quite opposite impression of her character. As we shall see, both led to commercial success, albeit with very different sections of the early nineteenth-century theatrical and musical audience.

One of the most direct and most easily controlled ways in which a stage-singer could project an impression of her personal character was through the way in which she occupied the stage space and interacted with her audience. As we have seen, many reviewers and many audiences assumed that a truly modest and virtuous woman would naturally feel startled and frightened, even if well prepared, when appearing before an audience. Stephens followed these expectations exactly, appearing early in her career to possess an 'unpretending and almost frightened modesty' on stage.[54] As her career progressed, she continued to respond to the powerful acclamations which greeted her entrances with an appropriately startled show of feminine modesty. 'When Miss Stephens presented herself as Diana Vernon', wrote a reviewer of *Rob Roy Macgregor* at Covent Garden in January 1819, 'she was so overwhelmed with the tumult of applause

[54] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder one, newspaper clipping from an unknown source, dated 15 Aug. 1815.

that burst forth from every quarter, that she seemed to labour under no common difficulty, whilst endeavouring to acknowledge the kindness of her patrons; and the effort was distinguished by emotion rather than by grace'. Her behaviour, which spoke to a series of assumptions about delicate feminine sensibility, clearly won her the sympathy of her audience as 'her embarrassment caused the plaudits to be renewed, and the whole house, animated but by one wish, appeared anxious to bestow their "warmest smiles on the child of song."'.[55] But some suspected the actress of being too good at her trade. After all, by 1819 Stephens was an experienced performer and such an extravagant degree of diffidence seemed 'perhaps a little more than was quite probable in the sensibilities of a performer who has stoutly faced so many audiences of all kinds during those half dozen years; but something must be allowed for the customary acting in the case, and she certainly accomplished her alarms with considerable dexterity'.[56] To the careful observer, Stephens's show of nervousness was an established trick of the trade deployed by female singers to signal their conformity to the audience's expectations about feminine sensibility. The majority of the audience, however, adopted a less cynical perspective. They expected a show of feminine modesty and diffidence as a crucial part of making the evening's entertainment 'polite' and respectable, and Stephens performed her role expertly. Even in 1828, after fifteen years on the stage, the rapturous applause that greeted her entrance as Isabella Wardour in *The Antiquary* at Covent Garden caused 'the object of it [to be] affected even to tears, while her frame trembled from head to foot'.[57] The fact that she felt compelled to do this, and the fact that newspaper reviewers

[55] *Ibid*., newspaper clipping from an unknown source, dated 21 Jan. 1819.
[56] *Ibid*., newspaper clipping from an unknown source, dated 21 Jan. 1819, but different to the above.
[57] *Ibid*., newspaper clipping from an unknown source, dated 1? May 1828.

paid such attention to it, illustrates powerfully the extent to which both Stephens and her audience were invested in her public image of feminine propriety.

Vestris's behaviour, of course, was quite different. Where Stephens had displayed feminine timidity, Vestris developed an undaunted boldness. Already, by 1822, early in her London career, it was clear to contemporaries that the 'timidity which formed so great a drawback upon the effect of her early exertions has entirely vanished; and no actress of twenty years standing, upon the stage, is more perfectly free and unembarrassed in her manner than is Madame VESTRIS'. That this behaviour was contrary to certain stereotypes of femininity is evident from the reviewer's observation that 'this confidence, not to say boldness of demeanour, is of advantage to her in male parts, but it detracts from the charm of her female personations'.[58] In divesting herself of feminine stage fright, she acquired a quasi-masculine authority over the stage space. A reviewer for *The Times* wrote: 'there is not a performer in town that so perfectly commands the stage while she is upon it, as Madame Vestris, - except Liston. Her voice, her talent, and her figure altogether, have given her such certainty with the Haymarket audiences, that the very sense of her infallibility enables her to do many admirable things, which a lower rate of popularity would not venture to attempt'.[59] As this indicates, it is important to recognise that Vestris's boldness was no less popular than Stephens's reticence, although, as we will see later, they appealed to very different audiences seeking quite different styles of entertainment.

Looking beyond the theatrical arena, the press also reported on the off-stage lives of stage-singers, an area over which singers were generally less able to exert control. The

[58] 'Madame Vestris', *The Drama*, pp. 315-16.
[59] *The Times*, 13 July 1827.

relationship of both Stephens and Vestris to money and commercial success was a subject of frequent discussion. Intriguingly, neither were portrayed as possessing a legitimately professional relationship to money and their pursuit of career and commercial goals, belying a wider disquiet in early nineteenth-century society about women's relationship with money and their pursuit of business affairs. Vestris's public image, for instance, was infused with insinuations of avarice, particularly in relation to her motivation for conducting quite so many love affairs with high society gentlemen. One infatuated poet lamented:

> when you sing 'Who'll buy a heart?'
> I sigh to think I can't afford it.
>
> My purse is filled with silvery rhymes
> Jingling like shillings 'gainst each other;
> But theirs is not the note that chimes
> With thine – ah! you demand another.[60]

The financial rewards Vestris received for the popular success of her performances were not portrayed as the legitimate rewards of her professional work, but instead as the ill-gotten gains of high-class prostitution.

Stephens similarly had to defend herself from accusations of avarice, though not in relation to prostitution. Instead, she was accused of pursuing her career and its financial rewards in a manner too vigorous and self-interested to be compatible with the image of feminine propriety she was attempting to project. Stephens's evident public success meant she could not avoid press speculation about the vast sums she was rumoured to have made, including £50 per night for an engagement at Bath right at the start of her career in 1813, £5,000 on a tour of Ireland in 1819, and £1,000 from a

[60] 'Tributary ode', *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography*, p. 60.

provincial tour across England in a single summer season in 1825.[61] Such dazzling sums were undoubtedly inflated, but Stephens's financial success was a self-evident truth in contemporary eyes. It was, of course, the result of astute financial management of her professional career on the part of Stephens and her brother and agent, Edward Maxwell Stephens. There was a clear risk, however, that contemporaries would interpret her success as demonstrating a quite unladylike concern for ensuring she secured the highest fees possible.

This is revealed particularly clearly by the rumours surrounding her acrimonious departure from the Covent Garden theatre company and her transfer to Drury Lane in 1822. During the 1821-22 season, Stephens had been engaged at Covent Garden at an already very high salary of £20 per week, far higher than any other female in the company and equal to that of the leading male actors, Charles Young and William Macready.[62] As contracts were renegotiated for the 1822-23 season, however, the management decided to raise the salary of Anna Maria Tree, a younger mezzo-soprano stage-singer who had performed many of the same roles as Stephens and may have threatened to supplant her. Stephens, deciding to test the management's loyalty to her, insisted, as James Winston, the deputy manager of Drury Lane, recorded in his journal, that 'she… would not engage under £25 per week. This was assented [to] after some conference, but Kemble could not let it appear on the books… She would not engage

[61] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder one, three newspaper clippings from unknown sources, dated 1813, 14 Jan. 1819 and Sept. 1825.

[62] Winston, *Journal*, p. 39, entry for 14 Nov. 1821. William Dunn, another member of the management at Drury Lane had apparently conducted some industrial espionage and seen the financial records of Covent Garden at Coutts's bank.

unless it appeared in the books that she had £25 per week'.[63] Stephens, keenly aware of the need to maintain her professional pre-eminence, wished her authority as principal singer-actress to be prominently and officially displayed by her salary in the books. Charles Kemble, the manager of Covent Garden, could not assent to this, perhaps for fear that other performers would demand yet more money if they knew, and Stephens promptly left Covent Garden and entered negotiations with the management at Drury Lane for an engagement there.[64]

As a result of this episode, however, Stephens found herself attacked in the press. An author, styling themselves 'DRAMATICUS' (quite possibly Kemble or one of his associates), accused her of being governed by avaricious self-interest and petty pride in her response to Tree's advancement, both of which, her assailant argued, reflected 'little credit on her character as a lady or a singer'.[65] This was a serious threat; Stephens's feminine public image which supposedly shunned careerism and financial dealings was severely threatened by such revelations. The newspaper editor who printed Dramaticus's letter defended Stephens, writing that he could not 'see how Miss STEPHENS's demand is to injure her character as a lady and a singer', but he simply argued that she was justified in demanding her financial rewards and asserting her status in the Covent Garden company, rather than refuting the idea that she had been motivated by such goals in the first place. 'To be at the head of one's profession', the editor wrote, 'and by some marked distinction to be so acknowledged, evinces surely a

[63] *Ibid*., p. 55, entry for 16 July 1822. Charles Kemble, manager at Covent Garden, following his dispute with Stephens had come to Drury Lane to ask if they had engaged Stephens for the 1822-23 season, which is how Winston came by this information.
[64] See CS's letter to RWE on this subject, HTC, *2009MT-28, folder two, CS to RWE, 27 July 1822.
[65] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder one, newspaper clipping from *John Bull*, 4 Aug. 1822.

laudable ambition'.[66] While this editor was supportive of her position, in the eyes of those who were less inclined to view the situation of the female musical professional in a sympathetic light, this still left Stephens open to the charge of unladylike mercenary conduct and petty rivalry. Aware of the danger, Stephens attempted to project a quite different story regarding her motivations. In a letter to the newspaper in question, *John Bull*, in response to that of 'Dramaticus', she stated:

> Fearful my health might be injured by a too constant application to my profession, I had determined to quit the Theatre for a season, and attend at concerts only; but the Committee urged me to continue, and I agreed, upon the condition of a rise in my salary, which would enable me to give up some part of my concerts.
>
> *This was the only stipulation I made*, without reference to any performer whatever, or "choice of parts," as incorrectly stated by DRAMATICUS.

Furthermore, she thanked the editor for 'the very handsome and kind manner' in which he had rejected Dramaticus's claims.[67] This gesture of thanks for the gallantry of the editor who had risen to the defence of a wronged woman and her stress upon the damage to her health caused by her performances as her only motive for seeking to leave the theatre emphasised an image of a vulnerable woman fatigued by public exertion of her talents, rather than a shrewd commercial operator determined to secure the best price for her performances by playing off the rival patent theatres against one another. Winston's journal entries offer a glimpse into the hard-headed, behind-the-scenes financial dealings in which professional female singers had to engage to secure their interests, but Stephens could not afford for these aspects of her personality and professional life to become well-known to the public, which tended to view women's involvement in such matters with distaste. Instead, her response to public accusations of

[66] *Ibid*.
[67] *Ibid*., newspaper clipping from *John Bull*, 26 Aug. 1822.

this kind shows clearly the amount of energy that Stephens expended in maintaining a certain type of feminine public image which could not be contaminated with the grubbier aspects of careerism, financial management and theatrical rivalry.

Equally to be avoided, from Stephens's perspective, was any association with sexual scandal. Stephens took great care to avoid any hint of scandal leaking into the press and the vast majority of those writing about her private life agreed with the author of a biography of her in *The New British Lady's Magazine* that 'on her private life, calumny has not dared to throw the slightest stain, and this eulogium is not a trifling one, when it is considered, that her situation is surrounded with temptations, which few have the fortitude to resist, and in which, all the allurements are held out, which rank or fortune can supply'.[68] Later in her career, rumours began to circulate of an illicit liaison with the Earl of Essex (whom she was later to marry in 1838 following the death of the previous countess), but the strength of her virtuous reputation was such that, apart from one satirical poem mocking the aged earl's sexual impotence, there is very little reference to this relationship in the press.[69] Instead, the strong congruence between her public image and feminine virtue frequently led to comparisons between Stephens and the ideal wife. In the character of Lilla chastising her husband in *The Siege of Belgrade* in November 1817, Stephens 'was like an affectionate wife in private, who raillied, not from excess of spirit but of a wish to please'.[70] Another reviewer wrote of the audience's response to her performance as Violetta in *Don Juan* in June 1821:

> we never heard gratulations more fervent and hearty than when she exclaimed: "If any young fellow would but take a liking to me, and prove

[68] 'Biography of Miss Stephens', *The New British Lady's Magazine: or, Monthly Mirror of Literature and Fashion* 2/8 (Jan. 1818), p. 6.
[69] HTC, *2009MT-28, folder one, newspaper clipping from *The Age*, 23 Nov. 1828.
[70] *Ibid*., newspaper clipping from an unknown source, 16 Nov. 1817.

himself faithful, I'd make him the best wife in the world." It was as if every auditor felt impressed with the truth of the assertion.[71]

As this suggests, a large part of Stephens's appeal, at least to some sections of the early nineteenth-century public, was her virtuous reputation, which she consequently worked hard to maintain.

Contrary to this, of course, was the public image of Vestris. Right from the start of her career, upon her return from the continent to London in 1819 without her husband, a fact made all too evident by the 'Madame' in front of her name, Vestris, 'the delight of all the dandies', courted controversy.[72] Her affairs with a string of young gentlemen from London high society produced not only cartoons such as 'The Select Vestry-Men', but also a succession of scandalous biographies published to feed the gossip-hungry and prurient tastes of a large section of the public.[73] Some were exceptionally lurid; *The Adventures, Public and Private, of Madame Vestris*, among a variety of other shocking and entertaining details, gave an account of her supposed stay on board the British navy ship, *Theseus*, while docked at Palermo and her participation in a game of 'hunt the barber' with the naked seamen on board. Vestris pursued the publisher of these libels in court and won £100 of damages in 1826, although, as the trial and many of the contents of the *Adventures* were then reported in *The Times*, this may only have fanned the flames of public speculation, a perhaps not unintended

[71] 'Miss Stephens', *The British Stage and Literary Cabinet* 5/54 (June 1821), p. 162.
[72] *The Examiner*, 30 July 1826.
[73] *Memoirs of the Life of Madame Vestris of the Theatres Royal Drury Lane and Covent Garden: illustrated with numerous curious anecdotes* ([London?], 1830); *Memoirs of the public and private life, adventures and wonderful exploits of Madame Vestris, the Don Juan of the present day* (London, n.d.); *Memoirs, Public & Private Life, Adventures, and Secret Amours of Mrs. C. M. late Mad. V. of the Royal Olympic Theatre* (London, n.d. [post 1838]); *Memoirs of the life, public and private adventures of Madame Vestris, of the Theatres Royal Drury Lane, Covent Garden, Olympic and Haymarket, with interesting and amusing anecdotes of celebrated characters in the fashionable world, detailing an interesting variety of singularly curious and amusing scenes, as performed before and behind the curtain. In which will be found most curious notices of many eminent roués and debauchees of the day; with various others of public notoriety* (London, 1839).

consequence on Vestris's part.[74] Her affairs were certainly no secret, but, most importantly, while they created for her a public image extremely different to that of Stephens, they did not fundamentally damage her career and in fact almost certainly contributed to her renown and popularity. One bitter former lover, frustrated that press rumours about Vestris's scandalous behaviour had not caused more harm to her career, railed to Charles Harris, Vestris's manager and confidant: 'what astonishes me is that no thorns appear to lodge in her bosom to prick and sting her! Zounds it makes one angry!'.[75] That Vestris and Stephens could possess such different public images and yet both prove immensely popular with the early nineteenth-century musical and theatrical public is highly significant. The key to explaining this lies in investigating precisely to which groups within the theatre- and concert-going public they each, in their very different ways, appealed.

To each singer her public

One of the most striking features to emerge from a comparison of Stephens's and Vestris's careers is the very different performance venues in which they achieved success. Almost from the very start of her career, Stephens had supplemented her winter season at the theatre with regular engagements at the two leading London subscription concert series, the Philharmonic Society and the Concert of Ancient Music. As far as extant programmes reveal, Vestris never performed at the Concert of Ancient Music, and

[74] The full title of the book was *The Adventures, Public and Private, of Madame Vestris, formerly of the Theatre Royal San Carlos, at Naples, as performed both before and behind the Curtain*, which appeared in 1826. No copy has been traceable. The trial and much of the content of the work was reported in *The Times*, 27 Nov. 1826.

[75] HTC, MS Thr 578, Madame Lucia Elizabeth Vestris correspondence and other papers, *c*.1816-1833, Unknown to Charles Harris, n.d. There are several letters in this hand to Harris. This writer appears to have been at one point romantically involved with Vestris, but by the time of writing this had been terminated on somewhat hostile terms. He was, however, a close witness to her intrigues with other men.

only performed in a single concert at the Philharmonic Society on 26 April 1824.[76] One possible reason for this is that Vestris may have received and turned down offers to perform at these venues.[77] However, it would make very little financial sense to do so. Such engagements were exceptionally lucrative and highly desirable; Stephens received fifty guineas for singing at just three concerts during the Philharmonic Society's season in 1820, the equivalent of over two and a half weeks' wages at the theatre where she would be required to perform nearly every evening.[78] Given that singing a few unstaged arias did not require the extensive rehearsal, line-learning and drudgery of a theatre role, such contracts represented high financial reward for comparatively little effort. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that, early in her career, Vestris was actively seeking to follow a similar path to Stephens, and pursue a career as a prominent performer at London's elite subscription concerts, alongside her theatrical work. Her first theatre contract with Robert Elliston at Drury Lane, signed in 1819, specifically included a clause permitting her to perform six nights at the Argyll Rooms, one of London's leading concert venues and the home of the Philharmonic Society.[79] Furthermore, the Drummond portrait examined above, which dates from this early period in her career, emphasised elegant femininity, rather than cross-dressed sex appeal, perhaps with an eye towards appealing to managers of respectable subscription concerts.

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[76] See the programmes for the Concert of Ancient Music for each season printed under the title (which varies slightly) *Concerts of Antient Music, under the patronage of their Majesties, as performed at the New Rooms, Hanover Square* (London, 1813-1830). For the Philharmonic Society programmes, see Myles Birket Foster, *History of the Philharmonic Society of London, 1813-1912* (London, 1912).

[77] There are no papers relating to any such negotiations in the Royal Philharmonic Society's archive at the British Library, although the archive is obviously not a completely comprehensive record.

[78] BL, RPS MS 334, Royal Philharmonic Society archive, original letters Ashe-Beckwith, Henry Attwood to William Watts, 7 July 1820, f. 12. Her theatre salary in November 1821 was £20 per week (see p. 169).

[79] HTC, TS 952.5, Extra-illustrated volume of Vestris memoirs, contract between EV and RWE, 13 Dec. 1819, in which the Argyll Rooms clause is included. This is absent from a brief summary of her 1823 contract with Elliston to be found in the same volume in the HTC. James Winston notes in his journal that when she signed a three-season contract with Elliston in June 1820 to last until the summer of 1822, the Argyll Rooms clause was still included, see Winston, *Journal*, p. 11, entry for 7 June 1820.

However, while she did perform at some minor concerts at the Argyll Rooms in these early months, she failed to secure the Philharmonic Society engagement she may have been seeking.[80] It was during this time that she shot to fame for her cross-dressed performance as the libertine Don Giovanni at Drury Lane, and it seems plausible that the sexualised and scandalous public image she acquired as a result was the reason why concert-managers were so reluctant to engage her for their sober and respectable high society concerts. As her theatrical career progressed and she achieved even greater renown in breeches roles, the prospect of a concert career appears to have receded still further. In January 1821, she changed tactics, seeking Elliston's permission to take an engagement at the King's Theatre (the Italian opera house), indicating she had relinquished her ambition to become a concert artist and had settled on a fully theatrical career instead, one more in line with the particular public image (derived from her success in libertine breeches roles) that she had acquired since signing her first contract in 1819.[81]

One major reason why Vestris's public image made concert managers reluctant to engage her was her perceived unsuitability as a performer of the sacred oratorio music of Handel. Such repertoire formed the overwhelming majority of Stephens's performances outside of theatrical contexts, especially at the Concert of Ancient Music, provincial music festivals and at the patent theatres during Lent and other religious feast days when theatrical performances were prohibited. Reviewers commented on

[80] She took part in a performance of a new oratorio by Giovanni Paisiello at the Argyll Rooms on 17 Apr. 1820 (see *The Times*, 15 Apr. 1820) but does not appear to have performed there on any other occasion that season. Interestingly, in April she had not yet performed as Don Giovanni.

[81] JW notes that RWE grudgingly gave permission for this 'against the advice of everyone' on 30 Jan. 1821. Allowing performers to sing at concerts was acceptable, but allowing them to perform theatrically at another London venue risked losing commercial advantage. JW notes that she eventually signed her contract with John Ebers, manager at the King's Theatre, on 9 Mar. 1821 (see Winston, *Journal*, pp. 25, 27). EV's contract at the King's Theatre can be found in the BL, Add. MS 52335, Ayrton Papers vol. II, f. 32.

Stephens's extraordinary power to capture the meaning and emotional force of Handel's sacred music. For instance, one of Stephens's most popular arias was 'Angels ever bright and fair' from Handel's oratorio *Theodora*. Set during the fourth-century persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire, Theodora is arrested for refusing to renounce her faith and led away to a punishment of enforced prostitution. In the aria, Theodora, preferring death to such shameful degradation, implores angels to bear her away from her fate to the courts of heaven 'clad', she sings, 'in robes of virgin white'. It was a powerful instance of Stephens's 'virtue in distress' motif and on one occasion in March 1824 was delivered 'with so much excellence, that the deepest silence reigned throughout the house whilst she unbound "the chains that tie / The hidden soul of melody." At the close, however, a thundering call for an encore shook the Theatre, and was too loud and too general not to be instantly obeyed'.[82] Others noted the power of her renditions of arias from *The Messiah* with which, as the *Morning Post* put it, she had 'identified herself' such as 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'.[83] In the words of one reviewer, her performance of this famous aria 'went direct to the heart of all who heard her'.[84] This ability to perform oratorio convincingly was inextricably linked to the virtuous public image she had cultivated.

On the rare occasions when Vestris performed sacred music the public response was quite different. At the oratorio concert at Covent Garden on 31 January 1822, the feast day of Charles, King and Martyr, Vestris was allocated 'the most pathetic of Handel's songs – "He was despised and rejected of men."' from *The Messiah*. Curtly dismissive, one reviewer noted: 'Her *forte* was certainly not consulted in the choice. The

[82] *Morning Post*, 11 Mar. 1824.
[83] *Ibid.*, 24 Mar. 1827 [the original is a misprint and reads 'indentified herself'].
[84] *Ibid.*, 10 June 1830.

notes were given, but the sentiment was not elicited'.[85] It is not at all surprising that a woman known for cross-dressed performances as licentious libertines, boldly exposing her legs to paying audiences, should be thought to fail to elicit religious sentiment by the oratorio public. As a result, Vestris appears to have sung oratorio only in this specific and infrequent type of concert at the theatres at times of year when dramatic performances were prohibited. Managers of venues where oratorio regularly featured very heavily on the programme, such as the Concert of Ancient Music, evidently felt it would be foolhardy to hire such a performer.

This may explain why the managers of the Concert of Ancient Music did not wish to hire Vestris, but it does not explain so readily why the Philharmonic Society also only engaged her on a single occasion. Vestris's Italian opera repertoire, acquired during her engagements at the King's Theatre, would have been ideal for the Society's programmes, the vocal portion of which consisted for the most part of the arias of Mozart, Rossini and other opera composers.[86] Vestris's absence, even from this more secular context, implies that managers of concert series and their subscribers had very particular notions of what kind of woman a female concert artist should be. Many prominent female concert performers, including, for example, Eliza Salmon and Joanna Goodall, both regular performers at the Philharmonic and Ancient concerts, had taken deliberate decisions not to become actresses and confined themselves exclusively to the non-dramatic repertoire. Their reputations for feminine propriety, unstained by even the slightest hint of scandal or sexualisation, had a powerful effect on moulding the image of

[85] *The Times*, 31 Jan. 1822.

[86] See Foster, *Philharmonic Society* for the Society's programmes. At the one Philharmonic concert on 26 April 1824 at which Vestris appeared, she performed in the quartet, 'Don Basilio' from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and a trio 'Cruda Sorte' from *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, both by Rossini.

the female concert artist. 'Miss Goodall is particularly remarkable for a sweet and elegant style of singing; for the purity of her public conduct; and her amiable and endearing manners in private life', remarked one biographer in *The Ladies' Museum* in 1824, noting particularly: 'she has never, we understand, sung on the stage, but has hitherto confined her efforts to public and private concerts of the very highest order'.[87] Stephens, a stage-singer, consequently had to take a great deal of care to cultivate a particular public image that could be reconciled with that of Salmon, Goodall and others and which would allow her to meet the expectations placed upon the reputations of female concert artists in these venues. Vestris's public image was simply too far beyond the bounds of the type of femininity that was expected of a concert artist.

These different expectations were, at least in part, a result of the social status of the audience at the Philharmonic and the Ancient Concerts, where the high price of subscription ensured an audience from a much narrower social range than at the patent theatres. A subscription to the Philharmonic Society might cost as much as 6 guineas a season, or 16*s*. per concert, which was more than double the cost of even the most expensive seats at the patent theatres.[88] Subscription concert audiences possessed a strong sense of social elitism and exclusivity, as demonstrated by the complaint of one subscriber to the directors of the Philharmonic Society in April 1820:

> in Spite of your Rule that Tickets should not be transferable – they are lent by many to their Friends; & hence the company is so mixed as to render the Concert very different from what it was intended to be, & very unworthy of being patronized by the King; you will, if you do not take care, knock up

[87] 'Miss Goodall', *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* 20 (Nov. 1824), p. 242.

[88] On the social composition of the Concerts of Ancient Music and Philharmonic Society audiences see William Weber, *Music and the Middle Class: The Social Structure of Concert Life in London, Paris and Vienna between 1830 and 1848* (Aldershot, 2004, first published 1975), p. 29. See also discussion of ticket prices pp. 27-34 and tables to accompany, pp. 159-168 and discussion of changes post-1830, pp. 71-80.

> your Concert… the Philharmonic should be select – and distinguished by its Superiority to all others.[89]

Such social exclusivity was in marked contrast to the 'one shilling mob' crammed into the cheaper galleries of the theatres.

These different social groups possessed very different expectations about what the appropriate public image of a female singer should be. High status audiences at subscription concerts, concerned perhaps to protect the innocence of their daughters, expected a far greater degree of feminine propriety and respectability from their professional female singers, than the much more socially-mixed theatre audiences did. Stephens's decorous and virtuous public image was designed to accord with the expectations of elite subscription concert audiences. Vestris's image, however, appealed to the sensibilities of a quite different social stratum. Lady Davis, a resident of Bath, explained in a letter to her sister which kinds of social groups found Vestris most appealing:

> Madame Vestris is now performing here with great success, having crowded houses every night; she is a bold Puss and therefore the men all like her; her performance in the Character of Victoire in the Invincible[s] is much cried up; two of my servants are to go to night, Richards is quite delighted with the thoughts of seeing her.[90]

Lady Davis clearly implies that Vestris's core audience consisted primarily of lower class males, a group very little in evidence on the subscribers' lists for the Philharmonic, and equally one less heavily invested in observing the niceties of feminine propriety than was the case among the propertied society at subscription concerts. Moreover, venue

[89] BL, RPS MS 368, Royal Philharmonic Society archive, original letters Widor-Zuchelli, 'Amateur' to the Directors, 12 Apr. 1820.
[90] DHC, Rackett papers, D/RAC/108, Lady Davis to Dorothy Rackett, n.d. [*c*.22 Apr. 1829].

and genre undoubtedly had a role to play alongside the contrasting social constituency of the theatre audience. While Lady Davis probably desired to associate Vestris's scandalous reputation with a socially-inferior audience, we might suspect that at least some members of her own class, less concerned in the theatre to maintain the decorum expected in the concert hall, probably applauded Vestris's amusing transgressions just as vigorously as their footmen and butlers.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, what this evidence shows is that there was no single route to success for professional female singers in this period. Stephens's and Vestris's equally successful but widely divergent public images and career paths indicate that increasing diversity was a major feature of this period in the commercial entertainment world in general and the image of the female singer in particular. Audiences from different social levels in different venues (or even different sets of seats within the same venue) possessed very different expectations about the type of femininity they wished their female performers to embody. Elite concert audiences favoured the 'virtue in distress', decorous feminine propriety of Stephens, while the 'one shilling mob' at the theatre relished Vestris's entertaining and amusing transgressions of those same modes of femininity. Of course, this is not to say that elite audience members never found themselves laughing at Vestris's less polite form of performance or that the shopkeeper and his wife were incapable of appreciating the pathos of Stephens's virtuous distress. Rather it is simply to argue for centres of gravity within an ever more socially-diverse music market, and the existence of certain codes of audience and performer behaviour

associated with particular musical venues and genres, as a means to explain the pronounced variation in the types of femininity performed on stage by female professional singers.

The most important point of this investigation, however, is the fundamental role of gender in structuring audience responses to female singers in this period. If audiences had approached female singers purely as professional artists, as advocated by writers in the specialist musical press, then their conformity with particular codes of femininity and gender ideals should have been irrelevant. After all, being a morally-upright woman had very little bearing on a performer's musical skill and talent. Instead, the concerns of audiences about a singer's conformity with or transgression of feminine propriety, and the care with which female singers' attempted to cultivate and maintain very particular public impressions of their private character, demonstrates that questions about their respectability (or lack of it) were of critical importance in shaping responses to female singers. For most people, the kind of femininity staged by these women in public life was at least as important as their musical skill or professionalism. Consequently, the professional and commercial success of female singers such as Stephens and Vestris was dependent just as much, if not more, on their accordance with the particular gender ideals of their audiences as on their musical skill. It was for this reason that a critic such as Richard Mackenzie Bacon, who elsewhere had been so clear about the need to assess singers on their musical skill alone,[91] sought to persuade readers of *The London Magazine* that Stephens's performances, far from demonstrating her professionalism and distance from domestic ideals, in fact revealed that she possessed the very same qualities desired in an ideal wife:

[91] See p. 121.

> We estimate her singing by the same standard by which a man would measure the qualities of a wife. Dignified in her manners, and elevated and pure in her thoughts, she is placid, yet not insipid; amiable and even lovely in her life, without the blandishments of her sex's arts. Her cheerfulness is constant, not exuberant and fluctuating. She satisfies the judgment, but the imagination never luxuriates. All is calm, and holy, and smooth, and bright, and beautiful.[92]

The fact that Bacon felt compelled to make his argument in this manner in a non-specialist periodical suggests the limited influence of the arguments put forward in the specialist press examined in chapter two. Most participants in the early nineteenth-century musical world did not judge these women according to criteria derived from a notion of the female singer as a professional artist, but instead were far more interested and concerned to compare their personalities to the qualities expected of a respectable, domestic woman. Female musical professionalism could not simply be defended as legitimate in itself, but instead had to be justified by critics like Bacon or performers like Catherine Stephens expending a great deal of time and energy in creating an impression of the virtuous respectability of their characters. On occasion, this even meant attempting to downplay their professionalism, as in the case of Stephens's conflict with 'Dramaticus' over the circumstances of her departure from Covent Garden, or her feigned nervousness and diffidence on stage. Stephens expressed and defended her professionalism, but she did so in very specific ways, that asked her audiences to approve of her not only because of her professional musical skills, but more importantly because of her respectable and virtuous personality. Furthermore, her task was made all the more difficult by the presence of performers such as Vestris. While Vestris's transgressions were highly entertaining to some sections of the musical public, her career

[92] [Richard Mackenzie Bacon], 'Report of Music', *The London Magazine* 6/34 (Oct. 1822), p. 379.

confirmed the long-held suspicions of others that female professionalism and publicity were utterly incompatible with feminine propriety. Female musical professionalism was a contested concept in this period that could be construed and constructed in a variety of ways by different performers and different audiences. For all the vociferousness of its advocates, the image of the female singer as a professional artist remained just one way among many of interpreting the place, function and reputation of these women in early nineteenth-century society.

Figures 3-23



Figure 3 *Madame Vestris as Josephine Negretti in* Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol, n.d. [*c*.1830?], HTC, TS 931.2, Schwalbe Actors & Actresses extra-illustrated volume.



Figure 4 [EV as Orpheus in *Olympic Devils; or, Orpheus and Eurydice*], n.d. [*c*.1831], HTC, TCS 45, Theatrical portrait prints (visual works) of women.



Figure 5 [EV as Captain Macheath], n.d., HTC, TS 931.2.



Figure 6 Isaac Robert Cruikshank and George Cruikshank, *The Green Room at Drury Lane Theatre. Tom & Jerry introduced to the Characters in Don Giovanni*, n.d. [early 1820s?], HTC, TS 931.2.



Figure 7 *Madame Vestris singularly introduced to His Royal Highness, &c*., n.d., HTC, TS 952.5, Vestris Memoirs extra-illustrated volume. It is unclear whether this is the Prince Regent or one of his brothers.



Figure 8 Alais[?] engraving after original painting by Rose Emma Drummond, *Madame Vestris*, *c*.1 Aug. 1820, HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 9 *Madame Vestris as Captain Macheath*, n.d., HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 10 Woolnoth engraving after painting by [Rose Emma?] Drummond, *Madame Vestris*, *c*.1 Oct. 1820, HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 11 John Cochran engraving after unknown artist, n.d. [*c.* July 1825], *Madame Vestris*, HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 12 T. Duncombe (publisher), *Mad. Vestris fitting on her Breeches for the Character of Macheath*, n.d., HTC, TS 952.5.



Figure 13 *MAD_M V_____S LEGS, Or the real Actors in the OLYMPIC REVELS*, n.d. [*c*.1831], HTC, TS 931.2.

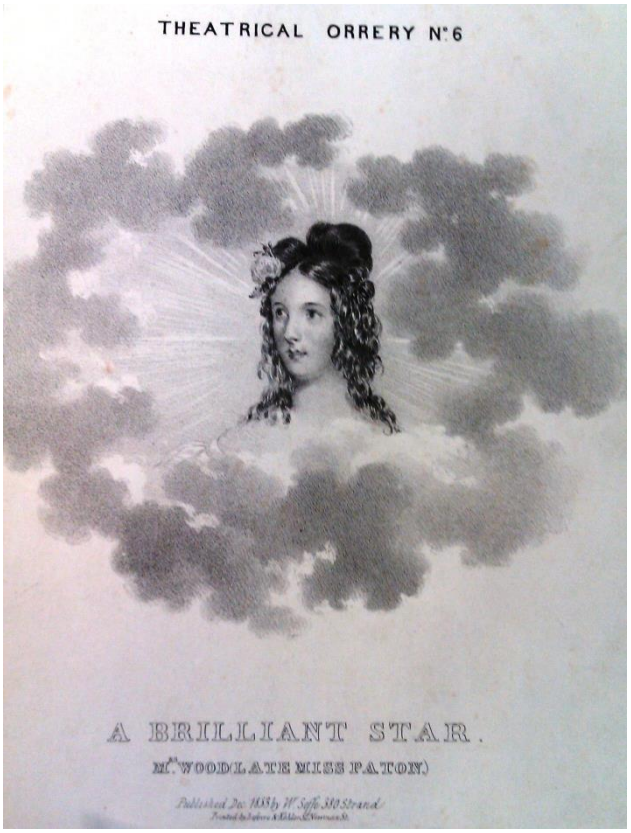


Figure 14 Leferre[?] and Kohler (printers), *A Brilliant Star. Mrs. Wood (late Miss Paton)*, *c*. Dec. 1833, HTC, TCS 45.

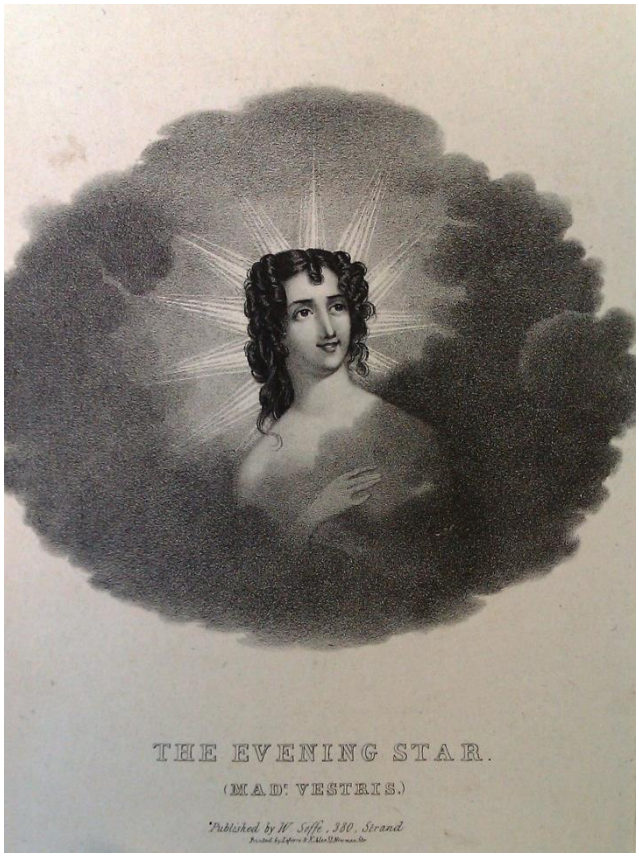


Figure 15 Leferre[?] and Kohler (printers), *The Evening Star. (Mad. Vestris)*, n.d., HTC, TS 931.2.



Figure 16 Untitled, n.d. [attributed in pencil as EV], HTC, TCS 45.

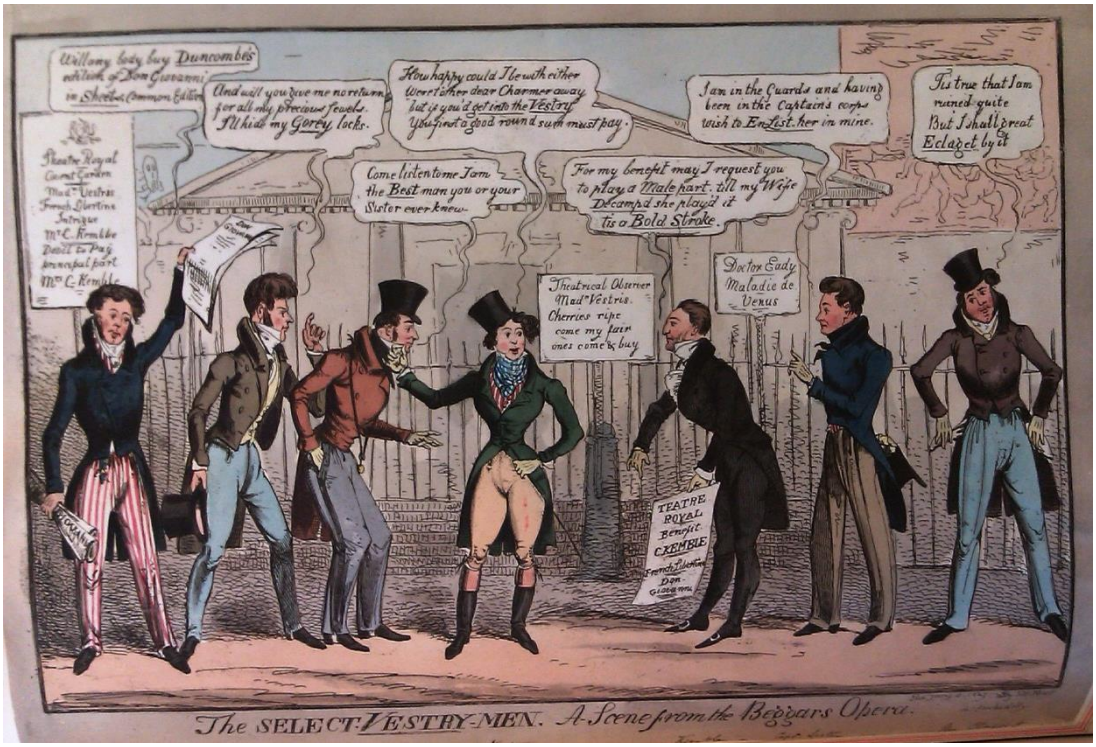


Figure 17 *The Select Vestry-Men. A Scene from the Beggar's Opera*, n.d., HTC, TS 952.5. These figures have been identified by Rachel Cowgill as (from left to right): Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, Montagu Gore, Captain Best, Eliza Vestris, Charles Kemble, possibly Robert Elliston, and Horatio Claggett. She was rumoured to have had affairs/received money from all except Kemble and Elliston, who were her managers at different points in her career, see Cowgill, 'Re-Gendering the Libertine', p. 59.



Figure 18 *Miss Stephens, as Diana Vernon in* Rob Roy Macgregor, *c*. Feb. 1819, HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 19 Freeman engraving after a painting by De Wilde, *Miss Stephens as Mandane in* Artaxerxes, n.d., HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 20 *Miss Stephens as Susanna in* The Marriage of Figaro, n.d., HTC, TCS 45.



Figure 21 G. Stodart engraving after painting by John Jackson, *c*.1822, HTC, TCS 45. The original painting is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

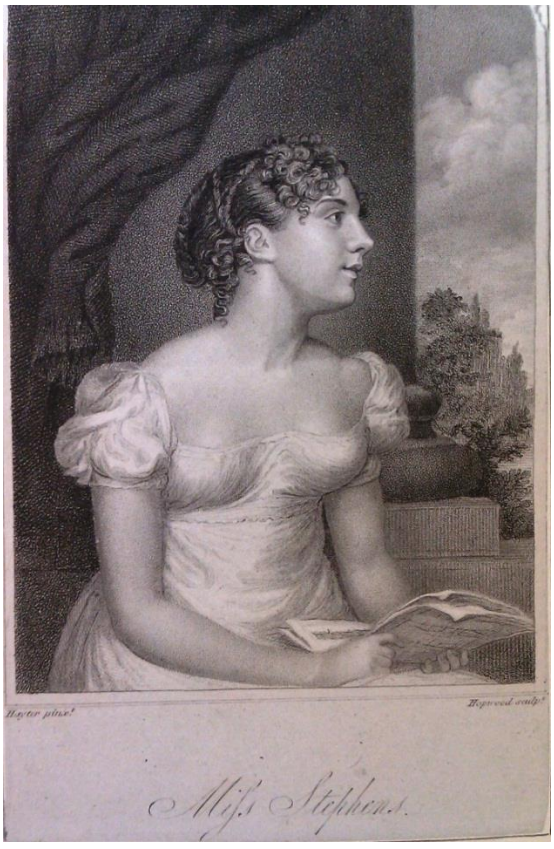


Figure 22 Hopwood engraving after a painting by Hayter, *Miss Stephens*, n.d., HTC, TCS 45. The fashion of the clothes she is wearing suggests a date in the 1810s.



Figure 23 J. C. Armytage engraving, *Miss Stephens*, n.d., HTC, TCS 45. The fashion here indicates a date in the 1820s.

Chapter Four

'Once the best English singer of her day': Charitable campaigns for retired professional female singers, Cecilia Davies and Eliza Salmon, *c*.1820-1850

In 1738, a 'Fund for the Support of Decayed Musicians', later to become the Royal Society of Musicians (RSM), was established. Payment of an annual subscription fee entitled members and their dependents to financial support in the event of accident, ill health, retirement or death.[1] Membership, however, was restricted to male musicians, which left the independent female musician without similar security, although this was of little concern in the mid-eighteenth century. There were, after all, comparatively few independent female musicians; most women working in the music profession were married, or otherwise related, to male musicians and could consequently call on support from the RSM as dependent wives or daughters. Others married out of the profession and secured support through other means. Those who were not in this fortunate position, however, frequently found themselves in a highly precarious situation once ill health, loss of voice or wavering popularity with the public forced them into retirement. Some turned to teaching until age or infirmity prevented them pursuing a full-time teaching schedule. Others were forced to accept the embarrassment of being brought before the public by exploitative concert-managers looking to capitalise on the novelty of a one-off performance by a relic of a bygone era. The septuagenarian soprano Caterina Galli, for instance, famous during Handel's day, was the 'principal novelty', according to

[1] Pippa Drummond, 'The Royal Society of Musicians in the Eighteenth Century', *Music & Letters* 59/3 (1978), p. 268.

the newspapers, of one oratorio performance in 1799.[2] An amusing spectacle and antiquarian curiosity, her appearance was exploited to the full by the managers, who, according to her patron, the Earl of Mount-Edgcumbe, neglected to pay her 'according to her agreement', a fact made all the more bitter in his eyes by the fact that 'nothing but the severest distress should have compelled her so to expose herself'.[3] Other late eighteenth-century female singers simply disappeared from the historical record after their final performances, many presumably into severe hardship relieved only by occasional donations from friends and former patrons.

By the 1840s, the situation was very different. The foundation of the Society of Female Musicians (SFM) in 1839 corrected the longstanding inequality of financial provision by offering the independent female musician the same services available to their male colleagues via the RSM.[4] This reflected the fact that, by the mid-nineteenth century, women formed a far greater proportion of the music profession. A musical directory compiled by Joseph Doane in 1794, although a far from complete record, suggests that, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, around 8% of the music profession were female.[5] By 1851, the census put the figure at 17% for professional performers, while also recording that women represented 45% of all music teachers.[6] Furthermore, a comparison of a mid-nineteenth-century directory of musicians with that of Doane suggests that the proportion of unmarried women working in the music

[2] *Morning Herald*, 6 Mar. 1799. See also reports of Galli's performances in 1797: *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 3 Mar. 1797; *The Times*, 14 Mar. 1797 and 15 Mar. 1797.
[3] The Earl of Mount-Edgcumbe [Richard Edgcumbe], *Musical Reminiscences, containing an account of the Italian Opera in England, from 1773* (4th edn., London, 1834), pp. 8-9.
[4] On the foundation of the SFM, see Deborah Rohr, 'Women and the music profession in Victorian England: The Royal Society of Female Musicians, 1839-1866', *Journal of Musicological Research* 18/4 (1999), pp. 307-46.
[5] See Appendix A.
[6] Rohr, 'Women and the music profession', p. 310 (Table 1).

profession rose from around 38% in the 1790s to around 69% in the 1850s.[7] Some of these, of course, were daughters of musical families working under the auspices of their parents, but an increasing number of older women were pursuing independent careers in their own right. Particularly telling is the fact that two-thirds of the forty leading female musicians who joined the SFM in 1840 were unmarried.[8] Although the nature of the data means these figures are inevitably approximate, they suggest that the independent female musician was a much more prominent figure within the musical world by the mid-nineteenth century. The establishment of the SFM was designed to make the lives and careers of such women more sustainable and secure.

Between the late eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, however, the numbers of professional female musicians steadily grew while the support structures to cater for them did not, at least until the SFM reached a secure financial footing in the mid-1840s.[9] A growing awareness and concern within the musical world about the plight of these women, conjoined with an evident lack of formal, well-established institutions to provide for them, precipitated attempts to raise support for these singers through public and private networks of charitable campaigning. This chapter will present case studies of two such campaigns, on behalf of Cecilia Davies in the 1820s and '30s and Eliza Salmon in the 1840s, and explore what they reveal about attitudes to professional female singers in the first half of the nineteenth century. It argues that the desire to

[7] See Appendix A.

[8] Calculated from the membership list included in 'The Royal Society of Female Musicians', *Musical World* 13/212 (9 Apr. 1840), p. 232.

[9] Evidently, the new society was in no position to start offering support to Salmon in 1840, a fact pointed out in 'Metropolitan', *Musical World* 13/198 (2 Jan. 1840), p. 7. By the end of the year, however, the society had done well enough to invest £300 and was well on the way to financial prosperity ('Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 14/246 (10 Dec. 1840), p. 377, which states the amount was £100, later corrected in 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 14/247 (17 Dec. 1840), p. 394). Rohr notes that when the SFM merged with the RSM in 1866, the major motivation for the RSM had been the extremely healthy state of the SFM's finances (£7000 in the funds, with an income of £375 per annum and only one claimant since its establishment): Rohr, 'Women and the music profession', p. 322.

support these singers long after they had ceased to perform their primary function is symptomatic of broader change in approaches to professional female singers in general and indicative of the far greater value ascribed to such women by certain groups within early nineteenth-century society. The principal subjects of this chapter are, therefore, the individuals from the musical public and the profession who orchestrated these campaigns. It will ask why they valued these retired singers, what their motivations were for promoting and supporting such ventures, what they stood to gain from their connections with them and how they attempted to persuade others to lend their support. It seeks to reveal with greater clarity how the new discourse about the female singer as professional artist explored in chapter two took root and was adopted by particular social groups and actors within the early nineteenth-century musical world, and in the process motivated and shaped these campaigns in crucial ways. Nevertheless, as ever, the analysis presented here is attentive to the specificity of these new attitudes to certain social groups, their limited influence and above all, their comparative failure to deal with the problem of the impoverishment of retired female singers, an issue only really resolved by the foundation of the SFM in 1839.

The Davies campaign: the female singer as cultural capital

By the mid-1820s, the once-celebrated prima donna of the King's Theatre, Cecilia Davies, was struggling to make a living. Approaching her seventieth birthday and suffering from bouts of ill health, she was unable to cope with the demands of full-time teaching which had been her major source of income ever since her retirement from

public performance in the early 1790s.[10] Rather than allow her to sink into poverty, however, some of her former pupils and employers decided to propose her as a candidate for election to a pension from the National Benevolent Institution (NBI), a public subscription charity.[11] Following extensive canvassing by her friends among the patrons of the NBI, Davies was duly elected to an annual pension of £25 in November 1827.[12] Concerned that this was not yet enough, one of her former pupils, Dorothea Solly (*née* Rackett), organised the publication by subscription of a set of songs by the German composer, Johann Adolph Hasse, written for Davies during her time as a favourite singer at the court of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and as a leading prima donna in Italy in the late 1760s and early 1770s.[13] Her friends continued to promote her cause among their social network during the early 1830s and were delighted when the campaign received more public support from a leading member of the music profession,

[10] For a general overview of her life and career, see Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'Davies, Cecilia (1756/7-1836)', *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7227> accessed 29 Mar. 2012. Several sources from the Rackett archive reveal that, during the 1790s and 1800s, Davies gave DS frequent singing lessons while she and her parents were in London (see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/140, Diaries of Mary Rackett for 1797 and 1799; D/RAC/103, Mary Rackett to TR, 19 June 1797; DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/140, Childhood diary of Dorothea Rackett for 1801). In 1826, Davies was still teaching the daughters of Maria Domville (see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/79, Cecilia Davies to DS, 17 Jan. 1826), and there is some evidence to suggest she continued some teaching work into the 1830s (DS noted in a letter to her parents transferring a guinea and a half to Davies from one of her pupils: DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, DS and SS to TR, DR and TS, 19 Aug. 1832), but evidently it was clear to the Domvilles and DS by the later 1820s that Davies was slowly becoming unable to support herself.

[11] The NBI was founded by a painter of miniatures, Peter Hervé, in 1812. Subscribers paid an annual amount into the charity's funds, with a minimum subscription of 5*s*. In return, the member had a vote at annual meetings at which candidates were elected to the pensions offered by the charity. Extra votes could be bought for each multiple of 5*s*. donated annually (i.e. 10*s*. gave two votes, £1 gave four votes). For a minimum donation of £5, subscribers could become life-governors with no further requirement to pay annual subscription fees and two votes at every election thereafter (four if a donation of £10, eight if £20 and so on). The archive of the NBI is currently in the care of the National Benevolent Charity (its modern successor). I am indebted to Paul Rossi, chief executive of the National Benevolent Charity, for this information (obtained through personal correspondence). See also E. Evelyn Barron, *The National Benevolent Institution 1812-1936: A short account of its rise and progress extracted from the minutes* (London, 1936), pp. 79-83 and Paul N. Rossi, *Peter Hervé's Charity: A History of The National Benevolent Charity* (Tetbury, 2012), p. 24.

[12] Information from the NBI minute books provided by Paul Rossi (see note 11).

[13] It has not been possible to trace a copy of these songs.

John Parry, in a series of articles written for the *Harmonicon* and the *Morning Post*.[14] The support garnered from such activity allowed Davies to live in tolerable, though by no means easy, circumstances until her death on 3 July 1836, aged nearly eighty.

One striking fact about this campaign is that those who took the lead in promoting Davies's cause were female members of propertied society, although their male relations often played a supporting role.[15] The type of charitable activity in which they engaged and their motivations for doing so are notably different to the major forms and motivations of female philanthropy in the early nineteenth century normally emphasised by historians. It is usually argued that women justified their public philanthropic work by emphasising that their motivations lay in promoting or restoring lost domesticity, as was the case for instance in their support for the reformation of prostitutes, or in female abolitionist activity which condemned slavery as anti-domestic.[16] Furthermore, evangelical faith is also emphasised as a major stimulus and

[14] [John Parry], 'Diary of a Dilettante', *Harmonicon* 10/8 (Aug. 1832), pp. 183-85. It is DS who identifies Parry as the author of this otherwise anonymous article (see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, DS and SS to TR and DR, 4 Feb. 1833). Parry was the music critic of the *Morning Post* from 1834-49, which is why so many notices of Davies's situation appear in that paper (see J. C. Hadden, 'Parry, John (1776-1851)', rev. David J. Golby, *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21421> accessed 13 June 2013), including: (from the time before he became critic) P., 'An Ancient Daughter of Song', *Morning Post*, 27 June 1832 and Parry's letter to the editor of the *Morning Post*, 2 Jul 1832; as well as articles in the *Morning Post*, 29 Dec. 1835, 26 Mar. 1836, 10 Aug. 1836 (a notice of her death).

[15] Maria Domville, for instance, wrote to TR in order to solicit his assistance in procuring a birth certificate for Davies (DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/115, Maria Domville to TR, 24 Feb. 1827), one of the requirements of her candidacy for the NBI election being proof of age (after September 1827, candidates had to be older than sixty, see Barron, *National Benevolent Institution*, p. 19).

[16] F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 3-10; Simon Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2007), pp. 3 and 74-106; Linda Mahood, 'The domestication of 'fallen' women' in *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the nineteenth century* (London, 1990), pp. 75-102 in which she notes the involvement of Ladies' Committees in the management of Magdalene asylums (see pp. 75-76, 78-79, 85, 94-96); Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 200-02; Clare Midgley, 'Slave sugar boycotts, female activism and the domestic base of British anti-slavery culture', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 17/3 (1996), pp. 143-47, 155-56.

justification for female campaigning in the early nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the missionary movement, anti-slavery or the campaign against *sati* in India.[17]

Something rather different, however, was taking place in the campaign for Cecilia Davies. Far from restoring a lost domesticity, this campaign emphasised Davies's professionalism as its justification. The NBI had been founded 'to afford Relief… to distressed Gentry, Merchants, Tutors, and Governesses, and Persons who have been engaged in Professional Pursuits, or in the Higher Departments of Trade'.[18] Dorothea Solly described the institution to her mother in similar terms as providing for 'the middling classes, Tutors, Governesses & Professional people', presumably including Davies among both the second and last category.[19] The NBI minute book recording her election in 1827 described her in this vein as 'a Preceptress of singing and music, who at one period held a distinguished rank in her profession'.[20] Campaigning for Davies's election to a pension from the NBI entailed underlining, not effacing, her public professional career. Moreover, Solly's publication of Hasse's songs written for Davies further emphasised her former professional career as the basis of her entitlement to charitable support. The activities of Solly and her friends and relations represent an advocacy of and admiration for professional women working in the arts; Davies, they argued, was to be afforded charitable relief because of, not in spite of, her

[17] Catherine Hall, 'The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology' in *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 89; Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 212; Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery*, p. 200; Clare Midgley, 'From supporting missions to petitioning parliament: English women and the Evangelical campaign against *sati* (widow-burning) in India, 1813-30' in Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds.), *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 74-81 and 85-87.

[18] Barron, *National Benevolent Institution*, p. viii.

[19] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, DS and SS to TR and DR, n.d. [early 1827]. In this and all further quotations from the DHC, Rackett Papers, spelling and punctuation have been reproduced as in the original. *Sic*. is used only where a word might be thought to be a typing error.

[20] Information from the NBI minute books provided by Paul Rossi (see note 11).

professionalism. Therefore, while this chapter does not seek to dispute that evangelicalism and domesticity were the major props of most female philanthropic activity in the early nineteenth century, they are strikingly not in evidence in this case. Support for Davies had to be justified on quite different grounds. Consequently, a close investigation of why the Sollys and their circle undertook this campaign on behalf of Davies helps us to understand the new ways in which certain groups within the early nineteenth-century musical public viewed the professional female singer.

We need to begin, therefore, by exploring the social milieu that produced this campaign. Fortunately, it can be reconstructed in some detail from the archive of incoming correspondence of Dorothea Solly's parents, the Rev. Thomas and Dorothy Rackett. Thomas Rackett was the rector of Spetisbury, a village just outside Blandford Forum in Dorset, a position he held from 1780 until his death in 1840. The living came with a handsome rectory built in 1716 at a cost of £1,000 (**Figure 24** and **Figure 25**) and produced a yearly income of £750, equivalent to many lesser gentry and placing the Racketts firmly within the local Dorset elite and propertied society more generally.[21] Like many clergymen with rich livings, Rackett employed a curate to see to the quotidian business of the parish, while he and his family spent a large part of the year at their

[21] M. G. Watkins, 'Rackett, Thomas (1755-1840)', rev. Glanville J. Davies, *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22972> accessed 13 June 2013. For comparison, in 1830 the median average income for English beneficed clergy was £275 per annum, while only around 12% of the clergy received more than £700 per annum (see Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence: Ecclesiastical Structure and Problems of Church Reform 1700-1840* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 277 (Table VI), based on *Parliamentary Papers*, 1835, XXII, 15-1060). Comparison with income figures for wider society is complicated and reliable data is sparse. G. E. Mingay suggests that in 1790 around four hundred families of the nobility had incomes of over £5,000 per annum (and averaging £10,000), seven or eight hundred families from the greater gentry had £3,000-4,000 per annum, four thousand families had around £1,000-3,000 per annum and around 10,000-20,000 'gentlemen' had from £300 to £1,000 per annum (G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1963), pp. 19-23). Alternatively, W. D. Rubinstein cites a table compiled from income tax returns in 1801 to suggest that 1,020 individuals had incomes of £5,000 or greater, 3,657 had incomes of £2,000-5,000, 6,927 incomes of £1,000-2,000 and 14,762 incomes of between £500 and £1,000 (W. D. Rubinstein, *Men of Property: The very wealthy in Britain since the Industrial Revolution* (2nd edn. (revised and updated), London, 2006, first published 1981), p. 62 (Table 2.8). All estimates suggest that £750 per annum placed the Racketts in approximately the top 3% of the population in terms of wealth.

London townhouse on Upper Gower Street, enjoying the social and cultural season.[22] Again in line with many of the more affluent members of the clergy, he spent most of his time pursuing a wide range of intellectual interests, ranging from natural history, science and technology to genealogy, heraldry and antiquarianism, and from economics and politics to music, drawing and literature. He corresponded on these topics with a very wide range of individuals, many writing from distant corners of the globe.[23] His wife, Dorothy, was the daughter of the Rev. James Tattersall of St. Paul's, Covent Garden and Streatham.[24] Evidence of her pursuits is less abundant, but from letters written to her, it is possible to trace strong interests in literature, the theatre, opera, concerts and domestic music-making, as well as some more unusual feminine interests such as the finer points of biblical translation.[25]

The family's correspondence reveals the Racketts nurtured a similarly broad intellectual and cultural outlook in their daughter, who shared many of her father's interests, accompanying him, for instance, on antiquarian expeditions to study West Country burial mounds.[26] She also possessed a similarly strong interest in new scientific discoveries.[27] More typically for a young woman of her rank, she received instruction in the standard repertoire of female accomplishments on family trips to London in the 1790s and 1800s, but, under the tutorship of Cecilia Davies, appears to have particularly

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[22] H. S. L. Dewar, *The Thomas Rackett Papers: 17th to 19th Centuries* (Dorchester, 1965), p. 12. Evidence for the Rackett's London address can be found in the subscription list for the NBI for 1828-29, in which the Racketts' address is listed as: '48 Upper Gower Street' (information provided by Paul Rossi (see note 11). This is confirmed by references to visiting Gower Street in several of the Racketts' letters: DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, n.d. [early 1827]; D/RAC/79, Cecilia Davies to DR, 5 Jan. 1827; and D/RAC/115, Maria Domville to TR, 24 Feb. 1827.

[23] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, pp. 11-12.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 11. Dewar gives 'Thomas' as the Rev. Tattersall's first name. Ashworth P. Burke's *Family Records* (London, 1897), p. 578, however, gives it as 'James'.

[25] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, pp. 74-75 (Charles Hatchett to DR, 21 Jan. 1834).

[26] *Ibid*., p. 12; Watkins, 'Rackett, Thomas'.

[27] See DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 1 & 2 Oct. 1832.

excelled in music.[28] She married Samuel Solly, about whom little is known, but who owned a heavily-mortgaged estate in Lincolnshire.[29] Despite some financial difficulties, the couple appear to have maintained a comfortable, if not affluent, lifestyle appropriate to minor county gentry.[30]

Two other relations played a significant role in the campaign. The first, Lady Frances Davis, widow of the wealthy brewer, Sir John Davis, was Dorothy Rackett's sister and a resident of Bath, from where she reported frequently on the latest cultural events, theatre productions, concerts and visiting performers, alongside her family news.[31] The second was Maria Domville, daughter of a prosperous London merchant, Isaac Solly, wife of Sir William Domville and probably Dorothea Solly's sister-in-law.[32] The Domvilles lived in Highgate and had a large family of daughters whom they employed Cecilia Davies to teach during the early 1820s.[33] As life-governors of the NBI, it was they who initiated the idea of campaigning for Davies's election and played a crucial role in the success of that part of the campaign.[34]

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[28] See note 10. As well as her music lessons with Davies, DS noted in her childhood diary on the 28 Jan. 1801: 'Began to learn to draw' (DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/140, Diary of Dorothea Rackett for 1801).

[29] Based on letters addressed to and from DS, the marriage took place sometime after 1818 and before 1824. For their discussion of the mortgage, see Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, p. 62 (DS and SS to TR and DR, Aug. 1830).

[30] See, for instance, descriptions of their daily life and social pursuits in DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, DS and SS to TR and DR, 4 Feb. 1833 and 9 Nov. 1833.

[31] For biographical information see Burke, *Family Records*, p. 578 and (more accurately) Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay): Volume XI*, ed. Joyce Hemlow with Althea Douglas and Patricia Hawkins (Oxford, 1984), p. 207, note 11. For the content of her letters, see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/108.

[32] For biographical information see Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay): Volume XII*, ed. Joyce Hemlow with Althea Douglas and Patricia Hawkins (Oxford, 1984), p. 690, note 1 (to letter no. 1393). There is no clear information on the Solly family, but, given the correspondence between the two families, it would seem likely that Domville was the sister of Samuel Solly.

[33] See note 10 and DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/81, TR to DR, 1 Jan. 1827, 5 Jan. 1827 and n.d. Jan. 1827.

[34] See the list of life-governors and subscribers of the NBI for 1828-29 in which Mrs Domville and four Miss Domvilles are all listed as life-governors (information courtesy of Paul Rossi, see note 11). For Domville's role in initiating the NBI election campaign see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, n.d. [early 1827].

With wealth drawn from clerical incomes, land ownership and commerce, the group behind the campaign for Cecilia Davies were, in certain aspects of their lifestyle, occupations and interests, fairly typical members of propertied society. In other respects, however, they were perhaps less typical, most especially in the kind of musical amateurism they pursued. Unlike many women of propertied society who quickly abandoned the piano and singing after their marriage, Solly continued to pursue her music-making in a serious fashion. Far from participating in amateur music-making simply for the sake of the display of elegant, attractive femininity as part of the marriage market, her primary concern was the music itself and the quality of performance, both her own and that of others. She worked hard, for instance, to improve her own technique, informing her parents: 'I have been practising those sonatas of Clementis that I found among Miss Davies's things I am really enchanted with them and I hope they will improve me'.[35] In another, she wrote, 'neither do I neglect my music for I am labouring hard to get into Clementi's style and call to mind all the golden rules Papa has given me and tho' there are some passages that the smallness of my hand will always prevent my executing properly yet I think I improve'.[36] Furthermore, she was particularly excited by the opportunity to broaden her musical experience by playing new instruments and new music, writing to her parents during a trip to a friend's house: 'What was still better I had the use of a very good cabinet Piano Forte & collection of music of the first modern composers Cramer Kalkbrenner &c. most of which I had never seen and which was a great treat to me Also as it was a 6 octave Piano I had an opportunity of playing in perfection that piece of Madame de Soar's which I happened

[35] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 17 Mar. 1831.
[36] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 8 & 10 Dec. 1831.

to have with me and which sounded delightfully on so full toned an instrument'.[37] Clearly, Solly had a keen awareness of the differences between instruments and relished the chance to perform her favourite pieces on the instruments which best suited them. Such opportunities were evidently rare in the provinces; dealing with out of tune and decrepit pianos and obtaining and exchanging new printed music both emerge as key concerns of Solly's letters, in one of which she complained, 'I cannot get these old Piano Fortes to keep in tune they plague me to death'.[38] Moreover, not only was she clearly familiar with works by Clementi, Cramer and Kalkbrenner, but her letters also reveal her knowledge and performance of the works of a wide range of other composers, including Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Paer, Cimarosa, Beethoven, Ries, Czerny, Sterkel and Weber.[39] They also reveal a significant interest in works by female composers, such as Madame de Soar's piano piece, but also compositions by friends and acquaintances in her social and musical circle, demonstrating an admiration for female musical activity that stretched far beyond the level expected of most women in propertied society.[40] Furthermore, Solly was an avid reader of *The Harmonicon* and often drew her parents' attention to particular articles in its pages.[41] Solly's style of musical amateurism was of a very different sort to that more commonly practised among women of her age, marital status and class.

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[37] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, n.d. [Mar. 1830].
[38] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 9 Sept. 1832.
[39] Some examples of references to these composers include: DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, DS and SS to TR and DR, 4 Feb. 1833 (Handel); SS and DS to TR and DR, 19 Aug. 1829 (Haydn, Johann Sterkel and Carl Maria von Weber); SS and DS to TR and DR, 12 July 1831 (Mozart); SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 1 & 2 Oct. 1832 (Beethoven, Ferdinando Paer and Domenico Cimarosa); SS and DS to TR and DR, n.d. (Beethoven, Ferdinand Ries, Weber); SS and DS to TR and DR, n.d. [*c*.4 Oct. 1827] (Cimarosa, Johann Cramer, Friedrich Kalkbrenner and Carl Czerny).
[40] It has not been possible to identify 'Madame de Soar' or her piano piece. Other works by amateur female composers admired by DS include a set of 'Glees and duets… composed by Dr Warwick's daughter Mrs Thompson which are very good' (DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 1 & 2 Oct. 1832).
[41] See references to *The Harmonicon* in: DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 1 & 2 Oct. 1832 and SS and DS to TR and DR, 4 Feb. 1833.

Solly thus adopted an identity that was self-consciously 'musical', often using the label to separate off the particular 'musical' sub-group of society to which she felt she belonged as special and different in their attention and dedication to music. Her use of the label in this fashion is evident in descriptions of guests who came to stay: 'we had Miss Naylor, who is musical… to spend a day or two with us; and she was quite delighted with her visit'; or in her descriptions of society more generally, pronouncing, for instance: 'Lincoln is not a musical place'.[42] She also expressed amusement, derision or frustration towards those outside this special group who did not appreciate, or even actively obstructed, their music-making. Always eager to play the piano whenever she had chance, Solly described the quite different attitude of some of her acquaintances: 'We gave several broad or rather downright hints for the Piano Forte but it would not do, they are so silly as to regard it as a piece of furniture'.[43] Similarly, continuing her condemnation of unmusical Lincoln society she wrote: 'The next night we went to a party… and had a good deal of music which I should have enjoyed much more if the people had not a trick of talking so remarkably loud at Lincoln'.[44] Solly evidently felt herself and her fellow 'musical' friends to be different in their approach to amateur music-making from that of their fellow members of propertied society.

Her letters reveal that this 'musical' identity was gained and reinforced by participation in a frequent round of musical parties among her social circle. Rather than the display associated with female musical performance for the marriage market, this form of musical sociability had a rather different tone. Performance in this context

[42] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR and DR, 1 & 2 Oct. 1832 (Miss Naylor); SS and DS to TR and DR, 17 Mar. 1831 (Lincoln).
[43] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, p. 64 [SS, DS and TS to TR and DR, 12 Aug. [1830?]].
[44] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS 13 Mar. 1831.

primarily represented a display not of elegant and graceful femininity, but of education, cultural knowledge and taste. The performers, who might be male or female, were in gentle competition with one another to appear the most refined, skilled or knowledgeable. This can be seen through Solly's critical appreciation of the performances of others in her letters to her parents. For instance, she admired the skill of a Miss Drury 'who played delightfully on the Piano Forte, giving it quite the tone of a wind instrument and with great delicacy of expression as well as a very brilliant finger. I wish you could have heard her', while in another letter she noted: 'Miss Berwick… is very clever & pleasant, she has a natural genius for music & plays a great deal of difficult music by memory as well as by note and with little or no instruction'.[45] Evidently, Solly's assessment of these women's performances is based primarily on their musical skill, rather than their performance of pretty and elegant, but musically superficial, feminine graces.

The serious and appreciative atmosphere of these musical parties is captured with particular clarity by Solly's description of one occasion at Newark in 1832:

> we heard Mozarts Quartetto played extremely well by Miss Dyer, her father & brother and a gentleman from Grantham who played the tenor remarkably well. we had also some of Haydn interspersed with songs duets and glees and as the party consisted of only four who were not performers there was not a word spoken during the music which enabled me to enjoy it very much… I played one of Mozarts trios which however was quite out of practice, but I sung a little which they seemed to like.[46]

Miss Dyer's performance on the violin is the first clue that a very different type of female amateurism was being pursued at such events, one which, as we saw in chapter two,

[45] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS 13 Mar. 1831 (Miss Drury); SS and DS to TR and DR, 26 Oct. 1829 (Miss Berwick).
[46] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, n.d. [*c*. Feb. 1832]. A 'tenor' in this context means a viola.

eschewed feminine physical grace in favour of musical excellence and commitment to art.[47] Solly viewed the purpose of this evening as serious music-making; not only did they tackle what contemporary critics felt to be some of the most intellectual parts of the repertoire – string quartets in the German classical tradition of Mozart and Haydn – but Solly was pleased to find this party to be made up primarily of performers, guaranteeing an appreciative silence during the music.[48] She also revealed her awareness of the high musical standards expected by the company through her disappointment at her own failings in the Mozart trio. Further evidence for the atmosphere of serious appreciation cultivated and valued at such musical parties can be found in another letter reflecting on a similar musical event at which she had performed, in which she wrote, it 'certainly is very gratifying' to sing in front of those who 'enjoy every word & note'.[49] The ultimate prize was to be compared favourably to the professionals, signalling just how far this style of female musical amateurism was from that explored in chapter one.[50] Solly was especially flattered, for instance, by the praise of a Mr Davison upon hearing her performance of some operatic recitative, who said that 'when he heard me sing first, he was sure I must have had some extraordinary advantages, my pronunciation of the Italian was so different from that of the English in general'.[51] Davison's opinion, as Solly carefully noted, was all the more to be valued because 'he had heard Marchese a good deal abroad, who was reckoned very famous for Recitative'.[52] Such a comparison was so

[47] See pp. 124-126.
[48] Christina Bashford, 'The string quartet and society' in Robin Stowell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 4-5 and 10-12; Christina Bashford, 'John Ella and the making of the Musical Union' in Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (eds.), *Music and British Culture, 1785-1914: Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 194 and 207-210.
[49] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 19 Sept. 1832.
[50] See pp. 47-49.
[51] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 9 Sept. 1832.
[52] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR and DR, 19 Sept. 1832.

desirable because performances at such musical parties were about demonstrating the participant's knowledge of national and international musical culture, displaying a refined education, rigorous training and impeccable taste, as well as expressing a shared love of music. There is very little sign of a concern that this dedication to and desire to excel in music might lead others to think she had neglected other aspects of her education or domestic duties, one of the warnings voiced by conduct writers.[53]

Although often provincial in its location, this form of musical sociability was part of a larger national and metropolitan, and increasingly European and cosmopolitan, musical culture. During the cultural season, the Racketts were normally in London and could participate directly in the capital's musical life, but even during the parts of the year they spent in the country, they were eager to remain up-to-date about the latest musical developments. Their family letters contain numerous accounts of metropolitan musical events reported by friends and relations. George Baker, Dorothy Rackett's nephew, reported on the state of London musical theatre in 1827:

> On Saturday night we went to Drury Lane and saw the Slave, & X, Y, Z. Their musical force is good consisting of Miss Stevens, Braham, Madame Vestris & Liston… On Monday we went to Covent Garden and saw Oberon… I think Miss Paton pretty & a pretty singer but inferior to Miss Stevens – I believe the fashionable world are disposed to set her above her rival and there are different opinions of her beauty… On Tuesday we went to the Opera La Vestale which comprised opera divertisement [*sic*.] & ballet – No singers here equal to Catalani & Tramezzani though I like Caraderi.[54]

Similarly, Lady Davis invited the Sollys to Bath in May 1829 to accompany her to hear the German soprano Henrietta Sontag on her tour through the provinces, anticipating that Dorothea would share her excitement at this rare chance to hear a renowned

[53] See p. 48.
[54] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, pp. 50-51 [George Baker to DR, 5 Apr. 1827].

international artist.[55] Furthermore, Solly's eagerness to obtain copies of *The Harmonicon* was in large part to keep up with the news that such publications disseminated of metropolitan and international musical events, particularly through the news, gossip and anecdotes included in the 'Extracts from the Diary of a Dilettante' column, a regular feature of the journal from 1827 onwards.[56]

Solly and her circle were therefore clearly orientated, at least in their musical activities, towards metropolitan culture. In conjunction with this, they were keen participants in a nascent celebrity culture, most evidently through their reading of the increasing number of biographies of artistic figures published in these years.[57] *The Harmonicon*, for instance, began every issue with one or two biographies of leading performers, some volumes including a lithographic print of their subject.[58] In addition to this, the Rackett letters reveal frequent discussion and circulation of celebrity biographies around their social circle. Solly described to her parents how she and her husband had relished 'the good deal of Theatrical chit chat' in a biography of the actor and theatre-manager Charles Dibdin the younger.[59] On another occasion, she described how they were avidly working their way through the biographies of Lord Byron,

[55] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/108, Lady Davis to DR, 12 May 1829.
[56] Diana Snigurowicz, *The Harmonicon, 1823-1833* (Ann Arbor, 1989), p. x.
[57] On the emergence of this biographical culture, see Cheryl Wanko, *Roles of Authority: Thespian Biography and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Lubbock, 2003), pp. 9-16; Karen Junod, *'Writing the Lives of Painters': Biography and Artistic Identity in Britain 1760-1810* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 15-47, especially 24-25 and 38-40; David Higgins, *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, celebrity and politics* (London, 2005), pp. 46-59; and Benjamin Walton, 'Rara avis or fozy turnip: Rossini as celebrity in 1820s London' in Tom Mole (ed.), *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 83-86 in which Walton notes the role of Stendhal's biographical writings about Rossini in shaping the composer's public image and reception during his trip to London in 1824.
[58] Snigurowicz, *Harmonicon*, p. ix. See, for example, the frontispiece to the 'Memoir of Ludwig van Beethoven', *Harmonicon* 1/11 (Nov. 1823), pp. 155-57.
[59] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 13 Mar. 1831. It has not been possible to trace the work to which DS refers.

Humphry Davy, George IV and Henry Fuseli.[60] The lives of musical figures naturally also featured regularly in their reading: Solly, for example, recommended to her parents the 'Memoirs of Mozart' published in the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* in August 1829, believing they 'would find [them] very interesting'.[61]

Most important are the clues these letters give as to their reasons for reading such works. A family friend, Mrs Pulteney, writing to Solly in 1818 described how she was working her way through the six-volume correspondence of Anna Seward with which she was 'really much entertained… & you would all be interested in what she says of your intimate acquaintances, Mrs Thrale-Piozzi, Dr. Johnson, Mrs Knowles, (is the Mr Knowles I have met at your house her son?) Mr Nicholls & a thousand more. Nothing I think gives so intimate a knowledge of character as familiar letters'.[62] Pulteney's comments suggest two important features of this biographical culture. The first is that the aim of the biography-reader was to gain an 'intimate knowledge of character'. Discovering the private personality behind the public works of these otherwise distant famous figures emerges as one of the key themes of comments about such works in the Racketts' correspondence. For instance, Solly wrote of Thomas Moore's biography of Byron that they 'were much pleased and interested with it, containing so many of his own writings and correspondence it must give a truer idea of his character than any

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[60] *Ibid*., SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 23 Apr. 1831. The works DS refers to are: Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: with notices of his life* (London, 1830); John Ayrton Paris, *The Life of Sir Humphry Davy, Bart. LL.D. Late President of the Royal Society, Foreign Associate of the Royal Institute of France &c. &c. &c.* (London, 1831); Robert Huish, *Memoirs of George the Fourth, descriptive of the most interesting scenes of his public and private life, and the important events of his memorable reign; with characteristic sketches of all the celebrated men who were his friends and companions as a prince, and his ministers and counsellors as a monarch* (London, 1830); and John Knowles, *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli* (London, 1831). John Knowles was a friend of the Racketts and assisted in the election campaign for Cecilia Davies (see DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/115, Maria Domville to TR and DR, 9 Sept. 1827).

[61] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 21 Sept. [1830?]. The memoirs to which DS refers are those in the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* 4/8 (Aug. 1829), pp. 404-37.

[62] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, p. 38 [Mrs. E. Pulteney to Miss Dorothea Rackett, 19 Mar. 1818].

thing that can be said by another'.[63] To convey this sense of intimacy was the main purpose of biographical writing in their eyes.[64] Secondly, Pulteney's comments also suggest that an extra frisson of excitement was added if the reader knew or had personal connections with the individuals involved or mentioned. Hence Pulteney's eager communication of the news that individuals connected to the Rackett family were included in Seward's correspondence and her desire to know if she too had met some of those referred to, even if the connection of Mr Knowles to Seward's letters was somewhat indirect.[65]

Solly and her relations therefore lived in a social milieu that, at least when it came to their engagement with music, prized metropolitan culture and an emerging canon of high art music. Similarly, they interacted with famous figures in ways which valued knowledge of their private character and above all personal connections with such celebrities. Understanding this helps us to explain why Solly and her relations initiated the campaign for Cecilia Davies and promoted it with such vigour among their friends and acquaintances. In this context, Davies was their personal link to the metropolitan musical mainstream. Even if Davies's career was long over, in a musical world in which increasing discussion of music history was playing a vital part in a gradual process of canon-formation, past glory was almost as powerful as contemporary

[63] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 23 Apr. 1831.

[64] An example of what Tom Mole calls the 'hermeneutic of intimacy' shaping responses to famous artistic figures in this period, especially in relation to the Byron cult: Tom Mole, *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 22-27.

[65] Dorothy Rackett's father, the Rev. James Tattersall, had been the vicar of Streatham and a neighbour of Hester Thrale-Piozzi, who was a close friend of Samuel Johnson, during the 1770s. The connection between the Tattersalls/Racketts and Thrale-Piozzi and Johnson would appear to be somewhat tenuous; they do not appear to have subsequently corresponded, and the references to the Tattersalls in both the diaries of Thrale-Piozzi and of her friend Fanny Burney are decidedly unflattering (see Hester Lynch Thrale, *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*, ed. Katharine C. Balderston (2nd edn., 2 vols., Oxford, 1951), i, 381 and Frances Burney, *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay): Volume IX*, ed. Warren Derry (Oxford, 1982), p. 174). It has not been possible to identify Mrs Knowles or Mr Nicholls.

achievement.[66] Solly and her relations consequently stood to gain much within their social milieu from their association with Davies. Particularly for women like Solly, whose economic capital was somewhat insecure, investing in the cultural capital offered by an association with Davies was a crucial way of securing and reinforcing her social position.

Exploring the campaigning activity of Solly and her relations reveals this process in more detail. Both canvassing for the NBI election, which meant securing the votes of several thousand people, and the publication by subscription of the songs written for Davies by Hasse, involved the successful exploitation of extensive networks of friends and acquaintances, which could be extremely hard work.[67] Fanny Burney reported in a letter to her nephew that Maria Domville 'tells me she is running all over the town & neighbourhood in this benevolent cause',[68] while letters between Solly, Lady Davis and the Racketts reveal the time and effort they put into gathering subscriptions for the song collection, correcting the manuscript for the printer and arranging printing and distribution.[69] Their efforts were, of course, motivated in part by compassion for their friend, but they too stood to gain from their association with Davies. In the absence of Domville's other correspondence, the ways in which her reputation among her social

[66] William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 205-222 and Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 241-42.

[67] At the election on the 26 November 1827, one hundred candidates were proposed of which twenty-five (including Davies) were elected. Barron (*National Benevolent Institution*, p. 20) records that the highest successful candidate had well over 25,000 votes and the lowest successful candidate, over 9,000. Given that subscribers were entitled to differing numbers of votes depending on the amount they gave, it is impossible to tell for certain the number of people who needed to be persuaded to vote in Davies's favour, but it may well have numbered into the thousands. Evidently, canvassing among that many people was hard work and extremely time-consuming.

[68] Burney, *Journals and Letters… Volume XII*, p. 691.

[69] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 26 Oct. 1829. See also D/RAC/108, Lady Davis to DR, 2 July 1828. Davies apologised for her mistakes in preparing the songs (a result of increasing blindness), which DS subsequently would have to correct: D/RAC/79, Cecilia Davies to DR, n.d. [early 1829?].

circle was enhanced by her canvassing activity for the NBI election is hard to trace, but it is perhaps significant that Domville continually refers to Davies in her letters to the Racketts as 'the Signora', a hint that she felt Davies to represent a cosmopolitan international operatic culture with which she wished to align herself.[70]

Evidence for Solly's use of her subscription publication to emphasise her own cultural sophistication is more forthcoming. The songs themselves clearly emphasised Davies's career as a leading prima donna who had achieved international fame in Austria and Italy. On social visits at which she tried to persuade her acquaintances to become subscribers, the songs presented an opportunity for Solly to relate stories of her friend and music teacher, such as how Hasse had taught Davies singing while she and her sister taught his daughters English in Vienna, how Hasse and the renowned librettist Pietro Metastasio had written operas expressly for Davies, or how the rivals and factions at the Neapolitan court had tried to thwart Davies's triumphant debut in Hasse's *Ruggiero*.[71] Although there is no direct account of her doing this, oblique evidence that she may have done so can be found in the collection of Davies memorabilia in the Rackett family archive. They possessed, for instance, a book of letters of introduction the Davies family used on their 1767-73 tour of Europe, which contained recommendations of the Davies sisters from Joseph Baretti, Johann Christian Bach and numerous members

[70] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/115, Maria Domville to TR, 24 Feb. 1827; Maria Domville to TR and DR, 9 Sept. 1827; Maria Domville to TR, 22 Sept. 1827.

[71] Such stories circulated in the press and were presumably well known to DS: *Morning Post*, 27 June 1832 and 29 Dec. 1835. The stories of the intrigues at the Neapolitan court do not appear to have been publicly known, but they were known to the Rackett family, who possessed a letter from Naples, written by Marianne Davies, which described the plotting of the factions opposed to Cecilia Davies within the Neapolitan court and her eventual triumphant success at the opera house (DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/79 Marianne and Cecilia Davies to 'Mademoiselle' [perhaps DR], 14 Mar. 1772).

of European musical and elite society.[72] They also possessed a letter from Marianne and Cecilia Davies, dated 1772, which described in great detail Cecilia's debut in Naples.[73] Finally, Solly had become the custodian of the famed glass armonica, on which Marianne had accompanied her sister at the Austrian court and throughout Europe.[74] Display of such items could be used to help persuade her acquaintances of Davies's fame and importance as a further incentive to paying the subscription for a set of songs. More importantly, however, her family's possession of such items reflected well upon Solly herself, associating her, as a pupil and friend of Davies, with the fame, excellent musical reputation and international cultural connections of such a renowned singer. They were designed to impress those she met at the numerous musical parties she attended and reinforce her membership of 'musical' society.

This connection between teacher and pupil could be manifested quite directly by Solly's own performance of the songs. At the same music party at which she had been so impressed by the skills of Miss Berwick, Solly reported to her parents that she had brought with her 'a corrected copy of Miss Davies's songs'. In emulation of her tutor, and to emphasise her own musical skill and training, she proceeded to sing 'some of them also with which they were much pleased'.[75] Solly's wider family also saw the opportunity of benefitting from the cultural capital of these songs and their association with Davies: 'Mrs. Edward Solly', she noted, 'admires them very much and I daresay

[72] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/79, Book of letters of introduction for the Davies family's European tour, 1767-1773.
[73] *Ibid*., Marianne and Cecilia Davies to 'Mademoiselle' [perhaps DR], 14 Mar. 1772.
[74] See DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 5 Feb. 1835, which details a request from Charles Wheatstone to use the armonica in a lecture series on acoustics at King's College, London. For a description of the glass armonica, see Betty Matthews, 'The Davies Sisters, J. C. Bach and the Glass Harmonica', *Music & Letters*, 56/2 (1975), p. 151.
[75] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 26 Oct. 1829.

will sing them this winter' at music parties in London.[76] Her aunt, Lady Davis, similarly collected subscribers and distributed them among her social circle.[77] Such activities served a practical charitable purpose, but they also emphasised the family's connection with a musical celebrity who embodied metropolitan cultural sophistication.

The efforts of Solly and her family to gain prestige within their social circle from association with the reputation of Davies received a significant boost from public notices drawing attention to Davies's plight and her former reputation. In August 1832, John Parry published a feature article on Cecilia Davies and the campaign to support her in *The Harmonicon*.[78] Solly was extremely excited by this notice, eagerly encouraging her parents to procure a copy in a letter sent a few months later: 'I wish you would get that [issue] for last August, (I think Miss Smith of the Down House has it) with the account of Miss Davies the songs the Armonica &c. put in by Mr Parry'.[79] Parry's article was important to Solly because it revived awareness of Davies's musical fame and achievements. Parry described Davies's time at the Austrian court where she had taught the Empress's daughters, the future queens of France, Spain and Naples, as well as her relationship with Hasse and her celebrated performances in opera in Italy.[80] It therefore asserted the considerable interest of Davies's career to those who wished to think of themselves as knowledgeable about music and its history. For those who desired to find out more and gain a 'truer idea of [her] character', Parry directed them to visit Davies herself, writing 'at nearly ninety years of age she retains all her faculties, is very communicative, and recollects the former events of her life perfectly, which she relates

[76] *Ibid*.
[77] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/108, Lady Davis to DR, 2 & 3 July 1828, 4 Aug. 1828, 19 Aug. 1828.
[78] [John Parry], 'Diary of a Dilettante', *Harmonicon* 10/8 (Aug. 1832), p. 184, see note 14.
[79] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 4 Feb. 1833.
[80] [Parry], 'Diary of a Dilettante', p. 184.

with great distinctness and vivacity'.[81] The curious could encounter the celebrated singer directly, experience the charming private personality of this once again public figure and receive a valuable lesson in music history in the process.

The article re-established Davies as a major figure of interest to participants in metropolitan musical culture, a project which Solly and her family had been pursuing on a more localised level for several years. Solly was no doubt pleased at the publicity the campaign was receiving and the effect this might have on charitable giving to Davies's cause, but she was surely also excited by the fact that Parry praised and publicised the intervention of 'a few friends' [i.e. Solly and her family] who had recommended to Davies the publication of the 'six charming compositions' by Hasse. The article also noted that the armonica was currently 'in the possession of a lady who was a favourite pupil of Miss Davies'.[82] To be described as a 'favourite pupil' of Davies and have her family's charitable activities praised in the *Harmonicon* was no doubt highly flattering for Solly, emphasising to her acquaintances in provincial musical society her connections to the mainstream metropolitan musical world.

During the early 1830s, the value of Solly's connection with Davies grew still further as the campaign attracted attention from other prominent figures in London's cultural elite. Parry, for instance, publicised in the *Morning Post* and *The Times* the latest donations to the campaign from elite figures in London life, including the intervention of the Earl of Mount-Edgcumbe to obtain a £20 donation from the king to Davies, and the pressure applied by Lady Keith, Lord Burghersh, the Archbishop of York and Earl

[81] *Ibid*., p. 184.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 184.

Fortescue on the RSM to secure a £10 donation from the society to their cause.[83] In 1834, Mount-Edgcumbe, a prominent musical patron and opera aficionado, included in the fourth edition of his popular *Musical Reminiscences* a footnote to his section on Davies's career, which read: 'this unfortunate woman is now (in 1834) living in London, in the extreme of old age, disease, and poverty'.[84] This addition to the work attracted attention from the book's reviewer in the *Athenaeum* who reiterated that Davies was 'yet surviving in London, we fear under the pressure of the worst ills of old age – what a long life has music lived since she charmed the town in 'Vestale', or 'Didone', or 'Semiramide' of those days!'.[85] Similarly, the literary celebrity, opera patron and friend of Davies from the 1770s, Fanny Burney, used the publication of the memoirs of her father, the renowned musician Charles Burney, to draw attention to the 'generous succour of some personages as high in benevolence as in rank' on behalf of Davies. Should any of her readers have wished to follow this example and become 'new commiserators of talents and integrity', she informed them they would find the worthy object of distress, 'truly deserving of every kind impulse she may excite', at her lodgings at 'No. 58, in Great Portland-street'.[86] The *Memoirs of Dr Burney* and Mount-Edgcumbe's *Musical Reminiscences* were both important publications attracting significant attention from the musical reading public.[87]

[83] P. [John Parry], 'An Ancient Daughter of Song', *Morning Post*, 27 June 1832.
[84] Mount-Edgcumbe, *Musical Reminiscences*, p. 6.
[85] [Review] 'Musical Reminiscences, containing an Account of the Italian Opera in England from 1773, 4th edit. Continued to the present time, and including the Festival in Westminster Abbey. By the Earl of Mount Edgcumbe', *The Athenaeum* 369 (22 Nov. 1834), p. 850.
[86] Madame D'Arblay [Frances Burney], *Memoirs of Doctor Burney, arranged from his own manuscripts, from family papers, and from personal recollections* (3 vols., London, 1832), ii, p. 20.
[87] As well as the *Athenaeum* review, Mount-Edgcumbe's *Musical Reminiscences* were 'strongly recommend[ed]' to the 'musical readers' of 'Literature of the Month', *The Court Magazine and Belle Assemblée* 5/6 (Dec. 1834), p. 263. The *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* were reviewed unfavourably in *The Literary Gazette: A weekly journal of literature, science, and the fine arts* 826 (17 Nov. 1832), pp. 726-27 and 828 (1 Dec. 1832), pp. 756-58 and *The Examiner* 1296 (2 Dec. 1832), p. 774, but was more kindly received by *The Athenaeum* 264 (17 Nov. 1832), pp. 737-39 and 265 (24 Nov. 1832), pp. 757-58, which noted 'any one who desires to write of the

The appeals they contained had a practical effect: in November 1833, Burney was delighted to transmit two sovereigns to Davies from 'Mrs. Bourdois', her niece, who, Burney noted with satisfaction, 'settled [her] presentation from the time she read my appeal in the Memoirs of Dr. Burney'.[88] A more general consequence of these public notices of the Davies campaign by such prominent members of the musical public was to associate further the campaign with metropolitan musical culture and re-instate Davies as a musical celebrity of significant importance.

For Solly, as she moved among her musical acquaintances, such associations surrounding a campaign she had helped to initiate were extremely flattering. She could recount, for instance, to her friends, as she did to her parents, how her connection with Davies brought her into contact with important members of London society. For instance, she recalled how, during a musical party at Davies's lodgings in 1832:

> a lady came in whom I conjectured to be Lady Keith and found afterwards I was not mistaken. She seemed inclined to talk but we were so many in that small room that we went away as soon as we could. I wish I had known who it was at the time for I suppose she remembers you. Miss Davies says she has lately married a daughter to whom she has given a large fortune.[89]

Viscountess Keith, the daughter of Hester Thrale-Piozzi and protégée of Samuel Johnson, was a significant figure in London's cultural elite, known particularly for her philanthropic activities.[90] Solly's report to her parents of this encounter reveals her excitement that the Davies campaign had brought her into association with such illustrious fellow-patrons and her disappointment that she did not make more of this

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poets, and critics, and artists, of half a century, will find in these Memoirs, a fine store of fresh and interesting materials' (p. 737).

[88] Burney, *Journals and Letters… Volume XII*, pp. 811-12.

[89] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR, DR and TS, 19 Aug. 1832.

[90] See Jennett Humphreys, 'Elphinstone, Hester Maria, Viscountess Keith (1764-1857)', rev. K. D. Reynolds, *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8743> accessed 14 June 2013.

opportunity to re-establish a lapsed family link between the Racketts and Lady Keith.[91] Such encounters, and the re-telling of them among her social circle, were a vital tool by which Solly could emphasise her fashionable metropolitan connections with figures of wealth, consequence and social prestige. The desire to forge such connections was a strong impetus behind her promotion of the Davies campaign.

Solly and her relations clearly stood to gain in a variety of ways from their association with and championing of Davies's cause. The fact that this was so demonstrates that among certain social groups in early nineteenth-century society, professional female singers, even in retirement, were figures to be admired. In this social milieu female musical professionalism was held in high regard and female singers were treated as fascinating celebrities, possessing rare talents and intriguing personalities, who embodied the metropolitan and international musical culture with which women such as Solly sought to align themselves. Nevertheless, it is important not to carry this too far; there is no sense in which Solly or her relations admired female professionalism to the extent that they ever desired to give up their social position in propertied society and take to professional performance themselves. Indeed, Lady Davis expressed her horror at her son Horace's suggestion that he was considering acting as a profession, writing to her sister: 'I know not what to think of this scheme for as his principles were never so correct as I cou'd have wish'd yet this will place him amongst a sink of vice that may even degrade him to the lowest degree'.[92] While it was therefore not a mode of life that they believed suitable to members of their own social class, the evidence examined here suggests that the ways in which they interacted with the musical world – their

[91] See note 65. Presumably, DR had known Lady Keith during their girlhood as neighbours in Streatham.
[92] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/108, Lady Davis to DR, 2 May 1825.

participation in a self-consciously serious and intellectual style of music appreciation, their admiration of professional and artistic performance standards, their knowledge of music history and the musical canon, their metropolitan and international musical outlook, and their consumption of celebrity culture – brought them to ascribe far greater value to professional female singers than many of their eighteenth-century forebears and those around them in early nineteenth-century society.

The fact that their views were not representative of other sections of nineteenth-century propertied society is of great importance. Solly and her relations were certainly aware that not everyone they encountered in their campaigning work adopted a similar attitude towards professional female singers. Maria Domville, writing to Thomas and Dorothy Rackett about the progress of her canvassing for Davies's election to the NBI, informed them that 'with perseverance I have the most sanguine hopes of success notwithstanding the opposition [Davies] incurs in some quarters on account of her having been on the stage But that opposition I am happy to find is supported only by those who aspire at superior sanctity and who I hope will find themselves in the minority'.[93] It was perhaps no surprise to Domville that among the subscribers of a philanthropic organisation such as the NBI she encountered individuals of a more evangelical persuasion. As noted above, the links between public philanthropic institutions and evangelicalism was strong in this period, particularly in the case of female forms of charitable activity. Evangelicalism advocated a more rigid definition of the qualities to be admired in a woman compared to that of the less fervent brand of

[93] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/115, Maria Domville to TR and DR, 9 Sept. 1827.

Anglican Christianity pursued by the Racketts, Sollys and Domvilles.[94] To the evangelically-minded, female professionalism, especially in the form of public performance, was an anathema to the domestic principles they associated with true femininity. Women of the stage they considered morally undeserving and hardly to be admired for their breach with feminine domesticity. It was perhaps to appease the moral qualms of just such a group that Fanny Burney, speaking as an eyewitness of Davies's career, wrote in the *Memoirs of Dr Burney*: 'In this course of rare celebrity, her unimpeachable conduct, her pleasing manners, and her engaging modesty of speech and deportment, fixed as much respect on her person and character, as her singularly youthful success had fastened upon her professional abilities'.[95] Feminine propriety, Burney suggests, was not as irreconcilable with professional performance as some might think. Writing in a more private context, Domville's gently mockery of her opponents' pretensions to 'superior sanctity' indicates that she evidently felt such views belonged to an overly pious minority.

In the case of the NBI election, Domville was correct. But in a wider social context, not only did Domville and her allies face evangelical opposition, but a perhaps even greater problem was simply apathy towards Davies's plight. It is difficult to demonstrate this, but many in early nineteenth-century society who were less enthusiastically and self-consciously 'musical' probably felt there were far more pressing demands on whatever spare income they had to give to charitable causes. To Domville, Solly and other members of 'musical' society, Davies was a great artist, who had played

[94] On the relationship between evangelicalism and conceptions of gender, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987), pp. 107-48, especially pp. 114-18. For discussion of the Racketts' attitude towards religion, see Appendix B.
[95] D'Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, ii, pp. 19-20.

a fascinating role in the development of European musical culture, a professional figure to be admired and whose fine musical style was to be emulated. To many others, she was simply an impoverished old woman, who had once performed a useful function in providing pleasant entertainment, but who now possessed very little value or significance. This helps to explain why the Davies campaign, despite Domville and Solly's efforts, and the public appeals of Parry, Mount-Edgcumbe and Burney, did not fully achieve its aim to alleviate Davies's financial hardship and she continued to struggle to make ends meet on the income afforded to her by the NBI.[96]

This case study therefore demonstrates in greater detail the effects and social constituencies of the new ideas emerging in the musical world of the early nineteenth century. Changing understandings of music's function and purpose and consequent developments in the status and value ascribed to professional musicians, and particularly women in the music profession, shaped how Solly and her relations thought about their own music-making, the relationships they developed with Davies and their motivations for championing her cause. In the social milieu in which they lived where this view of the female musician was common, being associated with a professional female singer of Davies's reputation (at least once they had helped to rebuild it) brought them significant cultural capital and reinforced their social position. But this was not true of other members of early nineteenth-century propertied society, where music remained simply one of the pretty feminine accomplishments for young unmarried women to pursue in their attempt to attract a husband, or a diverting way to spend an hour with friends attending an occasional concert.

[96] See DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/79, Cecilia Davies to DR, 21 July 1831 (appeal to DR for loan of a sovereign); D/RAC/113, SS and DS to TR and DR, 5 Feb. 1835 (cannot afford new bonnet).

Professional success and public failure: the campaign for Eliza Salmon

The Davies campaign illustrates some of the new ways in which certain groups of consumers of music culture in the early nineteenth-century had come to think about and interact with professional female musicians. The Salmon campaign was, by contrast, orchestrated entirely by members of the music profession. It demonstrates how the profession responded to the greater prominence of the independent female musician in the first half of the nineteenth century and, alongside the establishment of the SFM, formed part of a concerted effort to reform the institutions of the musical world by removing inequalities of financial provision. Most importantly, it was motivated by a clear understanding of the female musician as a fully professional figure. Moreover, as well as pushing for change within the profession, the arguments used by leading campaigners to try to persuade the public that Salmon was entitled to their support are of great interest. Such arguments were based on the notion of Salmon's moral worth, respectability and public value as a professional artist, reflecting some of the practical applications of arguments explored in chapter two. The ultimate failure of the Salmon campaign, however, indicates that, for the most part, these new arguments did not prove especially convincing to the early nineteenth-century public, at least when it came to appealing for support for a retired female singer.

The nature of the Salmon campaign was in a number of ways very different to that of Davies. Salmon's career, as the leading oratorio and concert singer of the 1810s and early 1820s, had been brought to an abrupt end by the total collapse of her voice in

1825.[97] Unlike Davies, she had been unable to develop a successful teaching practice; a singing teacher who could not sing was evidently looked on unfavourably by potential employers. This prevented her developing the same network of influential contacts among families such as the Racketts, meaning she could not draw on private networks among the musical public for assistance once she could no longer work. Having been widowed once already in 1813, she was married again to an obscure clergyman by the name of Hinde, who supported her until his death sometime in the late 1830s, an event which precipitated her descent into extreme hardship.[98] Fortunately, news of this became known in professional musical circles at a time when the problem of how to provide support for independent female musicians had been brought to the attention of the musical community by the establishment of the SFM the previous year. The fledgling society was not yet able to provide support, especially to a non-member such as Salmon, but the general air of heightened concern about this problem spurred a committee of prominent professional musicians, led by the renowned conductor Sir George Smart, to organise a benefit concert for Salmon in June 1840.[99] Despite their efforts, this failed to raise sufficient income to furnish Salmon with an annuity as had been hoped. In 1842, another committee was formed, this time led by John Parry, with the aim of setting up a public subscription to purchase an annuity.[100] This too failed to generate a substantial

[97] See, for instance, newspaper reports of her performances: *Morning Chronicle*, 1 Nov. 1815 (Halifax Music Festival) and *Morning Post*, 25 July 1821 (Westminster Abbey Music Festival), 30 Sept. 1823 (York Music Festival), 18 Sept. 1824 (Worcester Music Festival). Signs that her voice was going were audible in her performances in March 1825 (see *Morning Post*, 4 Mar. 1825). By May it had gone completely, as Salmon was forced to cancel all her engagements for the coming season (see *Morning Chronicle*, 7 May 1825).

[98] For general details of Salmon's life and career, see L. M. Middleton, 'Salmon, Eliza (1787-1849)', rev. J. Gilliland, *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24552> accessed 17 June 2013.

[99] See 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/9 (3 Mar. 1840) p. 134; 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/26 (30 June 1840), pp. 401-02; *Morning Post*, 1 June 1840, 15 June 1840, 22 June 1840; *The Standard*, 25 June 1840.

[100] See H. P., 'Correspondence. Subscription for Mrs. Salmon', *Musical World* 17/5 (3 Feb. 1842), p. 34; John Parry, 'Correspondence. Subscription for Mrs. Salmon', *Musical World* 17/6 (10 Feb. 1842), p. 43; 'Subscription

permanent income for her and she continued to live in severe hardship until her death in 1849.[101]

In the first place, the Salmon campaign, particularly when seen alongside the contemporaneous establishment of the SFM, demonstrates an increased concern for the plight of the independent female musician within the musical profession by the late 1830s and a determination to consolidate and affirm the professional status and rights of female musicians.[102] Different groups within the profession, however, took up this cause with varying degrees of enthusiasm. For some, it was self-evident that Salmon deserved support simply because of her former professional status. The performers at the 1840 benefit concert included many of the leading female musicians of the day, such as Lucy Anderson, Clara Novello, Charlotte Birch, and Elizabeth Masson, many of whom had been founding members of the SFM the previous year.[103] To them, Salmon's plight could be read as metonymic for the situation of all professional female musicians. Supporting the campaign therefore functioned as a means of highlighting the inequalities of status and rights of men and women within the profession and of promoting their objective that all female professionals should have access to support in their own right. The two campaigns were often linked in the musical press, the one forming the evident and forceful justification for readers to support the other: 'Perhaps the want of a society of Female Musicians was never so poignantly felt as at this present moment', wrote one commentator in the *Musical World*, 'when a lady of first-rate talent has no resources on

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for Mrs. Salmon', *Musical World* 17/7 (17 Feb. 1842), p. 51; 'Mrs Salmon', *The Examiner* 1778 (26 Feb. 1842), p. 134; *The Era*, 30 Jan. 1842; *Morning Post*, 1 Feb. 1842.

[101] For the failure of the subscription, see 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 17/21 (26 May 1842), p. 166; 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 17/27 (7 July 1842), p. 215; 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 20/19 (8 May 1845), p. 220; *The Times*, 29 June 1842.

[102] See Rohr, 'Women and the music profession', pp. 310-13, 325-27.

[103] For a list of performers at the concert, see *The Standard*, 25 June 1840. For a list of founding members of the SFM, see Rohr, 'Women and the music profession', pp. 330-31.

which she can depend for the means of existence. We trust that the society lately formed… will meet with that patronage which it most richly deserves'.[104]

Beyond attracting the support of those female musicians with a clear self-interest in its promotion, the fact that the campaign was initiated and led by leading male members of the profession indicates that this was a matter of far more general concern among musicians. Nor was this simply a matter of former friends and colleagues stepping forward to help from purely personal motivations; although Salmon almost certainly knew George Smart from her performing days, it is highly significant that John Parry, the leader of the committee behind the public subscription for Salmon, did not know her personally.[105] In a letter from Salmon to one of the donors to her cause, she wrote: 'The profession are very kind and endevoring to make a Concert for me the ensueing season. Mr. Parry (altho' I am not personally acquainted with) has in the kindest manner interested himself in wishing to assist me'.[106] This letter indicates that others, like Parry, championed her cause simply because of her status as a fellow professional and not out of personal friendship. Parry had particular reasons to be supportive. As treasurer of the RSM since 1831, he had dealt with applications from Davies, Salmon and others for casual relief and no doubt played a key role in persuading

[104] 'Metropolitan', *Musical World* 13/198 (2 Jan. 1840), p. 7. Another campaigner in the *Musical Journal* warned: 'what has befallen Mrs. Salmon may possibly be the fate of others, unless this Society be supported by those whom Providence has so amply given the means' ('Royal Society of Female Musicians', *Musical Journal* 1/9 (3 Mar. 1840), p. 136).

[105] George Smart was a founder member of the Philharmonic Society and director of the Lenten oratorio series in London in the 1810s and '20s (see John Warrack, 'Smart, Sir George Thomas (1776-1867)', *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25740> accessed 17 June 2013). He engaged Salmon to perform in numerous concerts he directed, see, for instance, *Morning Chronicle*, 15 Feb. 1816 (Drury Lane oratorios), 16 Aug. 1817 (concerts at the Rotunda, Dublin), 23 Apr. 1818 (Philharmonic Society concert), 6 Feb. 1819 (City Amateur Concert series); *Morning Post*, 1 June 1821 (Concert hosted by Mrs. Coutts), 16 June 1821 (Concert hosted by Lady Hobhouse), 21 Feb. 1823 (Covent Garden oratorios), 29 Dec. 1824 (Bath subscription concerts).

[106] HTC, MS Thr 467, Theater Autograph File, Eliza Salmon to [Unknown], 27 Jan. 1840.

reluctant members of the committee of the worthiness of their requests.[107] As we have seen, he had also taken an active part in publicising the Davies campaign.[108] He was consequently highly aware of the situation of these women and clearly felt them to be fully professional figures entitled to equal support. Leading the Salmon campaign was a means by which he hoped to draw attention to and further consolidate the status of the independent female professional musician.

Alongside the particularly enthusiastic support of men like Parry, Salmon's reference to the kindness of 'the profession' implies not only her sense of her membership of the professional community, but also her belief in a general desire among her professional colleagues to assist a fellow professional in distress. This was a viewpoint espoused by writers in the musical press. Announcing the benefit concert committee's formation in 1840, one writer in the *Musical Journal* wrote that 'there is no doubt but all our eminent vocal and instrumental performers will most cheerfully offer their gratuitous services'.[109] The journal later wrote approvingly of the performance: 'Here we find the members of our profession pressing forward, earnestly, willingly lending their talents and giving up their time (which with their generally limited means could be but ill-spared), [and] doing all in their power to assist a poor sister in pecuniary difficulties'.[110] Similarly, the editor of the *Musical World*, referring to the public subscription campaign in 1842, confidently wrote that, to members of the profession 'the soft feelings of charity are familiar; and the remembrance of the affability as well as talent of the present sufferer… will sufficiently awaken their sympathy for the visitation

[107] Hadden, 'Parry, John'. See reports of casual donations from the RSM to Davies (*Morning Post* (for which Parry was the music critic), 29 Dec. 1834 and 29 Dec. 1835) and to Salmon ('Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/1 (7 Jan. 1840), p. 14 and 'Metropolitan', *Musical World* 13/198 (2 Jan. 1840), pp. 7-8).
[108] See note 14 and pp. 214-216.
[109] 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/9 (3 Mar. 1840), p. 134.
[110] 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/26 (30 June 1840), p. 401.

which deprived them and the public of a most eminent and vocal artist, and will at once induce the contribution of their mites towards the amelioration of the grief and poverty which that visitation has produced'.[111] Such comments established a sense of Salmon's professional status as 'a most eminent and vocal artist' as the basis of her entitlement to support. They conveyed an impression that such views were widely held by musicians, both writers affirming that 'any very lengthy supplication' to the profession was unnecessary and stating that the musicians involved readily gave their assistance to this cause.[112]

However, these descriptions of the exemplary behaviour and characteristics of the music profession are not statements of fact, but rather of how these periodical writers desired or expected musicians to behave. Particularly in the case of the *Musical World* editorial, the desire to project a caring and compassionate image of the professional musical community to the wider public is clear. Furthermore, by implying that any truly 'eminent' performer would naturally wish to assist such a campaign, they enforced a sense of moral obligation on the members of the profession to offer their musical and financial support. The fact that this moral obligation had to be underlined, however, is a hint that some musicians were less enthusiastic in their support for the campaign. There was little active opposition to the campaign voiced in the musical press, an indication that there were probably few within the profession who wished openly to deny the professional status of female musicians outright, or that Salmon deserved assistance. But some perhaps failed to see what they might gain from supporting these campaigns, or even feared their interests might be harmed.

[111] C., [Editorial], *Musical World* 17/8 (24 Feb. 1842), p. 57.
[112] *Ibid*., p. 57.

The most concrete evidence of resistance expressed within the profession to the aims of the Salmon campaign and the SFM is the continued refusal by the RSM to accept female members. Although the exact reasons for this are unknown, the governing committee may have feared that granting membership and financial support to independent female musicians, especially those who were piano or instrumental teachers rather than singers, might encourage more women to pursue such work, leading to increased direct competition with male members.[113] Similarly, benefit concerts were a well-established feature of professional musical life, but normally they operated on a principle of reciprocity, musicians agreeing to perform for free at each other's benefits to their mutual gain.[114] In the case of the voiceless Eliza Salmon, however, there could be no such reciprocity. Musicians were therefore called upon to lend their support out of principle, not out of material self-interest, to this cause, and the gentle, but firm, sense of moral obligation voiced by writers in the periodicals was designed to sway any who might be thinking of taking up more lucrative work elsewhere on the evening in question. Furthermore, while the *Musical World* might call for financial contributions from professional musicians to the subscription for Salmon, its choice of the word 'mites' hints to the writer's awareness that most musicians had very little money to spare.

Because of these problems, the leaders of the Salmon campaign knew that they could not achieve their aims through the support of the profession alone. An audience

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[113] An examination of the RSM minute books reveals that this topic was never formally discussed by the governing committee during the 1830s. The application made in this regard by Elizabeth Masson (see p. 245) must have been done informally, perhaps via John Parry canvassing opinion among the committee and returning the negative answer to Masson. Unfortunately, this means the reasons for refusal remain unclear. They were evidently also unclear to contemporaries as well; see the comments of 'Astyanax' in 'Correspondence', *Musical Journal* 2/37 (15 Sept. 1840), p. 168. I am grateful to the RSM archivist Colin Coleman for information about the minute books, obtained through personal correspondence.

[114] Simon McVeigh, 'The Benefit Concert in Nineteenth-Century London: From 'tax on the nobility' to 'monstrous nuisance' in Bennett Zon (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies* (3 vols., Aldershot, 1999), i, 244.

had to be attracted to attend the benefit concert, while the real financial success of the public subscription would rest on securing contributions from wealthy members of propertied society. They needed, therefore, to make an appeal to the musical public for support on Salmon's behalf. Both the way in which they did so and their lack of success reflect the limited influence of the new attitudes towards professional female singers taking shape in the early nineteenth century.

The campaign's leaders almost certainly used private correspondence to further their cause, though this has not survived. Their major arguments, however, were most clearly and forcefully expressed in articles published in the music periodicals. Through these they sought to reach a national musical public, particularly in relation to the subscription campaign in 1842, for which the editor of the *Musical World* wrote: 'we earnestly solicit the assistance of our numerous Provincial subscribers'.[115] As well as extending their reach geographically, they also sought to appeal to their readers by flattering their sensibilities as 'music-lovers'. Having noted (optimistically) that those old enough to have heard Salmon's performances, and her colleagues in the music profession, needed only to be told of her distress to come to her aid, the editor of the *Musical World* wrote that his appeal was primarily directed instead to a third group: that 'very considerable number of music-lovers, who have come into the musical (if not the great) world, since the melancholy and premature setting of this once presiding star'. If their appeal to those who had enjoyed Salmon's performances directly was one of obligation to support someone who had previously brought them 'many an hour's rational gratification and delight', and their appeal to the profession was one of duty to

[115] 'Subscription for Mrs. Salmon', *Musical World* 17/7 (17 Feb. 1842), p. 51.

assist out of professional fellow-feeling, their appeal to this third younger generation was based almost entirely on their sensibilities and identity as 'music-lovers'.[116]

True music-lovers, they argued, should value and reward the endeavours of professional artists and empathise with their plight. By doing so, they would affirm the value of art and its producers in their society and their own sensibility and refined taste. This method of persuasion is evident in the pages of the *Musical World*, where Salmon was described as 'a most unfortunate individual – that individual a woman – that woman a highly educated artist'.[117] Such phrasing implies that Salmon was no ordinary example of superannuated female misfortune, or simply one of many unfortunates competing for the charity of the compassionate in nineteenth-century society. Rather, Salmon, as a 'highly educated artist', possessed a strong and very specific claim on the compassion of music-loving readers of the *Musical World* in particular. The editor continued: 'We feel certain that the appeal will be responded to by all true music lovers, who cannot but be generous and humane… each and all we invoke to assist in the liberal and touching attempt – each and all we exhort to contribute their trifle, no matter how small, to aid in the rescue of an unfortunate fellow-artist and fellow-creature from the worst endurances of human life'.[118] Just as with their appeal for assistance from music professionals, these journal-writers turned support for the campaign into an essential distinguishing mark of membership of the community of 'true music lovers'. In an opposite vein, but to a similar end, the *Musical Journal*, discussing the disappointing thinness of the audience at Salmon's benefit in 1840, castigated what it saw as 'this total want of feeling for our professors – this determined hostility' and blamed this on the

[116] C., [Editorial], *Musical World* 17/8 (24 Feb. 1842), p. 57.
[117] *Ibid*., p. 57.
[118] *Ibid*., p. 58.

'indolence, coldness, and insensibility of the wealthy of the land'.[119] Such comments implied that, just as the appreciation of music was increasingly felt to require the listener to sympathise with the emotions of the artist in performance, so the refined sensibility of the true music-lover would naturally lead them to empathise with the plight of a suffering 'fellow-artist' such as Salmon. To remain insensible to this cause signalled a wider disjuncture between oneself and musical art.

Appealing to the admiration of and empathy for artists among the self-consciously 'musical' public was especially crucial when it came to justifying why Salmon had not, during her financially very prosperous career, prudently provided for her retirement. Intriguingly, rather than simply pleading the obvious excuse that Salmon could not have anticipated losing her voice at the very height of her career, the *Musical World* instead argued that financial prudence was not in the character of the 'children of art' whose 'occupation and its requisite enthusiasm so entirely absorb their thoughts and feelings, that the past is but seldom remembered, and the future scarcely ever dreamed of'.[120] In other words, Salmon's absolute commitment to her art was the reason for her current poverty and a more than sufficient justification to the musical public for supporting her. This was the type of language designed to appeal to women like Dorothea Solly and her relations who greatly admired female artistry, who gained cultural capital through their association with such figures and who clearly wished to think of themselves as 'true music lovers'.

Furthermore, these writers stressed the respectability of Salmon and the moral purposes to which she had put her public fame and success. Those trying to persuade

[119] 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/26 (30 June 1840), p. 401.
[120] C., [Editorial], *Musical World* 17/8 (24 Feb. 1842), p. 58.

the public to contribute made sure to refer to 'the readiness with which she on all occasions assisted… in the pleasurable task of relieving misfortune' during her career through her charitable performances.[121] Moreover, despite being reputed to have earned as much as £5,000 during a single season at the height of her career, 'the appropriation of a part of her ample means [was] highly honourable to her, both as a daughter and a parent'.[122] As well as emphasising her charitable nature and her sense of familial domestic duty, her reputation as a leading oratorio singer lent her campaign a strong sense of morality and propriety. The *Musical Journal*, for instance, reminded its readers of her extraordinarily powerful performances in some of Handel's most celebrated sacred arias.[123] Salmon herself emphasised the sacred aspects of her career, writing to a benefactor: 'God gave me the Voice, and I did sing, but it has pleased Providence to take an aging vocal powers, and I submit to His will'.[124] This sense of her talents as God-given and of her career as ordained by divine Providence, alongside her charitable work and responsibility to her family, contributed towards building a picture of the female professional as perfectly compatible with respectability and morality. This was an argument that of course found ready adherents among admirers of female musical professionalism such as women like Solly, but it was also designed to assuage the moral concerns regarding professional performing women voiced by groups such as the religiously-motivated opponents of Maria Domville during the Davies campaign. The proponents of the Salmon campaign advocated a view of female artistry as something to be admired and valued and of female public professionalism as perfectly compatible

[121] *Ibid*., p. 57.
[122] 'Metropolitan', *Musical World* 13/198 (2 Jan. 1840), p. 7, which quotes from John Crosse, *An Account of the Grand Musical Festival held in September 1823 in the Cathedral Church of York. To which is prefixed, A Sketch of the Rise and Progress of Musical Festivals in Great Britain* (York, 1825).
[123] 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/1 (7 Jan. 1840), p. 14.
[124] HTC, MS Thr 467, Eliza Salmon to [Unknown], 27 Jan. 1840.

with morality and propriety. By doing so, they evidently hoped to attract as wide a portion of the musical public as possible to support their cause.

Despite these arguments, however, the Salmon campaign failed. The success of the benefit concert in 1840 was undermined by a rehearsal at the opera house scheduled at the same time, while the subscription in 1842 failed to reach its target of £400-500, raising only a meagre £120 and giving Salmon an income, as the *Musical World* reported forlornly in 1845, of only 4*s*. 7½*d*. per week.[125] The failure of the campaign had a variety of causes. Trying to attract attention to a concert in aid of a singer whose career had ended fifteen years previously was evidently difficult in the crowded London musical market.[126] This problem was compounded by the fact that, although the newspapers carried notices and updates about the progress of the campaign, the more lengthy persuasive articles arguing Salmon's case were confined to the musical press, especially the *Musical World* and the *Musical Journal*, publications whose readership was relatively narrowly confined to the profession.[127] Consequently, many of the arguments for the musical public to support Salmon's cause may well have failed to reach their intended audience. Furthermore, Salmon lacked the influential network of former pupils and employers that Davies had acquired over the course of her teaching career and so fewer individuals stood to gain from their association with Salmon if they supported the campaign. It is notable also that campaigners writing in the press did not invest as much

[125] *Morning Post*, 1 June 1840; 'Mrs. Salmon', *Musical Journal* 1/26 (30 June 1840), p. 401; 'Miscellaneous', *Musical World* 20/19 (8 May 1845), p. 220.

[126] Other musical events on 24 June 1840 included a benefit concert for the violinist Mr. Hayward at the English Opera House, but the biggest problem appears to have been a rehearsal at the Italian opera house for a performance of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* the following day, for the benefit of the soprano Giulia Grisi and featuring an renowned cast of leading Italian singers and dancers, including Francesca Persiani, Marie Taglioni, Francesca Cerrito, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Giovanni Matteo Mario, Antonio Tamburini and Luigi Lablache. Furthermore, the SFM had held its inaugural benefit concert the previous week, which may have exhausted audiences' willingness to donate to similar causes so soon afterwards, see 'Metropolitan', *Musical World* 13/222 (25 June 1840), pp. 402-03.

[127] See p. 91.

time in recounting stories of Salmon's career or re-establishing Salmon's celebrity, nor did they invite people to visit Salmon in the way that had been done for Davies. Salmon remained, therefore, a distant figure, and members of the musical public could not gain cultural capital from their interaction with her in the way that Solly and her relations had done with Davies.

In addition to these other causes, however, the arguments put forward in favour of supporting Salmon because of her status as a respectable, professional artist simply failed to convince. The views of many among the musical public, less in awe of the 'artist' and more suspicious of female performers, were the reference point for an editorial in the *Musical World* which offered a rather more pessimistic assessment of why female singers found themselves in need in old age: 'We know well that providence for the future is not characteristic of the musical or of the female nature; the consideration is involved with that of the loss of too many things that render life pleasant – youth, good looks, health, and the like – to render the idea even of destitution very frightful, or without some possible remedy in the chapter of accidents'. Warning that 'the decay of beauty is ominous of misfortune' and of the 'fleeting and variable' nature of 'public taste', this writer declared: 'There is a time when the most thoughtless must think' and on that basis approved of the foundation of the SFM as a long-overdue prudent step towards solving this problem on the part of female professionals.[128] Female musical performance, this editor asserts, was intricately bound up with visual attributes of youth and beauty. It thrived on a celebrity culture that was temporary, unstable and dependent on the whims of a frequently fickle public. Permanent value was not ascribed to these women by the majority of the concert-going public, who discarded them once they could

[128] [Editorial], *Musical World* 11/67 (11 Apr. 1839), pp. 221-22.

no longer provide the display of beauty they required. Consequently, this was a professional problem that required a professional solution; the musical public were not sufficiently enlightened to perceive value in these women in ill health, old age or retirement and would not come forward to their support. In the opinion of this editor, the advocates of the Salmon campaign could use all the eloquence and rhetoric at their disposal to persuade the public of Salmon's entitlement to support as a respectable, professional artist, but such arguments would fall on deaf ears. In the light of the campaign's relative failure, his assessment of the majority of the musical public's view of the only temporary, and purely functional, value of the female performer appears to have been correct. The exponents of the Salmon campaign were motivated by a view of the female singer as a respectable, professional artist. They clearly believed that arguments in favour of such a view would garner support from the musical public. Their failure in this regard illustrates the limited influence of this view of the female performer and the prevalence of alternative ways of thinking.

Conclusion

These case studies provide two different, but interlinked, perspectives on the changes in attitudes towards female singers taking place in the first half of the nineteenth century. If female singers were essentially 'flippant dolls' – if the main purpose of their performance was the display of feminine physical and aural beauty – then audiences failed to see what use or value an elderly, wrinkled and voiceless retired singer possessed. If, on the other hand, they were perceived as professional artists – if their performances were works of deeply meaningful Art created by a professionally-

trained and exceptionally talented unique individual – then they might retain significance for the musical public long after their retirement. As professionals they possessed (or should possess) rights and entitlement to access financial support available to the profession. As artists, they were special personalities who possessed a lasting cultural value in a musical world increasingly preoccupied with the history of music and strongly influenced by celebrity culture. The plain fact of the existence of these campaigns – the fact that greater social value was being ascribed to these women because of their careers as professional musicians – indicates the change in attitudes towards female singers taking place in the first half of the nineteenth century.

More importantly, however, these case studies reveal with greater clarity the social groups among which the new ideas about female singers as professional artists took root. Most obviously, the role of leading members of the music profession in both campaigns illustrates that by the 1830s and '40s, a significant and influential portion of the music profession clearly felt female singers to be professional artists and, on that basis, entitled to financial support in their retirement. For them, asserting the value and moral worth of such independent female musicians was a way of ending a perceived inequality within the profession and improving the reputation of the music profession as a whole among wider society. They met with some opposition, not least the continued refusal of the RSM to admit female members, but the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the foundation of the SFM and generally supportive attitude adopted by the musical press to the Salmon campaign illustrates the widespread support for the female musician and her professional rights among musicians in general.

Furthermore, these case studies indicate that, among a certain, self-consciously 'musical' segment of propertied society, comprised of keen amateurs with a serious

attitude towards the appreciation of music and musical performance, professional female singers, even in retirement, were objects of great admiration. Particularly among a provincial social milieu in which metropolitan musical connections carried significant social cachet, personal association with such figures from the centre of national and international musical life brought significant rewards of cultural capital. Support for such charitable campaigns was one way in which women like Solly and her relations could express their cultural identity and gain social prestige. This was only the case because they and their musical acquaintances shared a recognition and regard for these women as professional artists.

Nevertheless, the relative failure of both campaigns is a forceful reminder that such views were not shared by all who participated in musical culture. To those less heavily invested in an identity as a 'music-lover', less awestruck by the musical 'artist' or more sceptical about the moral propriety of female professionalism, there was little reason to ascribe value to these women once they had ceased to be able to perform their primary function of providing a pleasing display of physical attractiveness and pretty sounds. They failed to see why such women, whose poverty, they felt, was a result of their own vanity and imprudence, had any claim on them in their retirement, or what they could gain from any association with them other than social disrepute. It was for this reason that these campaigns largely failed in their objectives, while the only real solution to this problem – the foundation of the SFM – came from within the profession and the actions of female singers themselves, rather than from external support. New ideas about female singers were taking hold in early nineteenth-century society and had a very real effect on the lives of women such as Cecilia Davies and Eliza Salmon. These campaigns were one of the mechanisms by which these ideas were disseminated and

promoted. They underline the agency of men and women like John Parry and Dorothea Solly in bringing about these changes in attitudes. Nevertheless, the failure of the campaigns demonstrates their influence was limited, socially-specific and contested by alternative ways of thinking. They reveal in greater detail the complexity and diversity of the nineteenth-century musical world and the place of the female singer within it.

Figures 24-25



Figure 24 Front view of the old rectory at Spetisbury, Dorset, in April 2013.



Figure 25 Side view of the old rectory at Spetisbury, Dorset, in April 2013.

Chapter Five

'Who would be a Singer!': Clara Novello, Marianne Lincoln and the identity of the 'female artist', *c*.1830-1850

In 1837, a well-known female singer, Elizabeth Masson, wrote a letter to the leading music periodical of the day, the *Musical World*, demanding that the Royal Society of Musicians (RSM) should accept independent female members.[1] The letter went unheeded by the governing body of the RSM, prompting the indefatigable Masson to establish two years later a parallel organisation, the Society of Female Musicians (SFM).[2] Despite its failure, her letter is worth close examination because in it she articulates her sense of why female musicians deserved membership of such a society. Masson began by claiming full professional status for female musicians, upon which grounds she demanded equality of access to the financial security provided by the RSM. Deborah Rohr has interpreted the foundation of the SFM in just these terms, as the moment at which female musicians' sense of their professional identity was affirmed, and has situated it within contemporary debates about women's rights taking place in wider society at this time.[3]

The starting point for this chapter, however, is the second and even more radical claim advanced by Masson in her letter: 'the consideration that art knows neither country nor sex, being admitted, forms an incontestible [*sic*.] proof of the injustice of

[1] Elizabeth Masson, 'Royal Society of Musicians', *Musical World* 6/69 (7 July 1837), p. 53.
[2] Deborah Rohr, 'Women and the music profession in Victorian England: The Royal Society of Female Musicians, 1839-1866', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 18/4 (1999), p. 308.
[3] *Ibid*., pp. 310-13, 325-27.

depriving [female musicians] of the advantages of that excellent institution'.[4] In this light, the foundation of the SFM was not just designed to secure particular financial rights and securities, but represented an assertion of the claims of female musicians to recognition as musical artists on the same terms as men in the public sphere – an assertion of the legitimacy and social value of public female creativity. Yet for all Masson's hopeful optimism, the gender-blindness of art was far from being acknowledged by all in early Victorian society. Instead, her claim provokes the question: who would have agreed with her? Among which groups and upon what terms did female artistry find acceptance? Most crucially, we should begin by asking: did the women who made up the membership of the SFM think of themselves as 'artists' and in what ways did they define and express this identity? What might their behaviour tell us about the acceptance of such attitudes among their audiences and wider society?

To begin to answer these questions, this chapter examines the self-representations of two professional female singers and members of the SFM, Clara Novello and Marianne Lincoln.[5] Through a close reading of the autobiography and letters of Novello and the diary of Lincoln it will explore their sense of identity and their relationship to the idea of the artist as a model for their understanding of themselves. Both women, in different ways, expressed frequent and sometimes profound ambivalence towards the identity of the professional artist. Both felt able to inhabit this identity fully only under certain circumstances; at other moments they felt a degree of tension between their gender and artistic identities that they found difficult to resolve.

[4] Masson, 'Royal Society of Musicians', p. 53.

[5] CN was a founder-member of the SFM, but resigned her membership upon her marriage to the Italian Count Giovanni Battista Gigliucci in 1843. Lincoln joined the society in June 1846, but resigned her membership upon her marriage to Edmund Bryan Harper at the end of 1847. See the database of SFM members on the RSM's webpage: <http://www.royalsocietyofmusicians.co.uk/rsfmmembers.html> accessed 25 Apr. 2013.

To minimise or avoid these tensions, they refashioned their artistic identity in ways that rendered their expression of their identity as 'artists' quite different to that of their male colleagues. Investigating the reasons for this ambivalence allows us to see how contemporaries understood female performance, female creativity, and women's professional presence in public life in interrelated but often very different ways to those of men in early Victorian Britain.

Clara Novello's Reminiscences and the retrospective construction of her identity as a 'female artist'

In the period between her second retirement from public performance in late 1860 and the death of her husband in 1893, Clara Novello, by then Contessa Gigliucci and living in Italy, wrote down, in a disorganised series of loose jottings compiled in several sittings, her 'reminiscences' of her life.[6] Following her death in 1908, this collection of manuscripts was discovered by her daughter, Contessa Valeria Gigliucci, who edited and published them in 1910 as *Clara Novello's Reminiscences*. In her introduction, Gigliucci explained her reasons for publishing her mother's memoirs: at her mother's death, she wrote, 'the [newspaper obituary] notices referred almost exclusively, and rightly so, to the artist only, and many and pressing were the solicitations on all sides, that some record should be made of the woman as well, o[f] her vivid personality, of her shrewd and witty sayings, [and] of the many interesting experiences of her life'.[7] Although it might seem, therefore, that the *Reminiscences* are about the woman and not the artist, in fact no such separation was intended. What this

[6] A description of the original manuscript as discovered by Valeria Gigliucci can be found in Clara Novello, *Clara Novello's Reminiscences*, ed. Valeria Gigliucci (London, 1910), p. 28.
[7] *Ibid*., p. 27.

document really seeks to memorialise is the kind of woman that could achieve such success as a public artist: the kind of natural disposition, talent, education, experiences and character Novello possessed that made her excel as a 'female artist'. Though tensions between Novello's role as wife and mother and her public artistic career are acknowledged (as we will see later), they are generally downplayed or neutralised in favour of a naturalisation of Novello's artistic identity as her proper destiny and a sustained defence of the legitimacy of this role for women in public life. When this account of Novello's life and identity is compared to that contained in documents produced during the early part of her career in the 1830s and '40s, however, a time when success was as yet unachieved and not assured, and when attitudes towards female creativity were, in some ways, quite different to those prevalent at the end of Novello's life, a very different picture emerges of how she felt about her public role and her sense of herself as an artist. The first two parts of this chapter will compare the self-representations contained in these two different accounts of Novello's life in order to shed light on the varying ways and contexts in which Novello expressed her identity as an artist.

The *Reminiscences* is not a document which can be straightforwardly interpreted for a number of reasons. Regrettably, it has not been possible to consult Novello's original manuscript and the discussion that follows is based upon the printed text.[8] According to those scholars who have been able to compare both texts, Novello's daughter did make some editorial alterations, removing passages she felt were inappropriate to be made public, paraphrasing others and adding in her own occasional commentary or elucidation of events, along with other material, such as letters, relating

[8] See Appendix C.

to her mother.[9] While it appears therefore that there have been some textual losses, there is no suggestion from those who have read both texts that Gigliucci invented and inserted any additional events or opinions, claiming them falsely to be those described or expressed by her mother; all of her own commentary and insertions are clearly denoted by using a smaller font size. Thus, while it is clear that, in dealing with the printed text, we need to heed Linda Peterson's reminder 'to think of some, perhaps even most, nineteenth-century women's self-writing as collaborative writing', it seems reasonably safe to assume that the text represents the core, albeit it a softened and abridged one, of Novello's own text and the opinions about herself contained therein.[10] Even if Valeria Gigliucci, perhaps in the light of the glowing obituaries lauding Novello's artistry, desired to portray her mother as an 'artist', and edited accordingly, in a sense this does not matter. The essential point is that whether it was Novello or Gigliucci shaping the text, it was far easier and more desirable to make the case for viewing Novello as secure in her identity as a 'female artist' after her successful career and in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, than it was in the 1830s and '40s.

The ways in which the text constructs the identity of Novello as that of the professional artist are numerous, but perhaps the most important is the interplay between Novello's professional/artistic and domestic selves and roles. Framing their relationship to the world of marriage, motherhood and domesticity was one of the greatest challenges for nineteenth-century professional women when it came to writing

[9] Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello 1818-1908* (London, 1955), p. viii; David I. Masson, 'A Reminiscence of Clara Novello', *Music & Letters* 50/4 (1969), p. 481.
[10] Linda Peterson, 'Women writers and self-writing' in Joanne Shattock (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 221.

their autobiographies.[11] Some chose to efface or downplay the tension between a professional career and domesticity by embedding their professional work within a domestic context. The actress Fanny Kemble, for instance, explained her decision to begin a theatrical career as the only available solution to the financial ruin of her parents and domestic catastrophe,[12] while, according to Peterson, the author Margaret Oliphant wrote of the 'acts of writing and publishing not as the beginning of an independent professional career but as a collaborative, familial effort', making 'professional work [seem] naturally and necessarily to proceed from the domestic context'.[13] Others, however, embraced the professional world as necessarily divided from the domestic, without seeing this as problematic, most famously Harriet Martineau, but also several important later autobiographers (publishing around the same time as Novello), notably Annie Besant, Frances Power Cobbe and Mrs. Humphry Ward.[14]

Novello's autobiography lies somewhere in between these two broad strategies, though it has a clearer affinity to the latter than the former. Novello does make important references to her domestic roles as daughter, wife and mother, particularly (and significantly) at important moments in her career. For instance, upon her marriage to Gigliucci she retired from public performance and 'set to', as she put it, 'to prove to my husband that opposite though my life had been hitherto, love would teach me to become a "helpmate" to him – that highest title', and she applied herself 'regularly to learn the arduous duties of housewifery'.[15] Unlike Oliphant, Novello did not seek to

[11] *Ibid*., pp. 213-14; Linda H. Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (Charlottesville, 1999), pp. 19-20 and ch. 5; Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 11-15.
[12] Peterson, 'Women writers', p. 214; Peterson, *Victorian Women's Autobiography*, p. 154.
[13] Peterson, *Victorian Women's Autobiography*, pp. 155-56.
[14] Peterson, 'Women writers', pp. 216-17.
[15] Novello, *Reminiscences*, p. 121.

reduce the distance between domesticity and her career; indeed, whereas professional writing could, as Oliphant insisted, be undertaken fully within the physical confines of the home, public singing manifestly could not.[16] Novello acknowledged that the housewife and the singer were quite 'opposite' modes of life and that she, having been trained for the latter, would now have to 'learn' the skills required of the former. However, unlike Martineau, Novello portrays herself as ready to accept the 'highest title' of 'helpmate', and willing to sacrifice her career out of love for her new husband and the needs of his home and estate. Seeking to assuage her husband's concern that she might remain more dedicated to her music than to him, she records that she even went as far as to refuse to have a piano in the house, so that she would not be faced with temptations to neglect her domestic duties.[17]

Furthermore, just like Fanny Kemble, she frames her return to the concert world in 1849 as the only available solution to a domestic crisis, in this case caused by the financial ruin of her husband and the threat of his arbitrary arrest following the failure of the 1848 revolutions in the Italian peninsula.[18] Domestically, this crisis could not have come at a worse time; Novello records she was 'nursing a baby among other difficulties' when she received the lucrative offer to appear in *Semiramide* and *Robert le Diable* in Rome.[19] Her husband's reaction, she recalls, was initially to laugh the proposal down as ridiculous, but she persuaded him by saying she would be acting out of her 'own anxiety to see him safe out of all the late tyrannical arrests', and asking him 'how were our

[16] Peterson, *Victorian Women's Autobiography*, pp. 156-60.
[17] Novello, *Reminiscences*, pp. 124-25.
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 126-33 for Novello's account of these events. See also Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, pp. 190-209.
[19] Novello, *Reminiscences*, p. 133.

children to be educated under such a régime?'.[20] This sense of necessity to provide for their family also furnished the justification for her abandoning her children in order to travel to Portugal to take up an engagement there in 1850. Conforming to expectations of motherhood, she described the pain this separation brought her: 'To leave my children, from whom I had hitherto never been separated, whom I had never suffered servants to wash, dress, or walk with, whose every garment, except shoes, I had made with my own fingers, was the one terrible sacrifice I had to make, for their sakes, above all'.[21] These episodes, if taken by themselves, would appear to present Novello as someone who, once she had the opportunity, gladly left behind her professional career for the higher calling of domesticity and motherhood and who only reluctantly returned to the stage at great emotional cost in order to restore domestic familial harmony.

However, this view of Novello's motives is subtly undermined by other aspects of her accounts of these decisions. Although her anxiety about him, their income and their children are given in the list of reasons why she felt her husband should let her return to the stage, she also writes that she convinced him of what an excellent opportunity it would be to stage a comeback in professional terms: 'I made him observe the curious coincidence of "Semiramide" being the self-same opera I had made my first appearance in in Padua, and which had never been sung for years, "Robert le Diable," quite a novelty, long sighed for, Alboni as companion, bass and tenor good, etc.'.[22] Her arguments based on her obligations as wife and mother then follow, occupying a secondary place in her rhetorical strategy. No doubt her professional arguments may simply have been necessary in order to convince her husband that she would be

[20] *Ibid*., p. 134.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 138.
[22] *Ibid*., pp. 133-34. Marietta Alboni (1826-1894) was a celebrated Italian contralto.

successful in such a scheme and that this drastic step was worth taking. Yet it also suggests she had thought very carefully about how she might make a comeback and re-start her career, and that she was eager to take up this opportunity now that circumstances afforded her a justification.

In support of this interpretation, there is further evidence that Novello harboured a secret dissatisfaction with domesticity and the life of an Italian count's wife. 'I cannot deny', she wrote, when reflecting on her married life during the 1840s, 'I felt lonely sometimes, of an evening quite alone, working at clothes for an expected baby, half envying the peals of laughter from the kitchen far below, while my husband, according to custom, was at the "caffé," till ten, discussing politics, etc., with his men-friends, after a day's work with his peasants and men of business',[23] clearly expressing an evident jealousy of her husband's public life and hearing in the laughter of their servants echoes of the elegant receptions she had been invited to as the star singer and focus of attention after her triumphant performances of the late 1830s and early 1840s.[24] Nor did she keep to her promise about the piano. She had never been able, she confessed, to let herself slip out of practice entirely and 'had exercised my voice often when alone'.[25] Consequently, upon receiving a legacy of a hundred pounds in the will of her close friend, the double-bass player Domenico Dragonetti, she 'begged [her] father to purchase with this sum a square Broadwood piano', which 'proved a source of great pleasure, and subsequently

[23] *Ibid*., p. 123.

[24] See, for instance, CN's comments regarding her time in Rome in the winter of 1842-43: 'very soon, however, I became quite a favourite both on the stage and in society, where every one kindly vied with each other in petting me' and her description of a 'dazzling' party at the Palazzo Borghese in January 1843 (Novello, *Reminiscences*, pp. 114-15). See also the description of a jovial farewell party hosted by Baron von Senden in Berlin in CN's honour and attended by the Crown Prince of Prussia and many other court dignitaries written by MSN in her journal and quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 67.

[25] Novello, *Reminiscences*, p. 125.

of advantage also', a prudent move by an artist who had evidently not excluded the possibility that she might one day return to the musical world.[26]

These hints produce a reading of Novello's text that is less easily reconciled to domesticity. Far from appearing as the housewife and mother forced by circumstances beyond her control to return to her professional life, they suggest an artistic spirit that secretly strained against the confinements of domesticity and longed to return to the limelight, clandestinely practising the latest operas so that she would be up-to-date when the time came to perform once more. In a sense, this confusion over domesticity's role within the life-narrative of the *Reminiscences* is no confusion at all, but a quite deliberate rhetorical strategy designed so that Novello can appear to be all things to all readers: the natural and irrepressible artist and performer to some, and the respectable, domestic angel, patiently bearing her trials, to others. On balance, however, while the concerns of domesticity and her domestic persona are deployed to justify her actions at certain critical points in her life-narrative, it is the professional artistic image of her personal character that dominates the rest of the text. In simple terms, this can be seen in the greater coherence of her account of her years as a professional performer compared to her somewhat fragmentary memories of domestic life, as well as its disproportionate length, the twenty-two years of her professional career (less than a quarter of her lifetime) occupying almost sixty per cent of the pages of her *Reminiscences*. Clearly it was assumed by Novello/Gigliucci to be the primary interest of the book for the majority of readers. More importantly, however, the dominance of her identity as an artist can be seen in the way that, through carefully-controlled glimpses of her 'private' thoughts and feelings during these years, she welds the persona of the artist to her own personal

[26] *Ibid*., p. 125.

character. By contrast, the sense of her personal affinity for and commitment to domesticity remains, as we have seen, ambivalent.

Novello builds this self-representation as an artist in a variety of ways. For instance, she made sure to discuss her love of literature and close relationships with the various literary celebrities, including Charles Cowden Clarke, Leigh Hunt, Mary Shelley and Charles and Mary Lamb, who were friends of the Novello family and part of the artistic milieu in which she was brought up.[27] Her artistic sensibilities also emerge in enthusiastic descriptions of, for instance, the natural beauties of Italy, the wonders of Venice, or the 'picturesque' and 'romantic' charms of Prague, Heidelberg and other cities visited on her performance tours.[28] These passions for literature, the visual arts and nature expressed by Novello coincide strikingly, and not unintentionally, with what others in the nineteenth-century press were describing as the characteristics of the musical artist.[29] Their prominent inclusion in her life-narrative was designed to display to the reader her affinity for the arts and creative endeavour.

Novello's artistic sensibility emerges most clearly, however, in her descriptions of her especially strong reactions to music. When still a young girl, Novello recalled being taken to the house of the celebrated conductor Sir George Smart to hear Catherine Stephens sing her famous sentimental ballad 'Auld Robin Gray', upon hearing which, she wrote: 'I burst into such uncontrollable weeping, I had to be taken out of the room to have my face washed, and be slowly calmed down!'.[30] In a similar vein, she described her response to a performance by the tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini in Donizetti's *Lucia*

[27] *Ibid*., pp. 32-34, 46-47.
[28] *Ibid*., pp. 80 (Italy), 86 (Venice), 74 (Prague), 89 (Heidelberg).
[29] See pp. 98.
[30] Novello, *Reminiscences*, p. 50.

di Lammermoor: 'his divine voice, tears a component part of his liquid notes, singing as if to himself, in a far away reverie, pianissimo, the entire first part of the soliloquy in the third act – I felt entranced almost to fainting away in extasy! In art as in beauties of nature, absolute perfection strikes one dumb, utterly'.[31]

While such strong emotional reactions to performance were thought to be an intrinsic component of being a musical artist, they were not exclusive to artists alone; 'ordinary' audience-members might also be moved to tears by Stephens or stunned into silence by Rubini. What distinguished the 'artist' from other music-lovers, however, was that they alone possessed the training, knowledge and absolute commitment which went into producing, rather than simply responding to, great art. Novello continually emphasises her own possession of these attributes through her critical and detailed appreciation of the performances of other artists, male and female, and her admiration of the character traits that mark them out as exceptional and committed artists. Of her future tutor in 'stage-walking and action', the ballet dancer Clisio Catte, she wrote: 'he was a true, earnest artist, revering his own line of art, and enduring once the pain of a dislocated shoulder on the stage – caused by one of his death-falls – rather than, by movement or cry, destroy the effect on the audience'.[32] As well as admiring the absolute dedication of Catte, Novello emphasised her technical knowledge in her assessments of the performances of other singers. Writing about perhaps the most famous of all mid-nineteenth-century female singers, Jenny Lind, Novello observed (with a hint of professional rivalry):

[31] *Ibid*., pp. 115-16.
[32] *Ibid*., p. 88.

> Her voice was not spontaneous, and produced only with great effort; a peculiarity in her singing was the effect it gave of her doing it alone, separately, as it were, from the rest, a solo, ever, accompanied by others, never amalgamating together. The voice, on the contrary, should, in concerted music, ever modify its tones according to those of the instruments in obbligato – ringing, when with a trumpet, mellow with a violoncello, and so forth; so that when passages occur, in thirds for instance, the ear should not be able to distinguish which is voice, and which is the obbligato instrument; and great is the charm when this is obtained.[33]

As well as using such commentary to demonstrate her own technical mastery of her art, she also used it to emphasise the intensive practise and hard work that went into the best artistic performances, something of which the general public were, in Novello's opinion, often unaware. 'The highest art', she wrote, 'carefully conceals the machinery at the back of the canvas necessary to produce its grandest results, enhancing thus the effect on those who witness its triumphs, making it appear easy and spontaneous; an exquisite refinement this, lost on the herd, the majority of which is below comprehending it'.[34] Novello then selected four female performers who she felt embodied this professional artistic ethos, most especially Giuditta Pasta, who, 'conscientious in all things', 'studied in museums her statuesque attitudes and draperies, and continued to study "Norma," "Beatrice," and other operas long after attaining success, the completest, in all of them'.[35] Demonstrating that she understood how Pasta and other great performers had achieved their effects through intensive labour, she not only implied that she too had experienced what it was like to labour in the cause of Art, but reinforced this sense of her membership of the select club of artists possessing great talent and privileged insight into artistic creativity in ways that were 'lost on the herd'. The implication is that many have the ability to appreciate art, but few can truly

[33] *Ibid*., pp. 156-57.
[34] *Ibid*., pp. 99-100.
[35] *Ibid*., pp. 100-01.

understand how great art is made and work hard enough to produce it themselves or make the necessary sacrifices. By demonstrating her insider's knowledge of these processes, she asserted her own identity as an 'artist'.

Novello was careful to emphasise, however, that her assertion of her artistic identity did not go so far as to exceed the bounds of feminine propriety. This is particularly evident in her description of the leading soprano Maria Malibran, with whom she had performed and developed a friendship before the famous prima donna's premature death in 1836.[36] On one level, she admired and wished to identify herself closely with Malibran, whom she described as an

> artistic meteor… Inimitable whether as singer or actress, comic or tragic, a thorough musician, composer, pianist and violinist. As for her singing – in a voice, the mere sound of which caused emotional tears – a single phrase, one word, in certain moments, sufficed to bring an audience to raptures of enthusiasm all over Europe and America, in all places and climes. She spoke five or six languages equally well, drew caricatures admirably – she gave me some – danced the tarantella like a native. What could she not do?[37]

Novello paints Malibran as the apotheosis of the female artist and subtly emphasises her own similarity to and identification with such a figure by drawing attention to the intimacy and friendship that existed between them, emblematised by the gift of the caricatures and, later in the narrative, some large silver hair pins and a lock of the prima donna's hair.[38] She also inserts two stories about Malibran's assertion of her status and dignity as an artist: once when she refused Alfred Bunn's request for her to repeat a highly successful novelty mimed performance in *La Sonnambula*, something she had only agreed to do because of a severe sore throat, hurling music-books at his head, 'offended,

[36] *Ibid*., p. 56.
[37] *Ibid*., p. 54.
[38] *Ibid*., pp. 56 (hair pins), 57 (lock of hair).

as an artist, to be asked to join in a low charlatanerie, for speculation'; while on a second occasion, a violinist not playing an obbligato accompaniment to her taste and muttering mutinously that 'the passage could not be played in the way she said', she had snatched the violin and 'played herself the passage as she wished it'.[39] By including these anecdotes, Novello signalled to her readers her admiration for the uncompromising artistry of Malibran and, to an extent, her support for and identification with this expression of female artistic identity and authority.

Yet this identification with Malibran and all that she stood for is not unqualified. Alongside her fierce articulation of her rights as an artist, Novello also notes Malibran's 'queer whims', one of which was to 'dress like a man. I saw her arrive thus once in Manchester, from London, to a rehearsal, a long Spanish cloak over her man's attire and a travelling cap on her head. All these odd ways were never criticised, even in prim England, they being considered only part and parcel of this gifted, bewildering being'.[40] This note at the end of her passage about Malibran, and especially the use of adjectives like 'queer', 'odd' and 'bewildering', tempers her admiration for her and suggests a sense of distance between Novello's own brand of female artistry and that of Malibran. Perhaps hurling music books at theatre-managers and snatching violins from the leader of the orchestra seemed too much like Malibran putting on a distinctly unfeminine assertiveness, to go with her unorthodox wardrobe, for Novello to wish to emulate her completely. The potential for women's adoption of an identity as an 'artist' to clash with the correct performance of their gender identity in the eyes of the public, though it might be ignored and excused in foreign artists, was a problem which, as we will see later on,

[39] *Ibid*., pp. 54-55.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 55.

Novello faced during her career. In this passage, Novello makes it clear that, while she sees herself as a fellow artist alongside Malibran, she does not wish to carry this through to the point of contravening her gender identity.

Novello's aims in the *Reminiscences* were thus to assert firmly her identity as a professional artist and public figure, but also to imply that this identity was reconcilable with a respectable femininity. On several occasions in the *Reminiscences*, Novello offers a vehement defence of the professional artistic life for women in precisely these terms. Sometimes this is done obliquely through commentary upon other leading professional (though not artistic) women whom she admired. For instance, in her account of Florence Nightingale, Novello notes with sadness and a touch of indignation: 'As ever with superiority and extra, incomprehensible goodness, she was much criticised, blamed as unfeminine, as hunting for a husband (!), as inducing other ladies to "degrade themselves" in the same fashion', describing her instead as a 'Good Samaritan' in the face of public hostility. To emphasise her sense of fellow-feeling with Nightingale, Novello relates how, years later, she visited the bedside of the infirm former nurse who had expressed a desire to hear her sing. She obliged Nightingale's request, and answered her many 'eager questions', emphasising their mutual interest to each other as women in public life.[41]

More directly, however, Novello sought to highlight the virtues of professional female musicians' work. For instance, she emphasises occasions where her musical activities took the form of philanthropy, as when, for example, during her trip to Vienna many concerts were organised in aid of the victims of severe flooding in Budapest, 'in all of which I sang', she declares, adding: 'Musicians in all times and places contribute

[41] *Ibid*., pp. 163-64.

gratis to charitable performances, besides their own poor; musicians and doctors, for charity's sake, give their time and their abilities gratis'.[42] She also tackled issues that affected female singers specifically, making clear her own sense of propriety and decorum. Having refused to perform in Verdi's *Rigoletto* 'on account of the man's attire in the last act', she finally consented to perform in the opera when it was staged at La Scala in Milan only because 'all exposure of person was obviated, in the costume arranged with my husband's help: a long, ample mantle thrown over a long tunic, and full trousers held at the knee by high boots with frilled leather tops, produc[ing] a costume more elegant and decent than many gowns!'.[43] Pursuing her art was her calling, but it must not, Novello avers, come at the price of abandoning decency. Similarly, when she resumed her career in England in 1851, she faced a dilemma about what name she should perform under. 'Countess Gigliucci' was evidently not suitable, so she assumed her maiden name, but converted the 'Miss' to 'Madame', objecting, as she put it, 'to the English habit of public performers continuing to style themselves "Miss" though having children. One should respect one's profession or how can one expect others to do so, and every detail helps to correct prejudice'.[44] Significantly, Novello defends a married woman's right to perform publicly, as long as they adopt a suitable decorum in their self-styling.

Most striking of all is her response to an incident, which demonstrated, as she put it, 'the strength of class prejudice', that occurred in 1850 while Novello was engaged at La Pergola, the opera house in Florence. Driving home from a rehearsal in the artists' carriage provided by the theatre, she encountered a female friend whom she descended

[42] *Ibid*., p. 78.
[43] *Ibid*., p. 152.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 146.

from the carriage to converse with. Her friend, she reports, greeted her by saying, 'Dear Clara, how ingenuous you are to drive thus publicly in the "carozza della mala carne"'.[45] At Novello's surprised response, she added: 'Well, you will admit that there is a great deal of evil life in the theatre'. This provoked Novello to a vehement, though measured, defence of her profession, accusing her friend of hypocrisy: 'True, indeed,' she replied, 'only – on which side of the curtain?' Her friend was left 'breathless' as she continued:

> Allowing that, sometimes, members of my profession are not immaculate, that is the case in every rank and every station of life; at this moment the entire theatrical troupe, dancers included, is absolutely respectable, not so the audience, and if you, there, criticise the conduct of the performers, these repay you in kind. Florence is rife with scandals of various sorts, so from which tier and on which side, right or left, shall I begin with?

Novello was perhaps especially riled by these comments because they came from a woman 'highly-born and more highly cultivated, liberal in her views and an authoress of educational works' who, Novello implies, should consequently have had more sympathy for professional women.[46] By asserting that there was no causal link between professional performance and female immorality, this anecdote further reinforces the case that Novello has been making throughout her autobiography: that living the life of a musical artist could, if managed correctly, be a perfectly respectable undertaking for women and that she herself was a living example of this truth. In short, the *Reminiscences* is a confident articulation and vindication of Clara Novello's identity as a 'female artist'.

[45] Literally 'carriage of bad meat', but translated in a footnote by Gigliucci as 'carriage of the dissolute'.
[46] Novello, *Reminiscences*, pp. 137-38.

Clara Novello's early career and the perils of being a 'female artist' in early Victorian society

If Novello was happy, in the warm sunlight of her Italian retirement, to look back on her success and attribute it to her dedicated pursuit of life as an artist, she had not always been so sure of her vocation. The *Reminiscences* was a product of a specific set of circumstances, written after extensive experience had taught her how best to present herself as a 'female artist' to gain the greatest social acceptance, and intended for a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century readership increasingly reconciled to women's professionalism, publicity and creativity.[47] Evidence from the early part of her career, however, tells a rather different story about her relationship with the identity of the 'female artist', one which is far more hesitant and conflicted.

The reasons for this lie in the very different circumstances of the 1830s and '40s and the attitudes expressed in that era towards professional female musical artists. Although, as described in chapter two, some influential voices, especially within the musical press, were proclaiming the arrival of the female artist, other contrasting opinions were present in public discourse, sometimes even in the very same journals. These more negative viewpoints, which affected the lives and careers of all female singers, are crucial to understanding Novello's self-representation in this period. In essence, they reveal that many in early Victorian society felt that the female character, and prized feminine virtues such as modesty and diffidence in particular, were degraded, if not lost entirely, through exposure to public adulation and praise. In their

[47] For late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attitudes towards women's professional music-making, see especially Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (Basingstoke, 2000).

eyes, attempts by female singers to express themselves as creative artists, to take autonomy over their own performances and develop their own style and interpretation were not, in fact, art at all, but simply the products of vanity and conceit. Even more fundamentally, women who remained successful in the public spotlight, it was thought, would inevitably become spoilt, their heads turned by public adulation, their femininity corrupted by their lust for praise and flattery. The attempt to produce art in public contexts, therefore, came at the cost of sacrificing their femininity and their moral character. This kind of commentary was something which, as this section seeks to show, was generally not applied in appraisals of musical performances by male singers, an illustration of the distinctive challenges faced by women in adopting a public and professional identity as artists.

For Novello, the pressures created by these circumstances were all the greater because, following her promising beginnings in the British concert world in the 1830s, she had embarked on a series of hugely successful concert tours across Europe between 1837 and 1843.[48] Her successes had been widely reported in the British musical and non-musical press.[49] Consequently, when she made occasional return trips to Britain, and above all during her final visit to London before her marriage between April and November 1843, the public were well aware of the enormous success she had achieved in nearly all the major opera houses, concert halls and courts of Europe. Many of them

[48] See Novello, *Reminiscences*, pp. 62-119 and Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, pp. 47-163 for an account of these tours.

[49] See for instance: *The Standard*, 5 Dec. 1837, 22 Nov. 1838, 14 Dec. 1838; *Morning Post*, 12 Jan. 1838, 19 Mar. 1838, 24 June 1839, 8 Mar. 1842, 8 Feb. 1843; *The Era*, 22 Aug. 1841, 12 Sept. 1841, 14 Nov. 1841, 9 Jan. 1842, 16 Oct. 1842; 'Chit-Chat from the Continent', *Musical World* 8/13 (29 Mar. 1838), pp. 212-13, 'Chit-Chat from the Continent', *Musical World* 8/17 (26 Apr. 1838), pp. 287-88, 'Foreign', *Musical World* 11/56 (24 Jan. 1839), pp. 60-61, 'Foreign', *Musical World* 11/65 (28 Mar. 1839), p. 200, 'Foreign', *Musical World* 16/280 (5 Aug. 1841), p. 91, 'Foreign', *Musical World* 16/294 (11 Nov. 1841), p. 315, 'Foreign', *Musical World* 17/33 (18 Aug. 1842), p. 263.

watched suspiciously for signs of that unpleasant vanity that, they felt, was the peculiar disease of the successful female singer.

Her return to London began well with a compelling performance in the title role of Giovanni Pacini's opera, *Sappho*, staged at Drury Lane in early April 1843, which won praise from critics delighted to observe 'how the young vocalist, conscious of the arduous nature of the undertaking, has studied the effects to be produced – and with what an artist-like resolution she carries off the most impassioned scenes'.[50] Clearly, some commentators within the musical world in 1843 were delighted to witness such a shining example of female artistic talent.

In other contexts, however, she found herself on the sharp end of the critics' pens. Just a few days later, on 7 April, she took part in a performance of *The Messiah* before a crowded Exeter Hall, under the auspices of the Sacred Harmonic Society. Her first aria was, according to the reporter for *The Times*, 'so admirably performed as to call forth a very vehement *encore*'. Novello, however, refused to comply with the audience's demand. *The Times* reporter felt there could only be two possible reasons for such behaviour: 'either that she did not deem the demand for repetition unanimous enough', or that she was 'too exhausted to venture so immediately on a repeat'. The audience clearly suspected the former rather than the latter, and descended into 'uproar' which was 'by no means allayed by the demeanour on the part of the songstress, which the audience construed into any thing but a gentle refusal'. As 'sounds by no means holy, harmonious or agreeable' resounded through the hall, Novello continued to refuse the audience's request and eventually left the stage (before the appointed moment for doing so), much to the audience's displeasure. When the bass Henry Phillips then rose to sing

[50] *The Examiner*, 8 Apr. 1843.

'Why do the nations so furiously rage together, and the people imagine a vain thing?', the words 'vain thing', 'being susceptible to a particular application', 'were most pointedly noticed' by the audience 'with mingled laughter and jeering applause'. Novello eventually returned to the stage and an apology was made for her refusal to perform the encore, stating she was feeling 'very much fatigued', but the audience could not be appeased and 'the animosity continued so strong… that when she eventually retired, she was greeted with and followed by yells and hootings'. 'The scene was most painful', wrote the dismayed journalist, who concluded that it was Novello's body language that was most to blame for the audience's suspicion that she was not tired at all but simply so vain that she required the entire audience to be on their feet applauding before she would deign to perform the encore. This was dangerous behaviour for a singer, the reporter noted, for 'those who please to live, must live to please'.[51] This strong contrast between Novello's reception at Exeter Hall compared to that at Drury Lane was in part due to the different genre of performance; audiences were perhaps more acutely aware of any potential breaches of humility and reverence in the context of a sacred oratorio than a secular opera. Even so, it demonstrates the presence of persistent and deep-rooted suspicions about the effect of public adulation on Novello's character and a feeling that her public success in Italy had encouraged traits of vanity and a spoilt pettishness. It certainly made her decision to fall back on the ultra-feminine excuse of being too 'fatigued' by her exertions to perform again implausible, if not deceitful, in the audience's eyes.

Aware of the danger she faced in letting such an impression of her character persist among the London concert public, she was very careful to make a show of her

[51] *The Times*, 10 Apr. 1843.

compliance with the audience's request for an encore when she performed again in *The Messiah* at Exeter Hall a few days later. An approving article appeared in the *Morning Post*, congratulating her on having learnt her lesson and warning her to maintain a due sense of modesty:

> We are happy to announce that no scandal was perpetrated last night… the singer behaved in a manner to prove that she was sensible of the risk of provoking an indulgent public too far by ill-judged assumptions of self-importance. It is to be hoped that no occasion will be supplied for further notice of some very disagreeable anecdotes current in the theatrical and musical world. Miss Clara Novello is an artist of whom this country has reason to be proud, and she will recollect that next to the appreciation of high talent, the modesty attendant on real genius is most admired.[52]

This acknowledgement of Novello as an 'artist' of significant standing while simultaneously warning of the dangers of immodesty and arrogance – this tendency to praise her for her public achievements while at the same time worrying about the effect of that praise – was typical of responses to the performances of female singers in this period. It proved very difficult for Novello to counteract the effect of this way of thinking and, despite strong efforts to signal her humility, these 'very disagreeable anecdotes' continued to circulate throughout the ensuing season. In May, for instance, the *Musical Examiner* was incensed by the decision to drop the 'Miss' from her name as it appeared in the bill for a concert at the Hanover Square Rooms, which honoured her instead with her first name as 'CLARA NOVELLO', while her co-performers were billed simply as 'Miss Rainforth' and 'Miss Dolby'. 'We cannot', wrote the *Musical Examiner*'s critic, 'for the life of us, divine what should entitle Miss Clara Novello to claim a distinction of this kind, by the side of two young ladies, who are most assuredly her equals, in all respects, though they may not have been singing bad music, for two years,

[52] *Morning Post*, 13 Apr. 1843.

in that debased country [Italy], where "the divine art" is absolutely in a state little short of downright degradation', associating Novello's Italian fame with this new streak of vanity in her character and public self-presentation.[53] When Novello again acquiesced with the wishes of the press and dropped her first name from subsequent concert bills, a correspondent of the *Musical Examiner* felt this to be a timely and much-needed public gesture of humility, especially because, the correspondent observed, she had been lately 'puffed in the papers extra-preposterously', once more associating excessive public praise and the over-inflated egos of female singers. Novello and her colleagues should be especially careful, the correspondent warned, because 'vocalists' heads are sooner turned than those of any other class. *They* certainly have the organ of conceit enormously developed'.[54]

It is important to note that these comments about the 'conceit' of vocalists were directed at both sexes, the posturing of the bass Joseph Staudigl also receiving criticism alongside that directed at Novello from this correspondent of the *Musical Examiner*. Although, as this suggests, male musicians were perceived to be far from immune to the dangers of vanity (which, significantly, was often interpreted as a sign of effeminacy), it is equally clear that this trait was felt to be more common, more pronounced and more distasteful among female vocalists. This can be seen in criticism of Novello's singing and behaviour in another performance of *The Messiah*, this time at the Manchester festival in September 1843. The critic of the *Musical World* wrote of her performance: 'we cannot like the enormous effort at display which characterizes every mien and tone and motion of Miss Novello, and which, during the performance of a work of such awful grandeur

[53] 'Concerts', *Musical Examiner* 1/27 (6 May 1843), p. 191.
[54] H. M. G. 'Original Correspondence', *Musical Examiner* 1/36 (8 July 1843), p. 266.

as the Messiah, is lamentably out of place'. Reading this critic against the grain, it would appear that Novello attempted, in this Manchester performance, to express her own artistic perspective and develop a fresh and original interpretation of these often-heard *Messiah* arias. Far from acknowledging her efforts as legitimate art, however, and disgruntled that his preferred interpretation of the 'awful grandeur' of the *Messiah* had been challenged, this critic resorted to prevalent gender stereotypes to dismiss Novello's artistry as merely an 'enormous effort at display' and the product of her sense of her own 'superiority over every one else', an 'assumption' which he refused 'to put up with, much less admire', vowing 'we will not endure it while we have liberty to make our opinions public'. Citing her 'abrupt exit from the orchestra, in the middle of the third part' as proof that she felt herself above showing the respect due to her audience and to Handel's music, he launched into a diatribe against

> a truth too often illustrated nowadays by our young *female* vocalists – who, could they know how ill conceit and affectation become their sex, and how low they leave them in the estimation of those whose good opinion is of value, would shrink with horror from all temptation to their exercise. But alas! preach to a woman, and that woman a vocalist! (we allude, be it understood, to no one in particular) preach rather to the wind, or the rain, or the snow. Tell ice not to be cold – fire not to be hot – and you will have better chance of being obeyed than if you tell a popular vocalist not to be conceited; unless indeed her head and heart be of the soundest – and fashioned of stuff not easily spoiled.[55]

Clearly, as this vitriolic outburst shows, this was a world in which female singers, far more so than their male colleagues, were viewed with intense suspicion, in which an attempt to sing a well-known aria in a new way or leaving the hot stuffiness of the concert platform momentarily to fetch a glass of water and recover composure were all too easily diagnosed as the tell-tale symptoms of vanity. Being a female artist meant

[55] Q., 'The Manchester Festival', *Musical World* 18/38 (21 Sept. 1843), p. 315.

behaving in very different ways and cultivating very different relationships with the public to those followed by their male counterparts. While the label 'artist' was given to female musicians in a general sense, therefore, this evidence demonstrates that limits were placed upon the extent to which they could express that identity in practice, especially if their attempts at original and distinctive interpretations were simply dismissed as vain attention-seeking by critics.

A brief examination of the strongly contrasting behaviour and criticism of contemporary male musicians brings these limits into even sharper focus. In February 1847, the bass Henry Phillips took part in a performance of Haydn's *Creation* at Exeter Hall. A few days later a letter appeared in the *Musical World* which criticised Phillips for adding 'meretricious embellishments which, doubtless, Mr. Phillips thinks exceedingly ornamental', but which were 'anything but pleasing to the taste of the majority of his audience'. Such ornamentation might 'do very well for a theatre', wrote the correspondent, 'where not one person in fifty knows a note of the music, except from memory, but [they are] altogether unsuited to Exeter Hall' where a more musically-educated audience could be expected, often with their scores in hand.[56] Although Phillips, in the eyes of this correspondent, had ostensibly committed a very similar crime to Novello in Manchester, the correspondent attacks Phillips for a failure of artistic judgment and taste. At no point is there a hint that Phillips's unusual and erroneous performance had been caused by vanity or a desire to put on an 'enormous effort at display' simply in order to win applause – the accusation levelled at Novello. Rather, he simply had a faulty understanding of what a truly artistic oratorio performance should be.

[56] P. M., 'The Exeter Hall Oratorio and Mr. H. Phillips', *Musical World* 22/6 (6 Feb. 1847), p. 89.

More striking still is Phillips's response to this criticism. Far from the required display of humble submission to public chastisement that Novello undertook at her second Exeter Hall appearance, or the dropping of her first name from the bills, for instance, Phillips launched into print with a vehement – almost violent – letter to the *Musical World*, rebutting his critic's claims and defending his artistic integrity and performance choices. The correspondent's letter, he asserted, was '*one string of falsehoods* from the *commencement* to the *end*, written either in *extreme ignorance* or *malice*'. Far from using too much ornament, he asserts that he was well known for using less than many other performers. To justify his musical interpretation, he cites his constant study of '*all the sacred writers*, from Henry Purcell to Spohr' and his training in 'the then most rigid school of the concerts of ancient music… under the constant correction of such men as *Knyvett*, *Vaughan*, *Bellamy*, *Greatorex*, &c. &c. &c.', asking his correspondent whether, with such an artistic pedigree, he was likely to interpret Haydn's *Creation*, one of the cornerstones of the canon, incorrectly. Rather, he asserts that his critic, either 'a *fool* or a *knave*', must instead be musically illiterate and consequently unable, even if he had had a score with him at the performance, to see that Phillips was entirely correct in his interpretation. The singer finished his letter by declaring that, if his critic, who had signed himself simply 'P. M.', had 'the *courage of a Hen Partridge*', he should 'show his thick head from behind his fictitious initials, and at once *boldly* announce himself' so that Phillips might have the opportunity to lash him further with his pen.[57] In part, the authority with which Phillips's letter is written was the result of his seniority within the musical profession of which he had been a leading figure since the mid-1820s. Its aggressive tone suggests that Phillips may have known who his assailant was and that

[57] Henry Phillips, 'Exeter Hall – Haydn's Oratorio – Mr. H. Phillips', *Musical World* 22/7 (13 Feb. 1847), p. 109.

the exchange was part of a larger vendetta. Nevertheless, this exchange signals that critical responses to male singers were formulated very differently, generally as failures of artistic judgement or taste, rather than the products of vanity or conceit, and that male singers could defend themselves and their reputations as artists in ways unavailable or even unthinkable to female singers.

Clearly, female singers faced a distinctive set of pressures and attitudes that, compared to their male colleagues, constrained their ability and desire to express an identity as an artist. That these pressures shaped Clara Novello's sense of identity and her attitude towards her professional work in particularly powerful ways can be demonstrated by investigating her private correspondence, and that of those around her, during her early career in the 1830s and '40s. Not much of this has survived, but what does remain is telling.[58]

From such sources, it emerges that it was not just the press who were suspicious of nascent signs of vanity in the young singer; it was also a cause of worry for her friends and family. John Henry Whitmore-Jones, a family friend, music-lover and Oxfordshire Tory squire, on a visit to London in July 1839, noted in his diary that he 'sat a long while at Novello's, talking to Clara' who had recently returned from her latest tour of the continent, this time to the imperial court at St. Petersburg. Despite the young singer's triumphant success in Leipzig, Berlin, Vienna, Milan and elsewhere, Whitmore-Jones was delighted during his conversation to observe that she was 'not a bit spoilt or altered in any way'.[59] A desire to assuage similar concerns lies behind various comments in her parents' letters from this time. To Sir John Trevelyan, another member of the music-

[58] See Appendix C.

[59] John Henry Whitmore-Jones, Dorothy Whitmore-Jones and Mary Whitmore-Jones, *The Chastleton Diaries: Change and Continuity in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ian Hilton ([Warrington], 2011), p. 40.

loving provincial gentry and a very close friend and correspondent of the whole Novello family, Clara's father, Vincent, wrote: 'I am quite as proud of her simplicity and perfect propriety of conduct in her private capacity… as I am of her public Character as a charming Singer', evidently intending to suggest to Trevelyan that public success had in no way altered her private personality.[60] Similarly, while the family relayed to Trevelyan reports of Novello's astounding success across Italy in 1841, her mother, Mary Sabilla, made sure to add: 'Clara is not spoilt by her triumphs. She is the same good little girl'.[61] Evidently, Novello lived in a family milieu that gently, but persistently, sought to reassure everyone they could that their daughter had not been corrupted by public success. Behind the scenes, Novello was almost certainly continually reminded by her family of the need to be on her guard to avoid revealing any signs of vanity to her acquaintances or the public.

Strikingly, Novello herself, writing to Trevelyan, whom she treated as a close confidant throughout her years of intensive touring, informed him that:

> Far from being spoilt by all the homage and flattery I receive as an artist abroad, I fully intend the moment I have made 300 a year certain to retire entirely from the profession and settle quite quietly down in England among those I love, for – young as I am, I am now quite sure that would be the height of true happiness for me, but this is a secret between you and me, for it would not do to have it known while I am in public life… You must not think that I am unhappy. I have my object in view.[62]

Moreover, even in a letter to Trevelyan which related her extraordinary success among Italian audiences driven wild by her singing in Rossini's *Semiramide* and described how students cheered her sedan chair from the opera house all the way home to her lodgings

[60] VN to JT, (London, 31 Oct. 1839) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 105.
[61] MSN to JT (no full reference given) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 111.
[62] CN to JT (n.p., Aug. 1840) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 102.

every night, she chose to begin by informing him: 'I am saving up furniture for a little cottage in England. I already have 2 chairs, a bed two tables a looking glass and a cup and saucer', clearly wishing to emphasise that thoughts of retirement were never far from her mind, even at times of the greatest success.[63] We should be wary of trusting these moments of intimacy too completely as windows onto Novello's actual views of her situation; she may well have been presenting a specific version of her internal thoughts and feelings for the octogenarian baronet, whom she clearly thought of as a second father figure, a version which emphasised the appeal of his English countryside retirement and domesticity. Nevertheless, they are striking words to come from the pen of a successful professional singer, signalling some of the deep tensions Novello experienced in her attempt to negotiate her way through public life as a female artist, her awareness of some of the negative, 'spoilt' stereotypes of female singers circulating in the press, and her reluctance as a result to subscribe wholeheartedly to a professional artistic identity.

It is perhaps no surprise that Novello expressed to those closest to her that she found being a female artist at times difficult and frustrating. These feelings are revealed particularly by those around her at the time of her marriage and her first retirement from professional life, after the turbulent summer before the London public and press in 1843. Her mother, who from the start had been the driving force behind Novello's career, was implacably opposed to the marriage to Gigliucci, unable to comprehend why her daughter should want to give up a profession in which she had achieved such success (and financial reward).[64] Those more sympathetic to Novello's position, however, reveal

[63] CN to JT (no full reference given) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 111.
[64] Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, pp. 152-61.

her thoughts and feelings about retirement from the profession through their comments to others. Writing to Novello's mother, Trevelyan proposed that the marriage would remove Novello from 'the strain of public life', indicating his knowledge of the feelings she had confided to him about her public career,[65] while her father, writing to Trevelyan, lamented that 'her quitting the profession is the greatest loss which the musical world has sustained since the death of dear enchanting Malibran', but accepted that her retirement would allow her to follow 'her natural tendency towards simple domestic life', revealing that he too was aware of the difficulties she had faced in public life.[66]

This equivocation towards the identity of the female artist and the palpable sense of her discomfort in public life that can be traced through her own writings, and those of her family and close friends, in the 1830s and '40s is in marked contrast to the confident articulation of her relationship to the identity of the female artist in the *Reminiscences*. In the years up to 1843, she could not know the course that the rest of her life was to take. Looking back in the 1870s, '80s and '90s, it was an undoubted fact that she had been one of the leading professional female artistic figures of her generation. Furthermore, the glimpses we have of her self-understanding in the 1830s and '40s are from private documents, written to and between friends and family in which we might naturally expect more uncertainty and expression of doubt. In contrast, the *Reminiscences* is a public document, designed to project a confident image of professional life to entertain the reading public. Finally, as the press articles examined here show, the 1830s and '40s were a time of great ambivalence towards professional female singers and their artistry. By the end of the century, and in large part as a result of the careers of women like

[65] JT to MSN (no full reference given) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 158.
[66] VN to JT (London, 13 Dec. 1843) quoted in Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 161.

Novello that had begun to alter people's perceptions, attitudes towards the female musical artist had changed significantly, though by no means entirely. All of these aspects shaped Novello's changing relationship to the identity of the female artist. They indicate a need to situate expressions of female artistic identity firmly in their context in order to understand their significance. Nevertheless, while the glimpses of Novello's thoughts and feelings in the earlier period can go some way towards elucidating the relationship between female singers and the identity of the female artist in the early Victorian period, their fragmentary and limited nature means that they remain only tantalising hints. In order to see in more detail female singers' understandings of themselves in this period and their ways of expressing their identities as artists, we need to look elsewhere.

Marianne Lincoln's diary and her ambivalent relationship to the identity of the 'female artist'

The diary of Marianne Lincoln consists of over 380 entries written between 22 November 1844 and 19 December 1845, when she was in her early twenties.[67] It is a highly unusual document that allows us to observe, in unrivalled detail, the quotidian experience of a young professional female singer in this period. As numerous scholars of nineteenth-century diary-writing have pointed out, however, the windows such texts

[67] Marianne Lincoln, *Début at the Gewandhaus and after: A 19th Century Singer's Diary*, ed. F. M. H. Harper (New Malden, 1980). The editor, Francis Melvill Hill Harper, was Marianne Lincoln's great-grandson. His son Vaughan and his wife Diane are still in possession of the original manuscript and I am extremely grateful for the information they provided about the physical features of the diary which has been drawn upon extensively in the following few paragraphs, as well as several photographs of it, reproduced as **Figure 26-Figure 31.**

provide into their authors' lives and work are by no means transparent.[68] It is consequently worth considering the diary's nature as a source carefully, as this in large part determines the type of information that can be extracted from it.

Lincoln wrote her diary in a blank exercise book, seemingly bought, or perhaps given to her, especially for the purpose (see **Figure 26-Figure 31**). Consequently, she faced no limitation on space per entry and they vary enormously in length, though the majority are fairly short. Lincoln's varying handwriting and the variations in the shades of ink from day to day (e.g. **Figure 28**) suggest that she wrote her entries on a daily basis, rather than retrospectively writing them up at the end of the week.[69] The presence of doodles and cartoons (**Figure 30**), grammar notes from her German lessons (**Figure 29**) and translations of Italian aria texts in the back pages of the diary (**Figure 30** and **Figure 31**), also imply that this exercise book is not a later final copy of an earlier diary in note form (with the potential for revision), but is instead the original diary that travelled with her, lending her entries a genuine sense of immediacy. This is reflected in the content of the entries, which, though generally lucidly expressed, are written quite freely, idiomatically and sometimes vacillate or are inconclusive; often they reflect her open-ended or ambivalent thought processes as she weighed up her opinions about people, situations and problems in the moment, rather than representing her finally-settled or retrospective views about such matters. The diary also appears to be intact and has not

[68] See Felicity A. Nussbaum, 'Toward Conceptualizing Diary' in James Olney (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 128-40; Lynn Z. Bloom, "I Write for Myself and Strangers": Private Diaries as Public Documents' in Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia Huff (eds.), *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries* (Amherst, 1996), pp. 23-37; Margo Culley, 'Introduction' in Margo Culley (ed.), *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present* (New York, 1985), pp. 3-26; Martin Hewitt, 'Diary, Autobiography and the Practice of Life History' in David Amigoni (ed.), *Life Writing and Victorian Culture* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 21-39.

[69] See Culley, 'Introduction', pp. 14-15, in which she suggests the need to pay attention to the physical way in which a manuscript is written as a means to recover the circumstances of writing.

been subject to later editing in the form of systematic obliteration or excision of text. This is, it would seem, a diary written on a daily basis shortly after the events it describes, without significant amendment at a later date.

Furthermore, an intention to publish does not seem to have shaped the diary's entries, some of which relate information about her courtship with her future husband of an intensely personal nature.[70] Obviously, this does not preclude the possible intention that the diary might form the basis of a future set of memoirs to be written later, either for circulation among family, or perhaps for a more public audience, although, in the end, no such later project appears to have come to fruition. While writing for a future public audience seems unlikely, the need to consider what Lynn Bloom calls 'the audience hovering at the edge of the page' remains.[71] It may well be the case, for instance, that Lincoln intended to share her adventures in Germany with her family upon her return, using the diary as an *aide-memoire*.[72] Equally important is the presence of her brother, the only family member to accompany Lincoln on her journey and almost certainly aware of her time spent diarising, who may have had a more immediate influence in shaping its content, either directly through reading over entries Lincoln chose to share with him, or simply through his conversation with his sister as they reflected on their shared experiences of Germany and musical life there, thereby influencing what Lincoln chose to include as important information in her diary. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a lock on her diary, meaning that Lincoln must have always been aware of the risk of close family members reading her journal, a fear

[70] See Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 98-101.
[71] Bloom, 'Private Diaries as Public Documents', p. 23.
[72] Martin Hewitt notes that nineteenth-century diaries were frequently shared within the family circle, often read aloud by the diarist (Hewitt, 'Diary, Autobiography and the Practice of Life History', p. 27).

that can be seen in her cautious omission of her future husband's name when he features in the text during their courtship.[73]

As well as the sense of an immediate familial audience looking over her shoulder, other aspects of the intended 'audience' shaped the content of her journal. For instance, Lincoln's chosen title for her diary, 'Journal during a Winter in Germany, 1844-5' (see **Figure 27**), is a clue that she wished to associate her writing with a long tradition of published (and indeed unpublished) female travel-writing and one which inevitably shaped her choices about the kinds of information and subject matter to include in her diary, in particular several observations on the state of German railways or interior decoration compared to their English equivalents, or the condition of the poor in Germany compared to their situation in London.[74] The other major implicit audience for her diary is her future self, reading over and looking back on her earlier life. This intention of using the diary for future self-examination and self-reflection is at one point explicitly stated.[75]

However, the document's chief purposes appear to be, on the one hand, to keep a record of the exciting experiences of a young woman travelling on the continent for the first time, and on the other, to provide a space for introspective self-examination both of her musical performances and her conduct in social and romantic life, both of which are intended primarily for her eyes only. It is important to recognise this; her self-presentation, which will form the major subject of this final section, is largely intended for herself and, significantly, is generally not designed to suit the needs, demands or

[73] See Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 92-96.
[74] Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 24-25. Hewitt notes that publication of diaries was so common by the 1830s that 'it was impossible for a diarist to write without a degree of self-conscious positioning within a published tradition' (Hewitt, 'Diary, Autobiography and the Practice of Life History', pp. 25-26).
[75] Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 17-18. Culley includes the future self in her list of potential diary audiences (Culley, 'Introduction', pp. 11-12).

expectations of others. This does not mean that her projection of her sense of self is any less constructed, but it does indicate that this process of self-definition was a highly personal one. It was because she was using her diary as a safe space in which to try and work out what her sense of her identity was at this formative moment in her life and career that Lincoln's diary shows in great detail the often highly equivocal, ambivalent and uncomfortable relationship female singers possessed to the artist ideal and the occasions upon which they felt a sense of conflict between their gender and artistic identity. Sometimes she is intensely conscious of a desire to tackle these issues explicitly in the pages of her diary, but on other occasions this process of self-definition remains unconscious, visible in the decision to record particular details and events rather than others or in the admiration or condemnation of traits of behaviour witnessed in others.[76] With this in mind, we can now begin to pick apart the process of self-representation preserved in Lincoln's diary.

Just like Novello in the *Reminiscences*, Lincoln builds a sense of her artistic sensibilities through descriptions of her engagement with the arts. Lincoln carefully records her love of literature, working her way through a wide and varied reading list in a variety of languages in the course of the diary.[77] On occasion, she demonstrates her admiration for the major works of the literary canon more explicitly:

> Read Milton all the evening. How sublime he is. How wonderfully the poem of P[aradise]. L[ost]. is conceived & planned. How beautiful the allegory of sin and Death, in the 2nd Book. How exquisite the comparisons of the sun in an eclipse, the sleeping leviathan, the bees, and the revels of the faery elves.

[76] In this vein, Culley notes that 'all diarists are involved in a process, even if largely unconscious, of selecting details to create a persona… The pages of the diary might be thought of as a kind of mirror before which the diarist stands assuming this posture or that' (Culley, 'Introduction', pp. 12-13).

[77] Authors read or referred to include: Walter Scott, Anna Jameson, Vittorio Alfieri, Charles Lamb, Alain-Réné Lesage, John Milton, Torquato Tasso, Alessandro Manzoni, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare and Victor Hugo.

> This last enchants me. The language is so euphonious, that I distinctly heard (or dreamt I heard) the ground music. The words themselves seemed to dance in my ears, and the whole picture instantly presented itself to my view.[78]

Similarly, she recorded her excitement at ascending into the tiny attic room in the village of Gohlis outside Leipzig, the very spot where Schiller had penned the 'Ode to Joy',[79] while, back in London, she frequently noted how much she enjoyed taking little strolls 'up to the Regent's Park with Tasso'.[80] In the other arts, she enjoyed the 'splendid' Gothic architecture of the German cathedrals,[81] could not tear her eyes away from Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* on display in Dresden,[82] and demonstrated her knowledge of art by likening a scene encountered on a winter's walk of children skating and sledging in the countryside outside Leipzig to a picture by 'Teniers of a Dutch canal'.[83] This enthusiastic engagement with literature and the other arts was considered, as we have seen, to be a crucial part of being a musical artist,[84] but these descriptions also served other functions in aligning Lincoln with elite and middle-class cultural knowledge and tastes, as well as, more prosaically, providing her with descriptions and stories of interesting pieces of art encountered on her travels to share with her family back home. These moments in her diary therefore have a double function, serving to confirm not only her sense of herself

[78] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 91.
[79] *Ibid*., pp. 25-26. Lincoln refers to this village, now a suburb of Leipzig, as 'Goles'. She was perhaps familiar with the account of 'Schiller's Life and Writings. Part II.' given in the *London Magazine* 9 (Jan. 1824), p. 45 which states: 'With [the completion of *Don Carlos*] for his chief occupation, Gohlis or Leipzig for his residence, and a circle of chosen friends for his entertainment, Schiller's days went happily along. His *Lied au* [*sic*.] *die Freude* (song to Joy), one of his most spirited and beautiful lyrical productions, was composed here: it bespeaks a mind impetuous even in its gladness, and overflowing with warm and earnest emotions'.
[80] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 79, see also her walks with Tasso on pp. 73, 74 and 87.
[81] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 43.
[83] *Ibid*., pp. 25. It is not clear to which of the Teniers family of painters Lincoln is referring, though it is most likely to be David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), the most famous member of the dynasty.
[84] See p. 98.

as an artist with a wide knowledge of Art in all its forms, but also her claims to social and cultural status and their concomitant respectability.

While some aspects of her self-representation worked in this double capacity, others were clearly part of a more specific articulation of an identity as a professional artist. One of the most important of these was the emphasis placed upon hard work, signalling that this was primarily an account of a professional tour rather than a leisured holiday. Not only did she sedulously record the amount of time per day she spent practising both singing and piano, but she also used the way she wrote her diary entries to emphasise her dedication to the hard graft of artistic endeavour. A great many of her diary entries begin by recording the amount of practice she had completed that day as the first topic, with almost 30% of all entries beginning with the word 'Practised…'. This placement of her practice hours at the start of so many entries shows that, when she sat down to write her diary, she considered this activity above all others as something which needed to be monitored and maintained in order to sustain her identity as a young professional artist. She also repeatedly articulated a strong awareness of her own insufficiencies and expressed her sense that 'artist' status could only be attained after many years of hard labour, noting, even after a relatively successful rehearsal at the Gewandhaus, 'how *very, very* much is still wanting to make me a good Singer. I feel such a restless anxiety to improve – surrounded, as I am now, by good musicians'.[85]

A sense of herself as an aspiring professional, who took a pride in her work, is also revealed by her diligent study of modern languages. A successful graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, Lincoln was already fluent in spoken and written Italian and

[85] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 15.

French,[86] but during her trip to Leipzig she energetically set about learning German, taking lessons from a German tutor and working so hard at it that at one point she jokingly complained in her diary of developing a '*declension* headache'.[87] Her desire to develop her language skills was explicitly linked to her sense of herself as a dedicated and trained professional singer, and a wish to improve the accuracy of her performances. This can be seen in the concern she expressed at being asked at short notice to sing an extract from Louis Spohr's opera *Jessonda* in German, noting that 'It was not much, certainly, but they ought to have given me more time, on account of the words',[88] or in the attention she paid to the criticism of a certain Signor Bazzini at a rehearsal for one of the Leipzig concerts who 'said that my pronunciation of [Italian] was very good, except for one word "*Piacer*" which he was kind enough to make me repeat after him, several times'.[89]

Above all, however, and unsurprisingly, she articulated her sense of herself as a professional musician most clearly in describing her response to music and to other musicians' performances. She often adopted the role of the critic, evaluating the qualities, both good and bad, of other musicians' performances, and demonstrating her extensive knowledge of both the technical demands of different kinds of music-making and of the different schools and styles of music. Naturally, she was most at home

[86] Evidence of her fluency in Italian and French can be found in entries where she reports the wide variety of languages in which she conversed with those she met in Germany, see Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 29, 34, 45 and 58. Information about the curriculum of the Royal Academy of Music is not easy to find, though a sketched timetable from the early years of the Academy's existence is included in Frederick Corder, *A History of the Royal Academy of Music From 1822 to 1922* (London, 1922), pp. 10-11, in which the girls are allocated two hours a week for Italian, though no mention is made of French. As Corder notes (p. 12), the timetables may not have reflected actual practice and may have been subject to later revision. The girls also had plenty of time allocated to private study and reading, in which they could have acquired additional language skills.

[87] She began German lessons on 13 Dec. 1844, just over a fortnight after arriving in Leipzig. Scattered references to her practising and writing German occur throughout the entries for her time in Germany and afterwards. Her '*declension* headache' occurred on 18 Jan. 1845, see Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 35.

[88] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 31.

[89] *Ibid*., p. 15.

commenting on the performances of other female singers. After hearing a certain Mademoiselle Meyer perform as the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Leipzig, she wrote: 'M^lle^ Meyer does some things extremely well, but she rants & forces her voice that at times it is quite harsh'.[90] Similarly, at a concert in the Gewandhaus, 'Mad^e^ Mortier sang an air of Martini's', she recorded, 'in a very unfinished style & sadly out of tune',[91] while at the Society of Female Musicians benefit concert back in London, she felt that Miss Schloss had a 'fine voice, but wants energy', while that of Miss Birch, after her return from a tour to the continent, 'has gained power, but lost some of its sweetness'.[92]

Lincoln's critical commentaries, however, were not confined simply to the performances of other female singers, but ranged widely over many diverse aspects of musical performance and composition. In instrumental performance, she appreciated the 'admirable style' with which Clara Schumann performed a Beethoven piano concerto at one of the Gewandhaus concerts, noting: 'there is a great deal of delicacy & artist-like feeling in her playing'.[93] Furthermore, she revealed her knowledge of the characteristics of good ensemble playing in large orchestras, writing that, at the Gewandhaus, 'The Band is certainly perfect. Each Performer seems to consider the effect of the whole, & does not strive to make his own instrument conspicuous above all the rest, which is too frequently the case even at the Philharmonic, where, being all fine Solo Players, each one is anxious to shew off *his own* playing without reflecting how this must destroy the beauty & harmony of the *whole*'.[94] In a later entry, she also admired the Gewandhaus band's rigorous discipline in rehearsal, again comparing it closely to the less exacting

[90] *Ibid*., p. 20.
[91] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[92] *Ibid*., p. 69.
[93] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[94] *Ibid*., p. 8.

standards of the Philharmonic orchestra in London.[95] Lincoln was also at home commenting upon composition, observing, after hearing a symphony by Adolf Friedrich Hesse: 'He is a Pupil of Spohr, which is very evident in his music. This Symphony was very clever, and exceedingly well instrumented'.[96] Similarly, after hearing a mass by August Ferdinand Haeser at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, she wrote: '[it is] very good indeed, particularly the Kyrie, in which is some fine counterpoint. The Gloria is rather Haydn-ish, but none the worse for that'.[97] There are a great number of similar comments scattered throughout the diary; very few performances are noted without some kind of professional evaluation, and while those made in Germany at least were undoubtedly recorded to provide her with entertaining observations on musicians she could share among her family circle back at home, they also demonstrate Lincoln's sense of herself as a critical and well-informed listener and fellow-artist.

As well as emphasising her possession of the knowledge and technical expertise that went into producing high quality music, she also used her diary to reinforce her sense that she possessed that most desirable and rare prerequisites of the great musician: an artistic temperament. Her sense of possessing an acute sensibility to artistic stimuli is made visible by her decision to record particularly 'artistic' thoughts and emotions in her diary. Laying down her music after a long practice session in Leipzig, for instance, she wrote that she caught herself 'looking out of [the] window at the Sky, where, "through dark clouds the moon was gleaming"', images which left her feeling 'rather poetic and sentimental'.[98] Such comments, it would seem, were designed to imply that her musical

[95] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[96] *Ibid*., p. 32.
[97] *Ibid*., pp. 32-33.
[98] *Ibid*., p. 19.

practice session had stimulated her artistic sensibility to such an extent that simple exposure to a particularly evocative image had triggered powerful sentimental feelings.

Her sense of her artistic temperament, however, is most clearly demonstrated by the way she records her psychological and emotional responses to music. For instance, rehearsals at the Gewandhaus of one of Beethoven's symphonies, she recorded, 'made me fancy myself in Paradise',[99] while to a friend in Leipzig she confessed her 'mania' for the music of Spohr, which was 'so calm & although dramatic, yet breathing such a pure feeling, that I felt sure he must be an amiable excellent man'.[100] Moreover, her sense that a particularly heightened sensibility or temperament for the power of musical art was a distinguishing feature of the musical creator or artist is clear. She admired, for instance, the Liverpool musician, Mr Hirst, 'a very unaffected, amiable young man' who 'possesses genius' and whose 'large expressive eyes are suffused with tears' 'when listening to anything beautiful'. She clearly felt him to be a kindred spirit, noting 'It is refreshing to meet with such a person, amongst the insipid creatures with which the world is filled. I felt quite a pleasure in conversing with him – we could sympathise in each other's thoughts and feelings'.[101] Evidently, she valued these character traits in others and desired to express her sense of sharing these attributes by noting how closely their 'thoughts and feelings' harmonised. Furthermore, she associated these attributes with positive moral qualities; in her eyes, Hirst is an 'unaffected, amiable young man', while Spohr's expressive music means he must be 'an amiable excellent man'. Moreover, they were also extremely rare qualities possessed only by artists of 'genius', rather than being common to 'the insipid creatures with which the world is filled'. In admiring those

[99] *Ibid*., p. 28.
[100] *Ibid*., p. 29.
[101] *Ibid*., pp. 62-63.

who she felt possessed an artistic temperament, and articulating her sense of similarity to them, Lincoln was creating a persona in her diary that corresponded closely to that of the 'artist' as described by the musical press.[102]

What this evidence collectively demonstrates is that, within the pages of her diary at least, Lincoln felt able to express a clear sense of herself as a professional musical artist. However, her diary also contains several significant moments of reflection in which Lincoln revealed a pronounced ambivalence towards and anxiety about how to express this identity in more public situations. In particular, she focused upon the problem of to what extent asserting an identity as an 'artist' in public and social contexts contravened expectations about proper female behaviour. Through an examination of three particular passages in the diary describing moments when these issues came to the fore, we can begin to appreciate the ambivalence and uncertainty surrounding Lincoln's artistic identity.

The first of these moments is the description of her debut at the Gewandhaus concerts, which took place on 12 December 1844. Seated alone on the front row, waiting for her turn to be escorted up to the stage, Lincoln described being seized by an extreme attack of nerves:

> Oh how can I express the uncomfortable situation I was then in. Shivering with cold & timidity, finding myself the object of attention & notice from everybody. A hundred eyeglasses raised to examine the Debutante, who was trembling at the novelty of her position, anxious of course to shine in the eyes of so critical a Public. I felt almost overcome by nervousness & I think I never felt it to such an extent before. Every effort I used, to check it, only served to increase it, &, although I felt completely angry with myself I could not rally my spirits, & I was in a truly pitiable condition, when the Overture was ended, & Mr. Gade gave me his hand, to lead me into the Orchestra. I

[102] See pp. 96-97.

> actually wished I could have fainted – anything to have given me a little more time.[103]

This was probably the largest and most imposing audience before whom Lincoln, still at the very start of her career, had ever performed, and one which possessed a formidable reputation throughout musical Europe for expecting very high standards of performance. It is not at all surprising that she should have felt nervous. What is interesting about this passage, however, is the way in which she describes these feelings. Firstly, it is striking that, although clearly worried about what 'so critical a Public' will think of her musical abilities, her nerves were also stimulated and exacerbated by 'finding myself the object of attention & notice from everybody' and the 'hundred eyeglasses raised to examine the Debutante'. This discomfort in the face of visibility was something she shared with Clara Novello, who, following her own performances in the Gewandhaus, had similarly confessed to her journal the discomfort of having 'the men standing round looking at you through an immense eyeglass the whole night'.[104] As we saw in chapter one, women with virtuous dispositions were thought naturally to feel uncomfortable when thrust into the public gaze, the expected diffidence of debutantes being a recurring theme of newspaper criticism.[105] Lincoln here echoes that language of 'timidity' and 'trembling' in the face of the 'novelty of her position'. Had she fainted, as, strikingly, she wished she might, she would have conformed exactly to society's expectations about the virtuous female character's inability to cope with the shock of

[103] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 17.
[104] Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello*, p. 50. The quotation is taken from a manuscript by CN on loose leaves headed 'My Journal… 1837-8'. When Mackenzie-Grieve consulted this document it was in the Gigliucci family archive in Fermo, Italy. The current whereabouts of this document is unknown. It is perhaps also among the uncatalogued material in the Novello Cowden Clarke collection at the Brotherton Library (see Appendix C).
[105] See pp. 64-69.

public exposure. It would also have underlined the tension between the expected characteristics of women and those required of artists.

Lincoln is acutely aware that this episode represents just such a moment of professional failure in which her female nerves have got the better of her artist's resolve. Although she notes that her performance was not a disaster and that the concert directors were in fact rather pleased, she records that she was

> *very much dissatisfied* with myself. I have sufficient judgment to know what it ought to have been & also to be aware that I *did* it much better at Rehearsal. What then is this horrible spell that prevents me from doing justice to my own abilities? Is it to be overcome by reason & determination? If so, shall I overcome it, or shall I remain a slave to this cowardly, childish feeling[?][106]

Reflecting on her feelings, Lincoln resolves to adopt the 'reason & determination' of the true artist, and break free from the 'horrible spell' and 'cowardly, childish feeling' of the diffident, modest woman that she feels held back her performance from fulfilling its true potential.

Yet, in almost the very next sentence, she expresses a clear concern about utterly renouncing feminine timidity and diffidence in favour of a confident and assured artistic persona. Indeed, as she explains, the very reason why she recorded this attack of nerves in her diary with such clarity was so that it might serve as a reminder to her future self should she forget or discard the qualities of modesty and diffidence that signal a virtuous female character before the public gaze: 'I write down my feelings thus fully, thinking it may be a useful lesson a few years hence (should I fall into the other extreme & become vain and insolent) to refer to my fears & inexperience in this period, to look

[106] Lincoln, *Diary*, p. 17.

back to the past, to think of my own weakness, & to become humble'.[107] As we saw in the newspaper criticism of Novello, or of Getrud Mara in chapter one, female singers who inhabited the concert platform with professional confidence were all too often branded as 'vain and insolent'.[108] What this passage as a whole indicates, therefore, is a deep ambivalence in Lincoln's approach to being a public artist. On the one hand, an artist's 'reason & determination' must be deployed to conquer a woman's 'cowardly, childish feeling' in front of the public. Yet on the other, the vanity and insolence of a female artist corrupted by too much public adulation and too accustomed to the public gaze must be restrained by memories of the 'fears & inexperience' and the 'weakness' of women as public performers.

This anxious ambivalence can be traced elsewhere in her journal. At a Gewandhaus concert a few weeks later, Lincoln was asked by the managers to perform a scena entitled 'Atalia' by Carl Maria von Weber. Two days before the performance, the conductor of the Gewandhaus concerts, Niels Gade, came to Lincoln's lodgings to run through the piece with her and, as Lincoln recorded, 'put in some peculiar marks of expression of his own to make it, as he called it, un peu coquette!'. Her own artistic intuition told her such an interpretation of the song was inappropriate; 'Fancy this', she wrote, 'in a Scena of a serious, if not tragic nature'. Nevertheless, she accepted the superiority of Gade's artistic knowledge and acquiesced in this disruption of her own artistic autonomy, writing 'I am very willing to be obliging, & as I never saw or heard the Scena, I must submit to his judgment'.[109] However, the next day at the rehearsal, she was deeply disgruntled when the leader of the orchestra, Ferdinand David, whispered to

[107] *Ibid*., pp. 17-18.
[108] See pp. 265-270 and 67-69.
[109] Lincoln, *Diary*, pp. 26-27.

her once she had finished singing that 'he did not exactly admire the *marks of expression*' and that he would come and see her afterwards and suggest some alternatives. Exasperated at being blamed for artistic faults that were not her own and at the interference of yet another person in her performance style, she wrote: 'I felt really annoyed at having so many different tastes to please and made up my mind to consult my own'.[110]

Nevertheless, despite this resolution, when David visited later on and set about adjusting all of Gade's markings in the score, she shied away from telling him that she alone would decide what was best and grudgingly accepted that she had to follow her male superiors' advice in this matter, simply telling him crossly, 'I should be very happy to sing it in any way, but it must be decided whose advice I was to follow as I could not please both'. This reluctant acquiescence in the constriction of her artistic autonomy provoked an outburst of frustration in her diary, in which she wrote:

> Who would be a Singer! unless indeed they had arrived at that point when they are allowed to have their own way, although when this *is* allowed them, they are grumbled at, & called capricious & conceited & are said to give themselves airs. Well, I suppose I must have patience and wait for my turn. A young Singer must be humble & submissive until she has made her position & then ----- I hope I may *never* give myself airs, but I must confess I like to have my own way, sometimes.[111]

This passage, just like that describing her debut, shows her caught between a desire to assert and express her artistic identity by trusting to her own performance style and artistry and an equally strong fear of how her character as a woman might be viewed if she took such action. Although maintaining autonomy over their own performance in the face of the opinions of more senior colleagues was undoubtedly a

[110] *Ibid*., p. 27.
[111] *Ibid*., p. 27.

challenge for many young singers, male and female, it is Lincoln's language – her use of words like 'capricious', 'conceited', and 'give themselves airs' – that indicate that this was a more problematic issue for female singers, with wider-reaching consequences. This language, just like her use of 'vain and insolent' in the passage about her debut, clearly chimes with that deployed against Novello in the press and shows Lincoln's awareness of the consequences of expressing her identity as an artist, and her capability of making her own artistic choices, too assertively. In particular, her fears about appearing 'conceited' if she took control of her own performance resonate with press criticism of Novello's attempt to sing the soprano arias from *The Messiah* according to her own interpretation, actions also branded as signs of 'conceit'. In both cases the expression of female creativity was squashed: in Novello's case by condemnation in the press; and in Lincoln's simply through fear that by challenging male authority she might expose herself to similar kinds of criticism.

In her reflections on these events the following day, it is even possible to see Lincoln internalising and justifying to herself this suppression of her artistry and creativity. Having been openly frosty to David at the rehearsal the day before, she awoke on the morning of the concert and 'moralised a little… and reflected that I ought to be grateful for my present opportunities, & not to let "trifles light as air" disturb my equanimity & interfere with my progress, felt sorry that I had shewn a little temper, *only* a little, but yet too much – made up my mind to apologize to Mr. D.'.[112] Although it made sense to keep on the right side of her present employers – people with power and influence enough within the musical world to ruin her reputation – her words also demonstrate her internalisation and justification of the inequalities she experienced as a

[112] *Ibid*., p. 28.

young female singer. Having been indignant about it the day before, the removal of her artistic autonomy was, the following morning, brushed off as a 'trifle light as air'. Having been prepared the day before to affirm that she 'like[d] to have her own way, sometimes', she reasoned herself into accepting that it was she, and her temper – perhaps a sign of the beginnings, she feared, of being too 'vain' and 'conceited' – that was really at fault. Expressing her identity and asserting her rights as an artist among more senior male colleagues, as opposed to simply within the pages of her diary, was something Lincoln was deeply reluctant to do. It illustrates once more the pressures constraining the female artist in this period.

The third and final moment is a similar incidence of conflict with senior male colleagues, but this time Lincoln proved more ready to assert herself as a professional artist. In the summer of 1845, and now back in London, Lincoln had agreed to perform at a benefit concert for the well-known composer, William Sterndale-Bennett. During her performance of the same scena, 'Atalia', in a passage where the voice and the violins were meant to be in unison, the leader of the orchestra John David Loder failed (in Lincoln's opinion) to follow the conductor properly, performing instead at his own speed, leading to momentary chaos and disunity of sound. Lincoln turned round to Loder to hint that he needed to pay more attention, 'but the stubborn old brute would not give in'. After the performance, Lincoln recorded that, while she was receiving compliments from fellow performers as she came off the stage, 'the angry old whitehead followed me up, and, before the others, told me that when anything was wrong I ought not to look round at him. I thought this so ill-natured, speaking before other people & trying to crush me, because I was a young singer (for he would not have dared to notice any of the *sometimes* absurd caprices of artists of more standing) that I immediately took

fire' and replied that, having sung with 'very excellent Bands', she had 'always found the Leader follow the Singer'.[113]

In this instance, buoyed by her experiences and success with the Leipzig orchestra, Lincoln decided to stand her ground while a senior male colleague tried to accuse her of failing as a professional. He was, she noted, 'aghast at my boldness, no doubt expecting that I should have been very much confused & frightened'. By explaining Loder's reaction in this way, and suggesting that he believed that young female musicians did not possess equivalent authority to senior male professionals and should consequently behave more submissively, Lincoln revealed her own awareness that she had stepped outside the normal behaviour expected of someone of her gender and status within the profession. As the argument progressed, Loder sought to insinuate that she only dared to behave in this way because, like so many other female singers, she had become overly-confident and vain as a result of her public success in Germany. In this vein, he attempted to turn Lincoln's defence, that her time spent performing with leading European orchestras gave her a legitimate claim to authority as an experienced professional, against her: 'Oh, you have had so much experience!', he snorted, 'but you should be a little more humble', clearly suggesting that her success performing on the continent had turned her head and given her ideas above her station. Lincoln, however, brushed off this charge of vanity, instead accusing Loder of arrogance: 'You individuals of the Band are so independent of one another', she replied, drawing attention to his failure to keep in time with the rest of the orchestra and the conductor as a form of arrogant self-righteousness, and simultaneously pointing out his singularity in criticising her while everyone else in the room praised her. She concluded her account of the

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

argument with a defiant declaration of her right to equal authority and respect as a professional: 'I suppose he thought himself licensed to treat me with all the rudeness he pleased, but he found his mistake. I am no worm to be trampled on'.[114]

Yet, once more, in the very next sentence Lincoln reveals that Loder's words had struck a deep and troublesome chord in her mind: 'I should be more humble too!', she wrote, 'Heaven knows I was as humble & anxious as possible'. This worried reflection upon her conduct reveals Lincoln's sense that she needed to guard against being over-confident and asserting herself too strongly in future situations. The danger, she was all too aware, was that men like Loder could 'represent me as a conceited little upstart, & I am very anxious not to be thought presumptuous'. She knew, all too well, the kinds of things that were said of female singers who seemed too assertive, too confident, and too independent of male artistic authority. 'Nobody feels those things more keenly than I do', she wrote, but in this instance, she concluded, she was right to have acted as she did, not least because of the 'encouragement, which I have received from several others, with better hearts & feelings than this old *brute*… Mr. Bennett came up & thanked me. Pischek & several others congratulated me, in the presence of the old Sauer-kraut, which I enjoyed'.[115] This need to have her self-assertion underwritten by senior male opinion, however, reinforces once again Lincoln's continued sense of uncertainty about quite when and how confidently to assert her sense of herself as a professional and an artist.

Of course, it would be wrong to suggest that it was her gender alone that made Lincoln so hesitant in expressing an identity as an artist in public contexts; as her account of her argument with Loder clearly suggests, her youth and junior status within the

[114] *Ibid*., p. 79.
[115] *Ibid*., p. 79.

profession also shaped her behaviour towards senior colleagues. Lincoln herself makes this clear by suggesting that Loder's behaviour would have been very different had she been an 'artist of more standing' rather than just a 'young singer'. She also draws attention to the fact that Loder was known (and in fact had been dismissed) for the 'ill-nature and boorishness' he had shown towards his students at the Royal Academy of Music, of which Lincoln was a recent graduate, suggesting that he still viewed her as a troublesome student rather than as a fully-qualified professional.[116] Clearly, gender took its place alongside other inequalities of experience, seniority and fame in shaping Loder's and Lincoln's outlook and conduct.

Nevertheless, this analysis has suggested that a powerful gendered language – the contrast found in all three passages between words like 'humble', 'obliging', or 'submissive' on the one hand, and 'boldness', 'conceited', 'capricious', and 'vain and insolent' on the other – shaped Lincoln's understanding of when, how and in what ways she should express and assert her identity as a professional artist. Young male singers hoping to make a name for themselves might face similar problems to those of Lincoln, but it was this gendered rhetoric that made these problems both more intense and more far-reaching in their implications for female singers. Taken collectively, Lincoln's thoughts and feelings in these three passages demonstrate that she had absorbed some of the fundamental discourses about women and public performance circulating in this period. She was well aware of the tensions at play in articulating and expressing her identity as a 'female artist'. To be fully feminine was to be rendered incapable of the confidence required for true artistic performance; to be fully an artist required a self-assertion in public quite incompatible with feminine propriety. The ambivalence,

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

uncertainty and intense self-examination contained in these passages represent Lincoln's attempt to steer a middle way through these two extremes.

Conclusion

Whereas Novello's letters offer only fragmentary glimpses of how professional female singers in the 1830s and '40s thought about themselves, Lincoln's diary allows us to see in very considerable detail the particular discourses and pressures shaping how she conceived of the identity of the professional female artist and the reasons for her ambivalent relationship to it. Novello and Lincoln are, of course, individual examples, but nonetheless the analysis presented in this chapter has sought to suggest that their experiences illustrate the existence and the influence of wider social attitudes that shaped the lives, work and identity of professional female singers in general in early Victorian Britain. The recurrent theme is one of tensions only partially resolved, as both singers and audiences in a variety of contexts and circumstances negotiated what they understood, or desired, the 'female professional artist' to be. One strand of discourse within the musical world increasingly prized the persona of the professional artist as the possessor of the rigorous training, the highly-developed technical skills and the intense emotional sensibility and creativity required to produce great musical art, whether through composition or performance. Female singers, faced with this increasingly pervasive discourse, understood their need to cultivate and adopt this professional and artistic identity in order to succeed as professional musicians.

Yet it was also clear that both in theory and practice, women were conceived to be only secondary and inferior examples of this ideal artistic type, which along with its

correlates, creativity and genius, were resolutely gendered male in discourse from this period. Furthermore, the life of the professional artist as a necessarily public figure was in many senses incompatible with constructions of women's private domestic role and understandings of female intellect and moral character as naturally weaker, less rational, and less independent. These interrelated assumptions placed significant barriers in the way of female singers articulating and finding social acceptance for their claims to an identity as professional artists. As we have seen in the lives of Novello and Lincoln, their claims legitimately to occupy public space as professionals were continually undermined by strong suspicion of the corrosive effects of public adulation and praise upon the female character, while their attempts as artists to create fresh and original interpretations of musical works were frequently dismissed as the products of vanity or conceit.

It is for this reason that a thread of profound ambivalence towards seeing themselves as artists runs through the documents we have examined. It is also clear that the degree of ambivalence expressed varied enormously depending on the context. Under certain circumstances – in memoirs written after the fact and many years later, for instance, or in the private pages of a diary – female singers could and did think of themselves as professional artists. They might even mount sustained defences of their role as professional women and make claims for their respectability and artistic achievements. In other contexts, however – especially in their behaviour and self-presentation in public – they were clearly more reluctant, or more unsure about whether, how far and in what ways they should express and assert their identity as professional artists. Often female singers reached a form of compromise, continually adopting and adapting their relationship to the persona of the artist to suit their audience. Because of

the particular challenges they faced in this process of self-fashioning, the image of the female professional musical artist that emerges is often very different to that pursued by their male counterparts.

The evidence examined here, therefore, suggests that Masson's claim, made in her public letter to the *Musical World* in 1837, 'that art knows neither country nor sex', was at best overly optimistic. Art was not blind to gender in mid-nineteenth-century Britain; the relationship of female musicians to concepts such as artistry, genius and creativity, especially when expressed in public contexts, was markedly different to that of their male contemporaries. Nevertheless, by simply occupying this uncomfortable, uncharted territory and through their sometimes cautious, often partial, but persistent expression and defence of their identity as public and professional artists, women like Novello and Lincoln were undoubtedly crucial catalysts in the gradual emergence and acceptance of female creativity and women's professional engagement in the arts in British society.

Figures 26-31

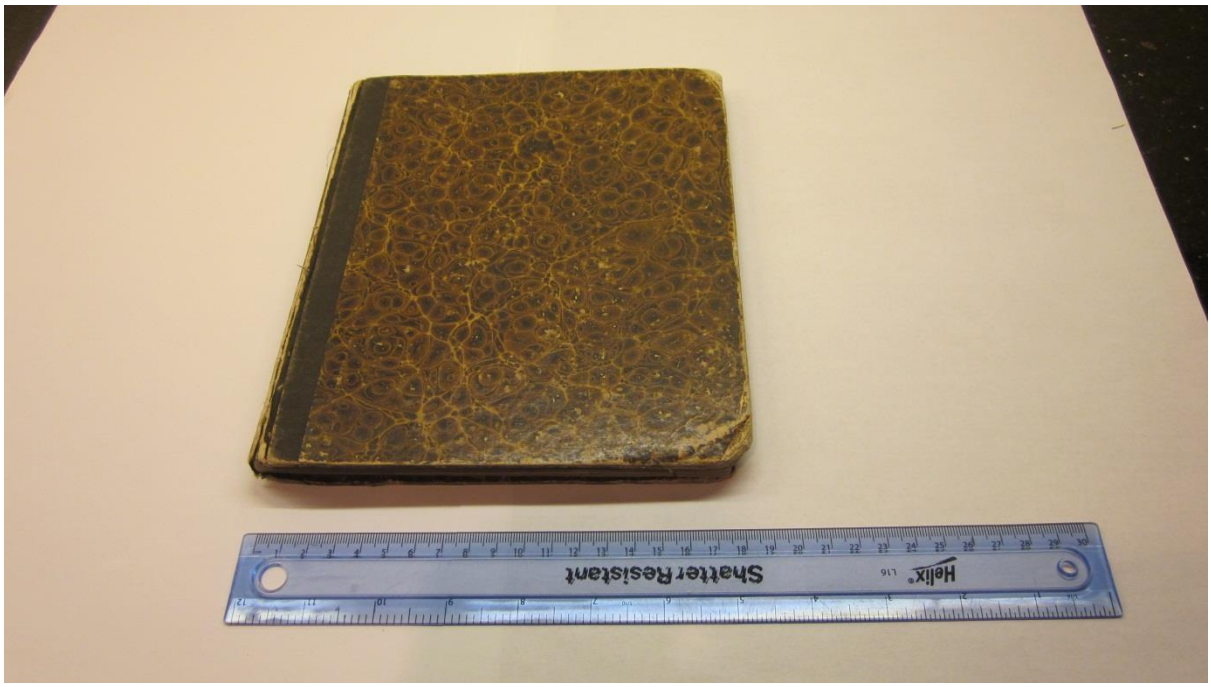


Figure 26 Marianne Lincoln's diary: closed view.

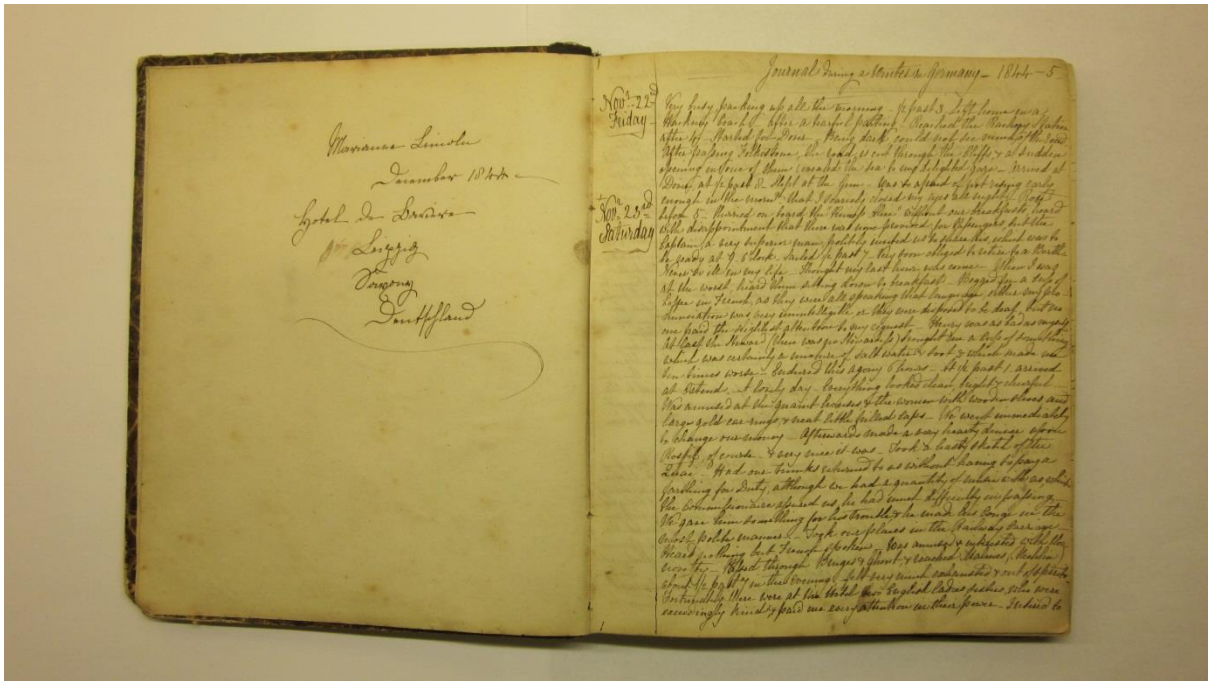


Figure 27 Marianne Lincoln's diary: beginning of text.

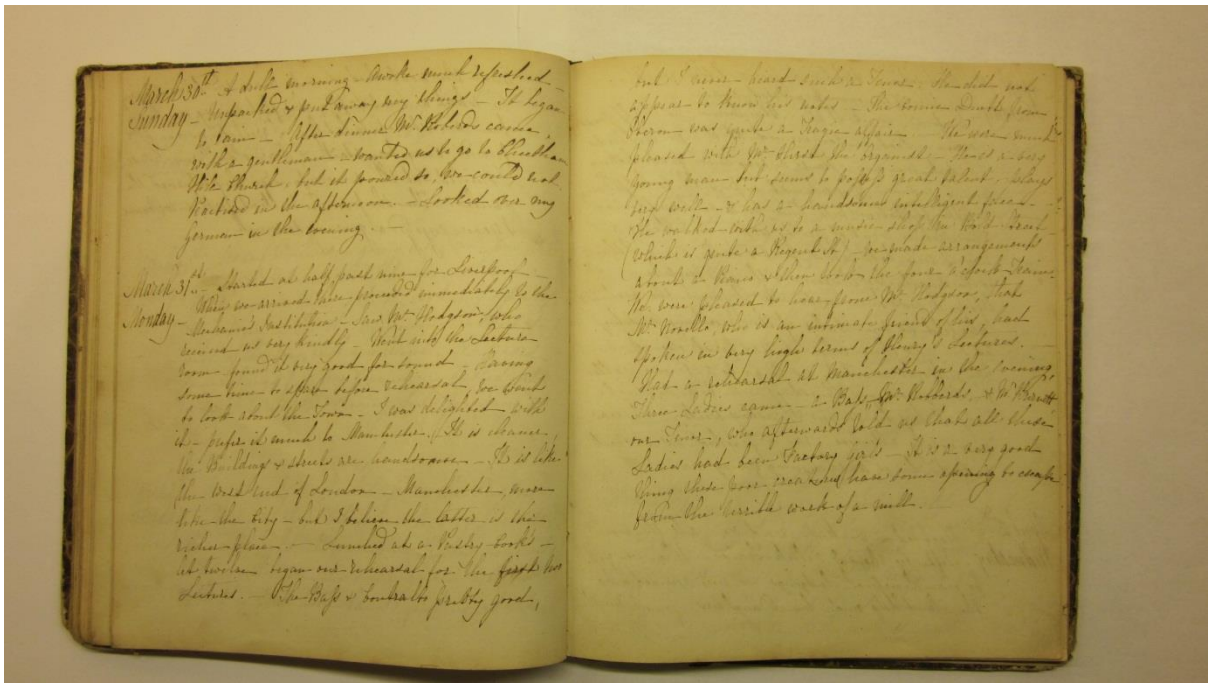


Figure 28 Marianne Lincoln's diary: entries for mid-March 1845.

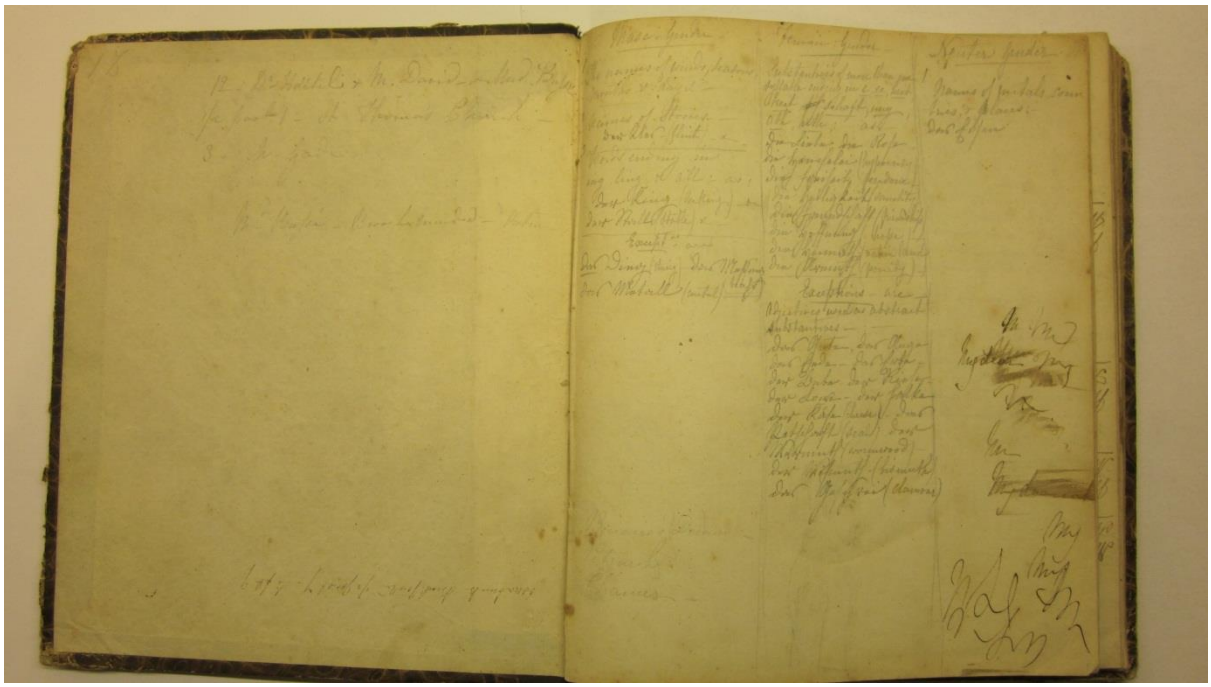


Figure 29 Marianne Lincoln's diary: backmatter, German notes.

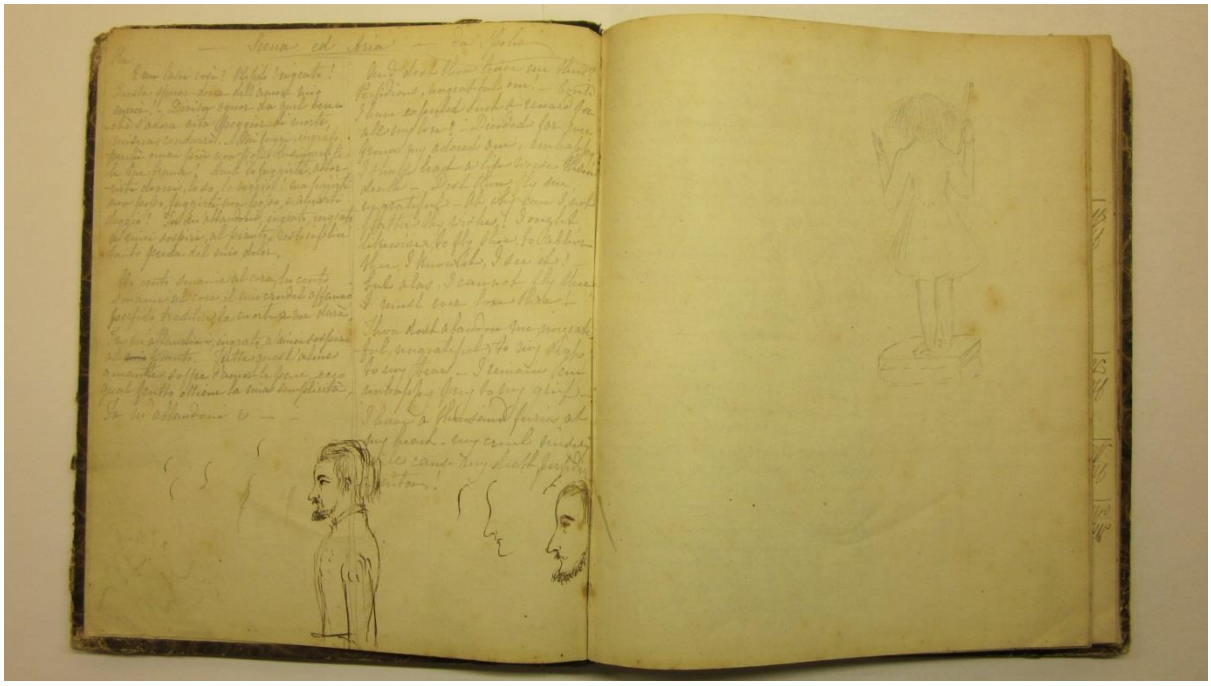


Figure 30 Marianne Lincoln's diary: backmatter, Italian translation and doodles.

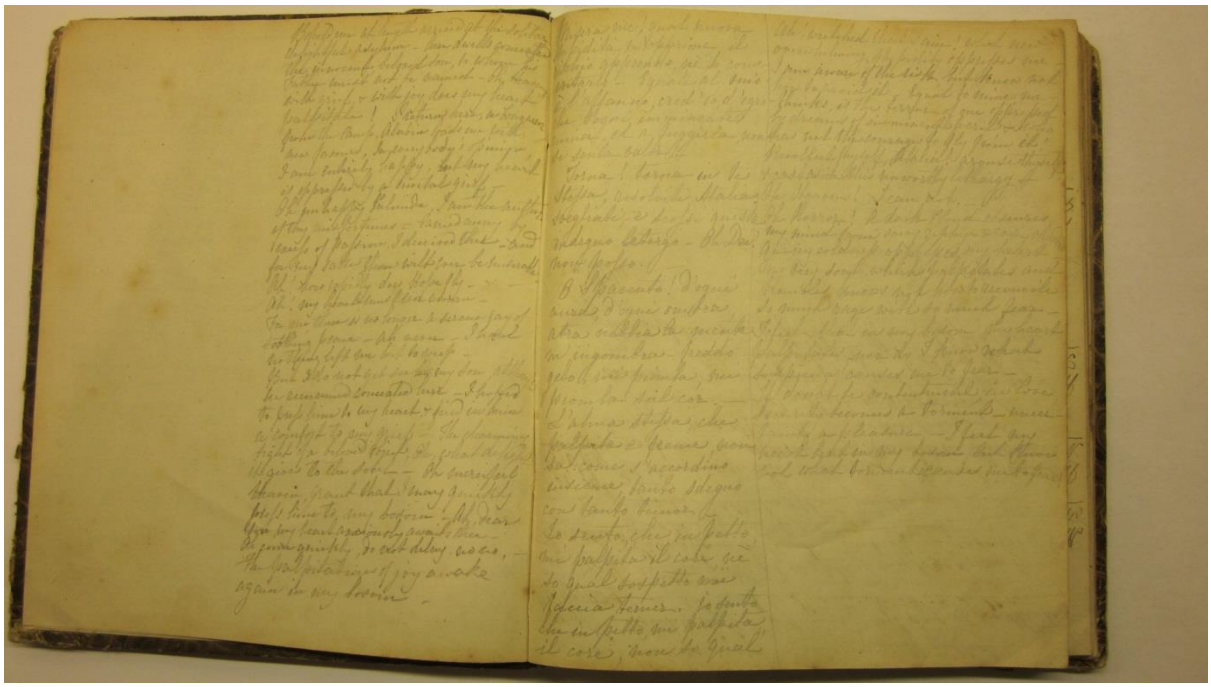


Figure 31 Marianne Lincoln's diary: backmatter, Italian translation.

Conclusion

Too often in accounts of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music profession female musicians have been seen as an unimportant sideshow to the main event: the triumph of the male composer and his ascent to become the ultimate symbol of self-expression in Western culture. Based on examinations of the experience of male musicians, the focus has been on their professionalization and their rising cultural status as 'artists', without questioning the gendered aspects of these concepts. As a result, the most striking aspect of these changes has often been overlooked. At first glance, we might indeed expect professionalism and artistry, musical or otherwise, to be firmly male-gendered concepts in the early nineteenth century. Paying close attention to the experience of female musicians, however, reveals that it was in precisely this period that arguments began to be made in favour of the professionalism, artistry and creativity of female musicians, arguments that asserted their legitimate role in public life as 'serious artists'. Inspired by the changes taking place around them in the status of musicians, female singers, and those who listened to and wrote about them, began to carve a notion of female artistry and professionalism out of their male archetypes. In the opinion of the most enthusiastic among them, there was no difference between male and female professional musicianship and artistry; as Elizabeth Masson declared in 1837, 'art knows neither country nor sex'.[1] Grounded in the uniqueness and irreproducibility of the female voice, such arguments were among the most vehement and complete justifications for the right of women to pursue artistic self-expression and an

[1] See p. 245.

independent professional career to be found anywhere in early nineteenth-century society.[2] On these grounds, they deserve more attention than they have so far received from gender historians. Foregrounding gender in our analysis of the 'rise of the artist' reveals that these changes were in some ways even more radical and dramatic than first thought.

Nevertheless, as this thesis has emphasised, those proclaiming the arrival of the female professional artist were a very specific minority – commentators such as the editor of the *Musical World*, for instance, or audience-members like the Racketts. Female musical professionalism remained a contested concept that could be construed, performed and interpreted in a wide variety of ways. It was so unstable precisely because it contravened many of the most cherished gender ideals of early nineteenth-century audiences. For this reason, rather than defend them by pointing to their highly-trained musical skill and expressive ability, many commentators spent more time reassuring their contemporaries that, despite their independent lives spent in the public eye, such women could retain their virtue, modesty and femininity, provided they behaved in certain ways. Such arguments, which had very little to do with musical merit and much more to do with assuaging anxieties about the transgression of gender roles, clearly shaped the behaviour of performers such as Catherine Stephens. Her feigned nervousness was but the most telling example of her manipulation of her audience's

[2] For comparison, see representations of other forms of female professionalism analysed by Christina de Bellaigue, 'The Development of Teaching as a Profession for Women before 1870', *The Historical Journal* 44/4 (2001), pp. 963-988; Barbara Onslow, *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2000), especially ch. 2; Deborah Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian women artists* (London, 1993), pp. 9-10, 78-86; and (for a later period) Eva Gamarnikow, 'Nurse or Woman: Gender and Professionalism in Reformed Nursing 1860-1923' in Pat Holden and Jenny Littlewood (eds.), *Anthropology and Nursing* (London, 1991), pp. 110-29 and Patricia Zakreski's investigation of representations of the creative work of female seamstresses, painters, writers and actresses, *Representing Female Artistic Labour, 1848-1890: Refining Work for the Middle-Class Woman* (Aldershot, 2006), among others.

gender expectations for her own commercial ends. Her performance of a specific kind of femininity to reassure her audience was counterbalanced (and made all the more urgent) by the contrasting performance of Eliza Vestris who, just as astutely, tailored her transgression of those same codes of femininity to suit the tastes of her less high-brow and 'polite' audience. Most important is that in both cases, audience reactions were determined, for the most part, not by the quality of their musical performance, but by their performance of a particular type of femininity. Despite the claims of the music periodicals, it was gender and not the idea of the female professional artist that shaped the responses of the majority of audience-members to such women.

Similarly, there were alternative ways of viewing the female musician that made very little reference to notions of professionalism or artistry. Attitudes to the female singer inherited from the eighteenth century, adapted to suit the conditions of the new century, continued to influence audience responses and singers' behaviour. Looking beyond the specialist press, this can be seen in the importance of the visual aspects of performance, often carefully observed by commentators while the musical skill and professional execution of female performers went unnoticed. In their eyes, the purpose of female musical performance was the appreciation of a pleasingly beautiful feminine object, rather than the technical evaluation of a professional artist's capacity to move her audience through well-executed expressive singing. The effect of this can be seen in the failure of the campaigns for Cecilia Davies and Eliza Salmon. If it was youthful feminine beauty that was on display (and not the unique abilities of the expressive artist) then wrinkled, voiceless, retired singers could hold little value for many contemporaries. Furthermore, if female musical performance was an exhibition of beauty to a paying audience, then it was at odds with codes of morality and feminine decorum that

emphasised the virtues of privacy, diffidence and modesty. At its worst, it might even bear a resemblance to prostitution. Those who opposed the campaigns, either through apathy, or through moral-minded distaste for the behaviour of such women, clearly held an attitude towards female singers far removed from that which saw them as serious professional artists.

Furthermore, even in the specialist press, many arguing in support of British female singers stopped short of advocating that they should pursue professional artistry to the same extent as men or their more passionate Italian female colleagues. They expressed disquiet or even disgust at the prima donna's emotional excess and praised the more restrained style of British singers because it accorded more closely with expectations about feminine emotional restraint and national characteristics. To pursue fully the life of the artist, requiring intense self-expression and the assertion of creative autonomy, was to dispense with true femininity and risk shocking audiences and critics. It is for this reason that Clara Novello and Marianne Lincoln displayed such hesitation when expressing their identity as artists in public contexts. They were uncomfortable with their own professionalism and artistry because they were seen as such ambivalent, unstable and contested concepts, even in leading music periodicals. After all, it was a critic writing in the *Musical World*, who, throwing up his hands at what he perceived as the ungovernable independence of female artists, declared: 'preach to a woman, and that woman a vocalist!... preach rather to the wind, or the rain, or the snow'.[3]

More broadly, this thesis has been deeply concerned with how identities are formed and maintained, and how they interact and conflict. It has argued that the labels 'professional', 'artist' and 'female/feminine' eluded stable definition in this period and

[3] See p. 269.

meant different things to different people, influencing their behaviour in very particular ways in particular contexts. Identities are not things that are naturally inherent to particular individuals, but are categories to be chosen, identified with, ascribed by others, rejected or denied. As we saw for Novello and Lincoln, far from maintaining them consistently, individuals could manifest and express their identities in varying ways in different contexts. Accounts which rely on rather static, or even ahistorical, definitions of what constitutes an 'artist', without recognising how this identity interacts with other social constructs, such as gender, therefore present a picture of change that is simply too smooth and uncontested. It can lead to a certain teleology, in which historians chart the rise of the composer as creative 'artist' or attempt to find the point at which performing women became 'respectable'. This has narrowed the questions asked of historical evidence and has determined the conclusions drawn from that evidence by historians, who have often overlooked the continued instability and contingency of ideas of 'artistry' and 'respectability'. Rather than describe a smooth process of change, this thesis has reinstated a greater sense of contest and conflict in its depiction of the early nineteenth-century musical world, in which new developments form but one stream in a sometimes chaotic mixture of competing ideas and patterns of thought.

What is more, this thesis has striven to demonstrate the process by which change took place, with particular regard to the balancing of structure and agency. Particular structural forces – the idealisation and naturalisation of domesticity as the appropriate social role for women, or the association of artistry and creativity with exclusively masculine intellect and imagination – clearly set the terms of debate about female singers and their unusual and conspicuous lives. However, as a result of its case study approach, this thesis has revealed the importance of the actions of individuals like

Richard Mackenzie Bacon, Dorothea Solly, John Parry and, most importantly of all, the eight singers at the core of this investigation, in pushing debate forward in ways that they hoped would serve their own interests. Sometimes their actions pulled in opposite directions – the self-styling of Stephens and Vestris, for instance – but this only serves to reinforce the fact that structural forces did not determine everything. Clearly, there was no single approach to professional female singers imposed by society's broad conceptions of domesticity or artistry. Rather, there was a wide and creative conceptual space in which singers, critics, and audiences could act and try to shape the interpretation of their actions by others in a variety of ways. Domesticity, artistry and gender ideals were open topics for negotiation in early nineteenth-century society and it was through this interplay that gradual shifts in the terms of debate themselves could occur. The actions of such agents expanded, through this process of negotiation, the range of possible responses to female singers. Increasingly, female musical professionalism, creativity and artistry received greater recognition and legitimacy, but equally important was the manipulation of celebrity and sexuality. As the commercial musical world expanded, female singers and their audiences responded in increasingly diverse ways to the broad frameworks set by social discourse. It was their actions and their innovations that, over time, began to alter the nature of these frameworks.

Trying to understand this process of negotiation has been at the heart of this thesis, especially its case studies. Its findings suggest a model of artistic production and consumption as one of communication and exchange – as a conversation embedded in a wider social context. Such conversations are influenced by all the various markers that govern social relations and inform behaviour – religion, nationality, race, class and, not least, gender (among many others). The meaning of a piece of art, or a musical

performance, is not determined by the content of that art alone, but is generated instead by the social conversations that occur around it. Nor are such conversations always, or even often, harmonious. Recognising this helps to restore a currently missing sense (at least in some accounts) of the contested and unstable nature of the meanings of art and the status of its producers in this, or any, era, and the ways in which the cultural economy interlocked with inequalities of power within society, of which gender is a particularly striking example. It allows us to see artistic production and consumption as intricately bound up in the micro-politics of everyday life in the articulation of social identities and the expression of social relationships.

It was in just such a contested world that female singers found themselves in the early nineteenth century. Some hailed them as professional artists in exactly the same terms as their male colleagues, without regard to their gender. Others felt female professionalism, publicity and artistic self-expression to be a renunciation of femininity and a threat to cherished conceptions of gender roles, while still others relished their transgression as amusing entertainment. There were those too who argued for a middle way that sought to reconcile femininity and professional artistry in the persona of the 'female artist', whose carefully-managed behaviour ensured her respectability in the public eye. To deal with these challenges, and take advantage of these opportunities, female singers presented themselves, and were represented by others, in increasingly diverse ways to the early nineteenth-century musical public. In this shifting and ambivalent environment, female singers must have felt themselves at times to be both 'flippant dolls' and 'serious artists'. Appreciating this is vital if we wish to describe accurately their lives and their history. Only by paying attention to the discords, the contests and the ambivalences within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century

culture will we be able to reconstruct and understand the attitudes of contemporaries towards the arts, artists and gender in all their richness and complexity.

Appendix A

Methodology for calculating the female proportion of the music profession and their marital status from musical directories

The mid-nineteenth-century censuses are the earliest available sources of (relatively) reliable data about the proportion of women working in the music profession.[1] It is not easy to gain an idea of the situation prior to this period, as sources of data about the composition of the music profession are almost non-existent for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The one exception is the musical directory compiled by Joseph Doane in 1794.[2] He listed 94 women out of a total of 1,194 musicians (a little under 8%). However, the information provided by Doane is, by his own admission, partial as he omitted 'several hundred musical persons' simply because he did not know their address (p. vii). His directory also listed music retailers alongside musical performers. Because of limitations of time, the two groups were not separated in the figures presented here. Alongside professionals, he also included several amateurs who performed at the Handel Commemorations at Westminster Abbey (see his reasons for doing so on p. v). Again because of limitations of time, these two groups (which can be hard to identify clearly) have not been separated in this analysis. The addresses given in the directory also indicate a firmly London-centric perspective. As a result of these problems, Doane's directory provides only limited insight into the numbers of women

[1] Figures calculated from those of 1841, 1851 and 1861 can be found in Deborah Rohr, 'Women and the music profession in Victorian England: The Royal Society of Female Musicians, 1839-1866', *Journal of Musicological Research* 18/4 (1999), p. 310 (Table 1).

[2] J[oseph]. Doane, *A Musical Directory for the Year 1794. To be continued annually. Containing the names and address of the Composers & Professors of Music, with a number of Amateurs, Vocal and Instrumental* (London, 1794).

working in the music profession in the late eighteenth century. Nonetheless, in the absence of census records, alternative directories, or any other kind of source for this information, it is the only means by which to gain some idea of the late eighteenth-century situation.

Directories have one advantage over census records (at least in their summarised form) in that they give the marital status of the women listed. To assess changes in the marital status of female musicians over time, Doane's directory was compared with the next available directory, compiled under the auspices of the Royal Academy of Music in 1853.[3] This comparison indicated a rise in the proportion of women who were unmarried and working in the music profession from around 38% in the 1790s to around 69% in the 1850s. However, the term 'unmarried' is obviously problematic. These figures were based on whether an individual is given the title 'Miss' or 'Mrs' in the directories. Factors which would lead to an underestimation of 'unmarried' female musicians are: that many women may have adopted the title 'Mrs' after a certain age; that the title 'Mrs' applied to both widows and married women; and that the 1853 directory tended to note musical families as a single entry, i.e. 'Mrs. Austin and the Misses Austin' or similar. In such cases where it is impossible to tell how many daughters this refers to, I have assumed only two, which renders the figures for unmarried women in 1853 slight underestimates. On the other hand, an overestimate may be generated by the fact that some women may have kept the title 'Miss' as their professional performing name. Furthermore, the titles 'Madame', 'Mademoiselle' and 'Signora' are all ambiguous, but were categorised according to the normal interpretation of such terms. There are

[3] *Musical Directory, Register and Almanack, and Royal Academy of Music Calendar. For the Year 1853* (London, [1853]).

therefore inevitable problems with these figures, but they give an idea of the broad direction of change.

Appendix B

The Rackett family and religion

There are several clues as to the attitudes of the Racketts towards religion. Spending most of his time in London and in pursuit of his intellectual and cultural interests, Rev. Rackett was hardly the most dedicated of clergymen.[1] In 1829, his absenteeism was criticised by Lord Lansdowne in a House of Lords debate on Catholic emancipation.[2] Furthermore, religion features only very occasionally in the family's letters, especially those between Dorothea Solly and her parents, suggesting it was not of great importance to them. Comments which do appear suggest a tolerant attitude towards Roman Catholicism and a distaste for the more extreme forms of Protestant evangelicalism. Charles Hatchett, for instance, writing to Dorothy Rackett about mistranslation in the English bible, attributed it to the translators being 'influenced by biggoted [*sic*.] hatred to the Roman Catholics and by an equally biggoted reverence for Martin Luther'.[3] Furthermore, the family cultivated close friendships with Catholics, particularly artistic and scientific figures such as Eva Maria Garrick, Tiberius Cavallo and Cecilia Davies.[4] The friendships with Garrick and Davies appear to have been

[1] See pp. 204-205.

[2] H. S. L. Dewar, *The Thomas Rackett Papers: 17th to 19th Centuries* (Dorchester, 1965), p. 12, see also the exchange of letters this provoked between TR and the Bishop of Bristol, pp. 56-58.

[3] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, p. 75.

[4] See Peter Thomson, 'Garrick, Eva Maria (1724-1822)', *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28330> accessed 15 June 2013; Paola Bertucci, 'Cavallo, Tiberius (1749-1809)', *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4918> accessed 15 June 2013; and Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, 'Davies, Cecilia (1756/7-1836), *ODNB* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7227> accessed 15 June 2013. Davies appears to have come from a family of Irish (or possibly English) Catholics, a fact not noted by Baldwin and Wilson. This is suggested by the book of letters of introduction used during the Davies' tour of the continent in 1767-73 (DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/79), in which J. C. Bach refers to them as 'una famiglia Inglese Cattolica', while C. Seilern describes her as 'Irlandaise, et Catolique'.

inherited from Thomas Rackett's mother, Mary Rackett, who records regular dinners with both women in her diaries from the 1790s.[5] Thomas and Dorothy Rackett continued to correspond with Eva Maria Garrick after the death of Mary Rackett in 1800 and Thomas Rackett was one of the executors of Mrs Garrick's will.[6] Thomas Rackett's friendship with Cavallo was particularly close; the natural philosopher spent the last months of his life with the Racketts at Spetisbury.[7] Obviously, as seen in chapter four, the family's continued friendship with Davies is well documented and stretched across three generations. Although this evidence does not necessarily indicate a weakness of religious commitment on the Racketts' part, it does suggest that they adopted a cosmopolitan and broad-minded attitude towards religious and denominational matters quite different to a more committed evangelical approach.

[5] DHC, Rackett Papers, D/RAC/140, Diary of Mary Rackett 1797 and 1799.
[6] Dewar, *Rackett Papers*, pp. 42-43 (TR to DR, n.d. [after 1822].
[7] Bertucci, 'Cavallo, Tiberius'.

Appendix C

The Novello Cowden Clarke collection at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds

Uncatalogued copy of the original manuscript of *Clara Novello's Reminiscences*

This manuscript, according to David Masson, was donated to the Novello Cowden Clarke collection in the special collections department at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, in 1969.[1] The major part of this collection, which consists of a wide range of manuscript and printed items belonging to the Novello and Cowden Clarke families, was given to the Brotherton Library in 1953 by two of Clara Novello's granddaughters.[2] In 1955, a handlist to the collection was compiled (which is still in the Special Collections reading room). Unfortunately, this handlist has not been amended to take account of any subsequent acquisitions to the collection, including the 1969 deposit of this manuscript. Furthermore, following the retirement of Brotherton staff members there has been a significant loss of institutional memory about the existence and whereabouts of various parts of this collection. In the absence of a full catalogue, and in the absence of archive staff who are aware of the uncatalogued items the collection contains, it is currently impossible for researchers to know what is and is not in the collection in any kind of reliable fashion. I was unaware of these facts (which I subsequently pieced together) at the time of my research trip to the Brotherton and so,

[1] David I. Masson, 'A Reminiscence of Clara Novello', *Music & Letters* 50/4 (1969), p. 481.
[2] Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds, Novello Cowden Clarke Collection.

working from the 1955 handlist, did not realise the manuscript was part of the collection. I assumed that the manuscript was still in the Gigliucci family archive in Italy, where it had last been consulted by Averil Mackenzie-Grieve in the process of researching her biography of Novello and I only discovered – too late – from the Masson note that the manuscript was in Leeds.[3]

Lost correspondence of Clara Novello and Sir John Trevelyan, 5th Baronet of Nettlecombe

The main set of sources for Novello's life in the 1830s and '40s is a series of letters from her, her parents and her siblings to Sir John Trevelyan, 5th Baronet of Nettlecombe. During her years spent touring the continent, Trevelyan acted as her confidant and she consequently revealed much to him about not only her activities, but also her thoughts and feelings. When Averil Mackenzie-Grieve wrote her biography of Novello in the early 1950s, these letters were still kept in the muniments room at the Trevelyan family seat, Nettlecombe Court in Somerset. Following extensive inquiries with the current curators of the Trevelyan family archive (all of which up to and including the 5th baronet's papers are at the Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC) in Taunton, while the later archive is kept at the Robinson Library at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne), it would appear that the original letters were (most likely) sold into private hands at Sotheby's at some point in the 1950s, before the archive was given to the SHC. The SHC contains five letters to Trevelyan from Novello's mother and sister, but not from Novello

[3] See Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *Clara Novello 1818-1908* (London, 1955), p. viii.

or her father.[4] Given the sixty-year gap in information about the whereabouts of these documents, there is currently no straightforward way of tracing them. However, a microfilm was made of these letters, presumably prior to their sale, which was deposited as part of the Novello Cowden Clarke collection at the Brotherton Library in the 1950s. However, during my research trip to the Brotherton, the archivists were unable to find this microfilm and, after many further months, have now finally confirmed that it is lost indefinitely. The analysis in chapter five is therefore based on the paragraphs and other extracts from these letters quoted by Mackenzie-Grieve in her biography of Novello. This is obviously unsatisfactory, but is currently the only available solution to this problem.

[4] Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton, Somerset, Trevelyan family archive, DD\WO/62/12/1, Five letters to Sir John Trevelyan from Mary Sabilla and Emma Novello.

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