
Georgian Psalmody 1

The Gallery Tradition

**Papers from the First International Conference
organised by The Colchester Institute**

Edited by Christopher Turner
The Colchester Institute
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The cover shows the Madding Crowd in North
Baddesley Church near Southampton.
Photo: Brynja Maughan.

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Contributors

Gordon Ashman

Gordon Ashman trained as a biochemist, worked as a journalist, joined the RAF and spent many years as a photo-reconnaissance specialist. On leaving the RAF, he took up a flying post with the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, followed by a period in management with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum. He has also specialised in social history research, tutored for Birmingham University and was a long-standing committee member of both the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Folklore Society. He co-founded (with Dave Townsend) the West Gallery Music Association in 1990.

Ken Baddley

Ken Baddley is a luthier by profession, a linguist originally and (in the context of the conference) writes on topics of organology and social history relating to west gallery music and instruments. He has a specific interest in English diaries of whatever period and is a member of the Parson Woodforde Society. He sings with the Thomas Clark Quire and plays keyed bugle and ophicleide. He is currently occupied with a biography of the Kentish composer Thomas Clark of Canterbury and a study of the numbers of instruments surviving from the west gallery period.

Mike Bailey

Mike Bailey is a versatile musician who is keenly involved in a wide range of musical styles. His skills on the recorder, baroque bassoon, lute and a range of renaissance instruments have enabled him to explore his interest in early music, but he also plays the saxophone in various jazz groups and swing bands, sings barbershop regularly and performs folk music to his own guitar accompaniment. In 1977 he began playing the flute with the Madding Crowd and, in the following year, he became their musical director since when he has researched the repertoire and prepared many performing editions for their use. Mike is also active as a teacher of flute, recorder and folk guitar.

Fenella Bazin

Manx-born Fenella Crowe Bazin has her roots in the strong Methodist singing traditions of the Isle of Man, as well as those of south Yorkshire, the home of her maternal grandparents. She studied

at the Royal Academy of Music, then taught in Cheshire and worked in the Extramural Department of Birmingham University before returning to the Isle of Man in 1977. She now works for the University of Liverpool's Centre for Manx Studies. She has been actively involved in the promotion and performance of Manx music all her life, recently completing the first comprehensive account of music in the Isle of Man for her doctoral thesis.

Sally Drage

After graduating from the Royal Manchester College of Music, Sally Drage taught flute and piano peripatetically, and is now doing post-graduate research into Georgian psalmody at the University of Sheffield. Recent work includes articles for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, and research for Hyperion. Current projects involve editing, and running workshops with Peter Holman.

James Forsyth

James Forsyth is a senior lecturer in the Visual and Performing Arts Department at Mount Saint Mary Campus of the Australian Catholic University, where he teaches in the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Education. He has also taught, part time, in the Organ and Church Music Department of the NSW State Conservatorium (now the Sydney Conservatorium, University of Sydney). Mr Forsyth is an experienced organist and choir director who has performed with the Melbourne and Sydney Symphony Orchestras.

Vic Gammon

Vic Gammon is Lecturer in Music Education in the School of Education, University of Leeds. He has taught in primary and secondary schools, in American higher education and at the Universities of Sussex and Huddersfield. He has written the music for over twenty stage and radio plays and features, including John Fletcher's *Death and the Tango* which won a Giles Cooper award and was runner up for a Prix Italia. He completed a DPhil at the University of Sussex on vernacular and religious music in 19th-century Sussex in 1985 and is a member of the Editorial Board of the *Folk Music Journal*. He is an active singer and instrumentalist, playing various instruments in-

cluding the cittern and both anglo and duet concertinas, and specialising in the performance of traditional music and contemporary song.

Ian Russell

Ian Russell is the headteacher of Anston Greenlands Primary School, Rotherham. He has been researching the local carolling traditions of south Yorkshire and north Derbyshire for over 27 years. His doctorate was based on local singing traditions including carolling (Leeds University, 1977). The fruits of his carol research, which include field recordings, manuscripts and local carol collections, are currently being organised into a major archive called Village Carols. From 1980 to 1993, he was the editor of *Folk Music Journal*, and in 1994 and 1996 directed the highly successful Festivals of Village Carols at Grenoside. He is currently undertaking research into the carol singing tradition at Beeston, near Nottingham, and writing the entry on 'England: folk music' for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

Nicholas Temperley

Nicholas Temperley was born in England in 1932, but became an American citizen by naturalisation in 1977. He has held various academic posts at the Universities of Cambridge, Yale and Illinois, where he has been professor and held the chair of musicology since 1972. His publications include *The Music of the English Parish Church* (2 vols, 1979), *The Athlone History of Music in Britain* (vol. 5, 1981) and (with Charles Manns) *Fuging Tunes in the 18th Century* (1983). The hymn tune index on which he has been working for many years is about to be published by Oxford University Press, and this will be followed by a *Musica Britannica* volume exploring the Georgian psalmody repertoire.

Dave Townsend

Dave Townsend initially studied piano but is now best known as a concertina player. He took English at Manchester University, followed by a research MA in mediaeval literature. He is now a full-time musician, specialising in traditional music. He performs and teaches widely, and provides music for theatre, radio, film and television. He formed The Mellstock Band to perform music from Hardy's Wessex, including west gallery repertoire, is director of The Christminster Singers, and was the co-founder, with Gordon Ashman, of the West Gallery Music Association.

Christopher Turner

Christopher Turner worked for many years in secondary education before being appointed to the Faculty of Music and Performance Arts at The Colchester Institute, where he is a senior lecturer. Currently working for his PhD at London University, he has a wide range of interests including English church music of the 18th and 19th centuries; most of his publications have been within this area. He also performs regularly with a small baroque ensemble and has broadcast on radio and television.

Gillian Warson

Gillian Warson is registered as a postgraduate student at Sheffield University and is researching cultural aspects of hymns in literature. This interest is a fusion of her training as a musician (especially as a choral conductor and string specialist) and her academic study carried out as a mature student in English. She is currently working as a music teacher in a middle school in Oxford.

Foreword

Bill Tamblyn
*Head of School of Music and Performance Arts
The Colchester Institute*

In 1974 I began teaching at what is now The Colchester Institute. At that time I proposed that, not only was the study of the music of the worshipping community a respectable academic activity, but that research in such an area was vital if we were to understand other issues in the liturgy. Acceptance of this view was a long time in coming, and only in 1982 were we able to offer liturgical music as a major vocational study within our undergraduate programme. In 1994 the Liturgical Music pathway within our Masters degree was validated by Anglia Polytechnic University, and currently there are 21 students registered on this programme of study.

Following the publication in 1992 of *The New Oxford Book of Carols*, I was invited by BBC Radio 3 to select and record some items for transmission during Advent. My immediate response was to turn to examples from the American 'primitives' and the English 'gallery tradition'. In consultation with Christopher Turner (who is currently working on his PhD in the educational implications of gallery music), our selection was decided – the gallery tradition it would be.

So favourable was the public response to the broadcast of our full-blooded rendition of this repertoire that Christopher Turner organised our first residential conference at the Institute in the summer of 1995, at which I was invited to direct a practical session. I had recently returned from the USA flushed with the success of attending worship with the 'horse and buggy' Mennonites and was persuaded by the power of their slow singing. I therefore asked conference delegates to sing some unaccompanied psalmody very slowly – a simple device to help us understand the acerbic comments on tempo made by English writers such as Isaac Watts and Samuel Pepys (Temperley, 1979, pp. 92 *et seq.*), but it also confirmed that 'slow' singing was indeed deeply prayerful.

There are many contentious issues addressed in this collection of papers from a distinguished list of contributors – not least in the matter of tempo. This collection more than justifies all those years of waiting. If anything validates our interest in the music of the worshipping assembly and their nominees, then this is it.

Introduction

Peter Holman

I well remember the first occasion I heard some 18th-century psalmody. During a visit to the USA in 1981/82 I found an LP by the Boston Camerata entitled *Sing we Noel: Christmas Music from England and Early America* in the shop of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and bought it on impulse. I was initially attracted by the medieval English music on side 1, but I soon became fascinated by the carols from 18th- and 19th-century America on side 2. Their directness and vigour came as a welcome contrast to the sentimental Victorian carols I had been brought up with, and I seemed to be hearing in their striking harmonies and lively counterpoint a remarkable 'folk' survival of renaissance compositional techniques. Daniel Read's fuguing tune 'Sherburne', used on the record as a vehicle for Nahum Tate's 'While shepherds watched', soon became a family favourite at Christmas.

In the sleeve notes of the recording, Joel Cohen wrote that 'Sherburne', first published in 1783, was 'a typical New England "fuguing tune"', and I initially presumed that the fuguing tune, an elaborate type of hymn or psalm tune featuring a contrapuntal passage, was a distinctive product of Colonial America. It seemed to exemplify the sturdy, pioneer spirit of the New World. In fact, I should have known better, for Nicholas Temperley's classic book *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Temperley, 1979) had already showed conclusively that the repertory of 'gallery music' (so called because it was often sung by choirs placed in the west galleries of country churches) or 'psalmody' (to give it its less restrictive contemporary name) had developed first in England, and had only been exported later to America. As Nicholas Temperley points out in his paper in this book, it was rediscovered earlier in America than in England because it was effectively the beginning of their musical history, but seemed to be only a small and rather peripheral part of ours. The English repertory of psalmody grew out of a late 17th-century movement to revitalise worship in Anglican parish churches by forming amateur choirs to improve standards. But this produced unforeseen results, for as the choirs became more ambitious and began to perform complex polyphonic psalm settings and anthems, they silenced the congregations they had been formed to support.

For me, the next landmark was the publication of *The New Oxford Book of Carols*, edited by Hugh Keyte, Andrew Parrott and Clifford Bartlett (1992). The *NOBC* contained the first sizeable collection of English psalmody to be made available in a mainstream modern edition, edited according to recognised musicological norms, and placed in the context of parallel repertories in America and on the Continent. A particularly important part of the *NOBC*, unfortunately omitted in the cheaper *Shorter NOBC* along with all the editorial notes, was the inclusion of long essays on 'English organ accompaniment, interludes, and givings-out' and 'The English "gallery" and American "primitive" traditions'. To my knowledge, they were the first published writings to treat the performance of psalmody as a subject of historical enquiry rather than as a matter of ethnographic report on a living or recently deceased tradition. More generally, the *NOBC* made a selection of psalmody accessible to choirs and vocal groups all over the country, just as Andrew Parrott's CD anthologies *The Carol Album*, *Carol Album 2* and *The Christmas Album* introduced psalmody to a wider listening public.

Of course, interest in the subject was not new. Francis Galpin and K. H. MacDermott had done valuable work at the turn of the century, when they were still able to talk to former members of country choirs, and a number of studies were subsequently made of the choirs and church bands of particular areas, often published in local history journals. Nicholas Temperley published an anthology that included psalmody as the second volume of his 1979 book, though, maddeningly, Cambridge University Press saw fit not to include it in the 1983 paperback reprint. In the 1970s, as Mike Bailey records in his paper, the Madding Crowd began to perform psalmody in public; during the 1980s and 1990s similar groups sprung up across the country. Then in 1990 came the formation of the West Gallery Music Association by Gordon Ashman and David Townsend. At the same time, the remarkable living tradition of psalmody that survives in the villages around Sheffield began to attract national attention, largely through Ian Russell's research and publications; his paper summarises his findings.

In retrospect, it is clear that the 1995 conference, the origin of the papers collected in this

book, came at the right moment to draw these diverse threads together. Perhaps I should explain why it was held in Clacton-on-Sea in Essex, a town better known as a holiday resort than as a centre of scholarship. The former Grand Hotel in Clacton is an annexe of The Colchester Institute (now a regional college of Anglia Polytechnic University), and the Music School at Colchester has developed considerable expertise in the field in recent years. The Head of School, William Tamblyn, is a practising church musician, and has developed a successful Liturgical Music option on the BA degree programme. Christopher Turner is also a church musician, and has developed an interest in psalmody as part of a wider study of the history of music education in Britain. My own research interests lie mainly in 17th-century English music, but I have become increasingly involved in that of the 18th and 19th centuries as a performer, and as a tutor supervising student dissertations. As a result, The Colchester Institute has become something of a centre for psalmody studies, and its library is building up an important collection of early sources.

What made the Clacton conference so interesting was the way the papers and the discussions continually revealed a philosophical or even ideological gulf between two groups. If it caused conflict from time to time, a lot of us came away with the feeling that our preconceptions had been challenged, and that our intellectual horizons had been broadened in the process. The organisers, Clifford Bartlett, Hugh Keyte, Blaise Compton, Christopher Turner and myself, come from the early music field and belong to a musicological tradition mostly concerned with art music. We spend most of our time searching for pieces in early sources, establishing critical texts of them, thinking and writing about them in historical terms, and, last but not least, trying to find out how they were originally performed. Thus we instinctively want to find the 'original' version of a particular piece, to attribute it to a named composer, to relate our findings to our collective mental map of musical history, and to perform it in a way that conforms as closely as possible to what we conceive of as the composer's intentions.

Many of those who participated in the conference came from the West Gallery Music Association. I hope I am not misrepresenting them by suggesting that they belong to a tradition that is effectively a branch of ethnomusicology. They see the psalmody repertory as a living tradition (as it is, particularly around Sheffield) rather than a historical phenomenon to be studied and revived. They are less concerned to establish the original version or an authoritative text of a particular

piece than to record the various ways it is used in a continuing tradition. They see composition as an open-ended process, in which a piece can exist in many equally valid forms, and thus they are not much concerned with identifying its 'original' version, or with performing it in a particular historical style.

The two essays on performance practice in this book neatly illustrate these different approaches. Sally Drage's 'Performance practice in 18th-century Georgian psalmody' is concerned with written sources – prefaces in psalm-tune books – and what they can tell us about the tempi, tone production, ornamentation, allocation of parts, instrumentation and pitch used by country choirs. By contrast, the main focus of Vic Gammon's essay 'The performance style of west gallery music' is traditional music, or, more precisely, what he calls the 'plebeian musical tradition'. He does not neglect the sort of written evidence used by Sally Drage, but places more reliance on historical recordings of British and American choirs, or modern recordings of performers of traditional music. Both approaches, of course, have potential weaknesses as well as strengths. The prefaces of psalmody publications, however informative, will never tell us exactly how an 18th-century country choir sounded, just as we can never be sure how much 20th-century recordings can tell us about the practice of the 18th and 19th centuries. The performances captured on them certainly belong to a tradition, but the one constant feature of tradition is that it is constantly changing.

Similar things could be said of the differing approaches to editing psalmody. Running through the papers by Ian Russell and Dave Townsend is the idea that, in Townsend's words:

the country psalmody tradition should be seen as a musical continuum, in which individual compositions and performances are liable to transformations caused by social needs and social change. The concerns of art music, the search for a composer's unique and original creation, are not appropriate here; in order to understand it, it is necessary to integrate information from the complete record, printed, manuscript, and oral, and to accept each as equally valid and valuable.

This position, of course, is close to that adopted by ethnomusicologists when they regard every version of a folk-song as equally valid exemplars of a continuous oral tradition. But psalmody is rather different from folk-song, partly because it was transmitted largely through notation, and partly because some of it is as extended, complex and elaborately scored as contemporary art music. When pieces in 19th-century manuscripts can

be traced back to printed collections published by named composers such as Joseph Key, Thomas Clark and John Foster, they cannot be regarded as 'equally valid and valuable', which is not to say that they do not have their own interest. One of the fascinating features of psalmody is that it combines features of art and folk music, and, as Nicholas Temperley points out, we need to devise new methods of editing it that borrow techniques equally from mainstream musicology and from ethnomusicology.

We also need to devise new methods of evaluating psalmody. As Nicholas Temperley has repeatedly pointed out, it is no good judging it by the standards of art music. Much of the music that looks 'crude' and 'incorrect' to conventionally trained musicians works extremely well in performance, and is often more memorable than equivalent pieces in the cathedral repertory. But that does not mean that all psalmody is equally effective, that we should not try to distinguish good from bad, or that all areas of the repertory can be judged by the same standards. We have learned not to discriminate against supposedly 'crude' and 'incorrect' pieces, but equally we should not discriminate against those that happen to obey the classical rules. We should also guard against drawing the boundaries of the subject too tightly. The core of the repertory was composed by amateur provincial composers for country parish churches where there was no organ, and for some today the absence of an organ has become an article of faith that effectively defines the

range of their interests. But it would be a mistake to exclude psalmody because it was written for dissenting chapels, by professional composers for urban churches with organs, for choral festivals with orchestras, or for devotional domestic use with harpsichord or piano accompaniment.

Where do we go from here? The first priority, of course, is to make more psalmody available in modern editions, in live performance, and on CD. We also need more detailed study of particular areas of the repertory, preferably bringing archival research into the original performing ensembles to bear on a study of the music. A number of performance practice issues are touched on in this book, but they need closer study. We need biographical studies of the major psalmody composers, and bibliographical studies of the important printed and manuscript sources. Above all, perhaps, we need to try to provide English psalmody with a credible historical context. We need to know more about how it developed, and how it relates to earlier types of religious music. We need to refine our understanding of the relationship between psalmody and the cathedral repertory. We need to examine the links between English psalmody and related repertories elsewhere in Britain and its colonies; Fenella Bazin and James Forsyth have made a good start in this book, writing respectively about psalmody in the Isle of Man and in Australia. We need to see whether there are any connections with parish church music in France, Germany and other European countries. In short, there is much to be done. Let's do it.

