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## “Faint copies” and “excellent Originalls”

### Composition and consumption of trio sonatas in England, c. 1695–1714

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JOHN CUNNINGHAM

#### Introduction: “*Compos’d In Imitation of ArchAngelo Corelli*”

Reflecting upon a visit to London c.1710, the diarist and amateur musician Roger North commented that “It [is] wonderfull to observe what a skratching of Correlli there is every where – nothing will relish but Corelli”.<sup>1</sup> The extent of Corelli’s influence was perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the trio sonatas written by English composers then working in London. The apparently wholesale stylistic capitulation advertised most blatantly with the publication in late 1709 of William Topham’s opus 3 sonatas, the title-page of which read “*Compos’d In Imitation of ArchAngelo Corelli*”, with Corelli’s name occupying almost equal prominence to that of the composer in the *mise-en-page*.<sup>2</sup> To modern observers, such stylistic obeisance advertises the collection’s (and the composer’s) lack of originality or invention, perhaps further tainted by the impression that Topham was cynically seeking to cash in on the popularity of Corelli. However, as Rebecca Herissone has recently demonstrated, for composers in Restoration England “musical invention was still based on the study and emulation of models”;<sup>3</sup> nor was imitation understood to be a pejorative term: “musicians studied and imitated models by authoritative figures, and sought to emulate them in their own works, aiming to avoid over-reliance on their source material by transforming it through their own invention”.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, just over a quarter-century before the publication of Topham’s opus 3, Henry Purcell similarly claimed in his 1683

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1 Roger North on Music: *Being a Selection from his Essays Written during the Years c. 1695–1728*, ed. by John Wilson, London 1959, p. xx.

2 See also below; the John Walsh edition is available on <[www.imslp.org](http://www.imslp.org)>.

3 Rebecca Herissone, *Musical Creativity in Restoration England*, Cambridge 2013, p. xviii.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 59.



sonatas (interior note, “To the Reader”) to have “*faithfully endeavour’d a just imitation of the most fam’d Italian Masters*”.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, the main difference between the sonatas of Purcell and Topham was “invention”: or rather, the presence or lack thereof. Whereas Purcell was often transcendent, Topham was consciously transparent. It was, of course, easier for Purcell to be inventive. He was a far superior composer than Topham. But he also had the advantage of writing at a transitional time before the trio sonata style had become fixed and formulaised. In addition to (mid-century) continental trends, in the early 1680s Purcell was able to draw inspiration from the long tradition of English consort music, which by 1709 had long been completely supplanted by the Italian sonata. From Purcell and Topham the linguistic modulation in the discourse of imitation shifted from anonymity to identity, from plurality to specificity, from interiority to exteriority, highlighting the way in which Corelli had come to signify the Italian style but also the way in which that signification became indelibly linked to cultural economics in terms of production and reception. Moreover, the respective dedications (Purcell to Charles II; Topham to William Henry Granville) also reflected the way in which the driving forces behind those cultural economics had shifted from the court to the town, silent witness to a process that had begun with the outbreak of the English Civil War and which saw the court significantly diminish as a centre for the production of sophisticated chamber music in the Restoration period.<sup>6</sup>

The short period between the Purcell’s first set of sonatas and Topham’s opus 3 saw a significant change in the production and consumption of trio sonatas in England. Imported prints and manuscript copies of trio sonatas were available in England since the 1670s or so; Corelli’s sonatas were readily available since at least the 1690s. But before 1700 few sonatas appear to have been written by composers working in London.<sup>7</sup> There are about a dozen sonatas by émigré composers (Nicola Matteis, Gottfried Keller, Gerhard Diesner) as well as by English contemporaries of Purcell (John Blow, Robert King, Sampson Estwick, Isaac Blackwell):

5 The literature on Purcell’s sonatas is quite extensive. See especially, Peter Holman, *Henry Purcell*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 85–93; Alan Howard, *Purcell and the Poetics of Artifice: Compositional Strategies in the Fantasias and Sonatas*, PhD thesis, King’s College, London 2006.

6 The best account of music at the English court in the seventeenth century remains Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690*, Oxford 1993.

7 The trio sonatas of Robert Valentine and John Ravenscroft appear to have been written after they left England for Italy.



all apparently written before c. 1685, several surviving in single sources, none printed.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, between the publication of Purcell's two collections (1683 and posthumously in 1697) only one collection including trio sonatas was published in London: Gottfried Finger's opus 1 of 1688. It was not until the turn of the century that native composers working in England began to regularly publish (or indeed, even compose) collections of trio sonatas. But even then the more talented native composers of the day generally avoided the genre, instead leaving it to lesser lights, such as William Topham, who, as John H. Baron put it, showed "little invention and much imitation of Corelli".<sup>9</sup>

Largely because of their lack of originality and uneven quality these "English" trio sonatas of the early eighteenth century have largely been ignored by scholars.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, these sonatas pose a number of questions about the way in which the trio sonata was disseminated, for example: Why did so few English composers explore the genre? And how and why did the influence of Purcell's sonatas fade so quickly in favour of a wholesale capitulation to the Italian style? In an attempt to examine these issues this essay will explore the contexts in which trio sonatas were written by native composers working in England between the death of Henry Purcell in 1695 and the arrival in London of Francesco Geminiani in 1714. In particular, it will examine the role played by patronage in the cultivation and dissemination of the genre and the Italianate style in England in the early eighteenth century, and how that relates to the wider sphere of commercial music publishing and the economics of elite culture.

8 These sonatas are all edited in *Restoration Trio Sonatas*, ed. by Peter Holman and John Cunningham, London 2012 (= The Purcell Society Companion Series 4). The sonatas by Estwick and Blackwell survive incomplete. See also the introduction to that volume for a comprehensive survey of the English context to c.1685.

9 John H. Baron, *Intimate Music: A History of the Idea of Chamber Music*, New York 1998, p. 117.

10 The most extensive treatments are found in Michael Tilmouth, *Chamber Music in England, 1675–1720*, PhD thesis, University of Cambridge 1960; more recently Min-Jung Kang, *The Trio Sonata in Restoration England (1660–1714)*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds 2008, which includes a catalogue of the 60 or so manuscripts of English provenance (to c. 1715) that include trio sonatas.



## William Williams

The 18–20 January 1700 issue of the London newspaper *The Post Man* carried an advertisement announcing the publication of a set of “six new Sonata’s (approved of by the best Masters) 3 for 2 Violins and 3 for 2 Flutes, with a part for the Bass Violin and Viol, and a figured Bass for the Organ, Harpsicord or Archlute, finely engraved on Copper Plates, and exactly corrected by the Author. Composed by W[illia]m Wiliams, Servant to his Majesty”.<sup>11</sup> This inauspicious advertisement was significant in its way: it was the first collection of trio sonatas to be published in London by an English composer after Purcell. Williams appears to have been born c. 1675, and first comes to light in 1695 with the publication of a set of six sonatas for two recorders; from March of the same year he served as a non-stipendiary musician at court until finally being appointed to a fully-paid post in the Private Musick at court in November 1697.<sup>12</sup> He was also involved in the theatre, and several of his song settings were published around the turn of the century. Williams’ trio sonatas were newly published in 1700 but they were not strictly speaking “new”. He had in fact advertised for subscribers to the collection on Christmas Eve 1696.<sup>13</sup> There are no further references to the subscription, though the long gestation suggests that the call was not met with resounding success. However, this should be understood in context: even Henry Purcell’s widow found it difficult to enlist subscribers for his second set of ten sonatas, forcing her to delay publication.<sup>14</sup>

Williams seems to have had Purcell’s 1683 collection in his mind when it came to his own sonatas (even using the same engraver, Thomas Cross), but it is likely that the decision to self-publish was foisted upon both composers alike. As Rebecca Herissone has noted, “from the late 1660s commercial London publishers seem to have become very reluctant to publish single-composer collections. For those composers who

11 *The Post Man and the Historical Account*, 18–20 January 1700.

12 For Williams, see Peter Holman, “Williams, William”, in: *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* [hereafter *GMO*] < <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30357> > (last accessed 29 December 2015); Andrew Ashbee and David Lasocki, assisted by Peter Holman and Fiona Kisby, “Williams, William”, in: *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians, 1485–1714* [hereafter *BDECM*], 2 vols., Aldershot 1998, vol. II, p. 1156.

13 *The Post Boy*, 24 December 1796. See also Michael Tilmouth, “Calendar of References to Music in Newspapers Published in London and the Provinces (1660–1719)”, in: *RMA Research Chronicle* 1 (1961), pp. 1–107.

14 See, Holman, *Henry Purcell* (see n. 5), pp. 92–93.



wished to see their music in print, the only possible alternative was self-publication".<sup>15</sup> This trend appears to have been countered somewhat with the popularity of Corelli's sonatas in the first decade of the new century, which in turn coincided with the rise of John Walsh's publishing firm and the London agents of Estienne Roger. The obvious advantage to self-publication was that it ensured that profits would be maximised for the composer but it also meant a substantial financial investment. For example, in 1701 Wriothesley Russell, the Duke of Bedford, paid £21 to cover the publication costs of Nicola Cosimi's solo sonatas.<sup>16</sup> While this may not be entirely representative, it suggests that self-publication was prohibitively expensive to most musicians without the backing of a patron. Indeed, in addition to being advertised for subscription, both of Purcell's collections of sonatas carried dedications to patrons (Charles II and Lady Rhodia Cavendish, respectively). So too it was with Williams, who dedicated his trio sonatas to James Annesley, third Earl of Anglesey and Viscount Valentia (1670–1702). We may perhaps assume that the Earl also covered the cost of the publication but, as Robert D. Hume has noted, "the real importance of patronage lay not in lordly gifts but in jobs. A court appointment or a semi-sinecure could provide a living".<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately Annesley's household records do not seem to survive and so we know nothing of the details of the patronage, though with his substantial wealth and connections as well as an interest in music and the arts, Annesley was an ideal patron for the young composer. Annesley inherited the earldom upon the death of his father in 1690, with it came the substantial estates of Newport Pagnell and Farnborough in England and Camolin Park and Mountnorris in Ireland, in total worth approximately £4,000 per annum.<sup>18</sup> In 1699 he married Lady Catherine

15 Rebecca Herissone, "Playford, Purcell, and the Functions of Music Publishing in Restoration England", in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63/2 (2010), pp. 243–290, at p. 256.

16 See Gladys Scott Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury, 1669–1771*, London 1940, pp. 129–130. Thomas Cross was paid 6s per plate for engraving 52 plates (£15 12s) and £3 5s for 2600 printed pages. Russell outlaid a further 2s 6d "For a tray to steep the paper" and 1s 6d "For 26 sheets ruled paper for the music", with another £1 11s paid to "Mr. Penythorn for the use of the press for printing said music". The total outlay was £20 12s. See also Lowell Lindgren, "Nicola Cosimi in London, 1701–1705", in: *Studi Musicali* 11 (1982), pp. 229–248.

17 Robert D. Hume, "The Economics of Culture in London, 1660–1740", in: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69/4 (2006), pp. 487–533, at p. 522. See also the discussion of the role of patronage in Tilmouth, *Chamber Music* (see n. 10), pp. 111–130.

18 <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/annesley-james-1645-90>> (last accessed 28 April 2017).



Darnley, the illegitimate daughter of James II and Catherine Sedley, Countess of Dorchester.<sup>19</sup>

Despite being couched in typically obsequious and deferential rhetoric, Williams' dedication is a revealing document. In the face of a growing tide of foreign musicians in London, he frames the Earl's support in explicitly nationalistic terms. He also implies that the sonatas were written explicitly for Annesley, acknowledging the importance of having access to the Earl's library during the compositional process. Wealthy nobles such as Annesley often acquired large collections of expensive music while on their Grand Tour: having access to such resources was a form of non-cash patronage, and a way in which English composers – most of whom, like Williams, did not travel to Italy – could get to grips with the new style of repertoire:

[...] *The Judgement and Genius which your Lordship has shewn in Musick, by making one of the best Collections in the World, in your Travels thro' Italy, had very much over-aw'd me in this Undertaking, if I had not at the same time Consider'd your Lordship as a Nobleman of England & Patriot and an Ornament of your Country; and consequently, as one who will encourage the Endeavours, and look favourably on the Labours Of an English Man. Musick has of late met with Improvement, and a more favourable Reception than ordinary in England; and I make no Question but it will yet receive much farther Advancement: And without degrogating from the Names of foreign Masters, I hope I may Say, it is evident from many Pieces ev'ery day performed in our Churches and Theatres, That a Genius is not wanting to our Climate, and were there a few more such Noble Patrons of Arts as your Lordship, our Country-men might hope to be more esteemed abroad, and less undervalued at home. [...]*

Whatever form it took, Annesley's patronage of Williams was destined to be short-lived. The composer died in January 1701, evidently after a brief illness; he was buried almost year to the day from the advertisement of his trio sonatas.<sup>20</sup> Annesley himself was dead almost exactly a year after that on 21 January 1702.

19 *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vol. vii, London 1841, p. 172. The union was short-lived: they were separated by an Act of Parliament in June 1701; Lady Catherine claimed that Annesley had tried to murder her.

20 His probate (PROB 6/77) was dated 13 October 1700: Ashbee, "Williams" (see n. 12), p. 1156.



## James Sherard

Annesley was one of the generation of grand tourists who, in the words of Roger North, "went over into Italy and resided at Rome and Venice, where they heard the best musick and learnt of the best masters; [...] they came home confirmed in the love of the Itallian manner, and some contracted no litle skill and proved exquisite performers".<sup>21</sup> As London became increasingly attractive to continental musicians by the late 1690s English musicians were facing unprecedented competition within a reasonably limited sphere of professional opportunities,<sup>22</sup> especially as wealthy patrons sought to re-create the Italian experience at home: speaking precisely to the anxieties expressed by William Williams. An excellent (and oft-quoted) example of this is Wriothesley Russell, second Duke of Bedford (1680–1711) (then Marquess of Tavistock) who visited Rome as part of his grand tour in 1698–1699, and while there heard Corelli perform in the household of Cardinal Ottoboni. The experience clearly made a significant impression on Russell and his perception of the power of culture. Before he left Rome, Russell secured the services of the violinist Nicola Cosimi, who arrived in London in 1701 along with the continuo cellist Nicola Haym.<sup>23</sup> In London the musicians were based at Southampton House (later Bedford House), Bloomsbury. Both received massive wages,<sup>24</sup> which they supplemented by teaching, making trips to back to Italy to purchase music for Russell,<sup>25</sup> and by performing for other wealthy patrons.<sup>26</sup> Cosimi returned to Rome for good in April 1705,

21 Roger North *on Music* (see n. 1), p. 310.

22 The favouring of foreign musicians over native ones was not new in England; throughout the seventeenth century foreign musicians generally commanded better salaries than their English counterparts in the Royal Music: see, John Cunningham, *The Consort Music of William Lawes, 1602–45*, Woodbridge 2010, Chapter 1.

23 For Cosimi, see Lindgren, "Nicola Cosimi" (see n. 16), pp. 229–248; for Haym, see Nicola Haym: *Complete Sonatas*, parts 1 and 2, ed. by Lowell Lindgren, Middleton WI 2002 (= Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era 116–117).

24 Cosimi and Haym both received 100 guineas a year in the years 1701–1704; after Cosimi returned to Italy Haym was paid 50 guineas per annum: see Haym, *Complete Sonatas* (see n. 23), pp. vii–viii.

25 Music was also apparently imported but the receipts are unspecific: see Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury* (see n. 16), pp. 128–130.

26 For example, in 1704–1705 Cosimi seems to have led a concert series lasting five months at the Surrey estate of Charles Calvert, Baron Baltimore, for which he received roughly 20–30s per concert. See, Lindgren, "Nicola Cosimi" (see n. 23), pp. 234–235.



leaving Haym to become master of the music in Bedford's household. Between 1703 and 1706 Haym also edited Corelli's sonatas for Roger in Amsterdam and was forced to deny publically doing the same for Walsh in London. He also issued two sets of his own trio sonatas, heavily indebted to Corelli (Amsterdam, 1703–1704).<sup>27</sup>

Russell was accompanied on part of his grand tour by the botanist William Sherard (1659–1728), whose brother James (1666–1738) published two collections of Corelli-esque *da chiesa* trio sonatas under Russell's patronage.<sup>28</sup> In the dedication to the first collection Sherard tells us that he had received from his brother “books, and other Materialls, which gave me the first tast, and acquaintance with the *Italian Musick*”. This is likely to have been an exaggeration intended to highlight the authenticity of his compositional references but also serving to highlight his (indirect) connection to Russell. In fact, it seems likely that James took gamba lessons from Gottfried Finger in London in the 1690s,<sup>29</sup> through whom he would also have become familiar with a range of continental music. Both of Sherard's collections were published in Amsterdam by Roger. Opus 1 was first announced in September 1701, dedicated to Russell.<sup>30</sup> The second collection is undated but appears to have been published c.1716,<sup>31</sup> though the sonatas may well have been written much earlier. According to Hawkins, Sherard “played finely on the violin”,<sup>32</sup> and presumably performed trio sonatas with Haym and Cosimi at Southampton House (and perhaps elsewhere). Cosimi dedicated his *Sonate da camera a violino e violone o cembalo, opus 1* (Roger: Amsterdam, 1702) to Russell, who was also the dedicatee of Haym's first set of trio sonatas

27 Modern edition: Haym, *Complete Sonatas* (see n. 23).

28 For Sherard, see Michael Tilmouth, “James Sherard: An English Amateur Composer”, in: *Music & Letters* 47 (1966), pp. 313–322.

29 Peter Holman, *Life after Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch*, Woodbridge 2010, pp. 78–80.

30 *The Post Man*, 16 September 1701: “neatly engraven on Copper Plates, and printed upon fine paper by Etienne Roger at Amsterdam”.

31 Thomson noted that the Woburn Abbey copy includes a dedication to Wriothesley Russell's young son: Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury* (see n. 16), p. 131. The plate number for opus 2 is 398, which suggests a date of 1716: see Rudolph Rasch, “‘La famosa mano di Monsieur Roger’: Antonio Vivaldi and his Dutch Publishers”, in: *Informazioni e studi Vivaldiani* 17 (1996), pp. 89–135, especially pp. 96–98. See also, Rasch, *The Music Publishing House of Estienne Roger and Michel-Charles Le Cène 1696–1743* (My Work on the Internet, Volume Four), The Catalogue: Saint-Hélène-Swaen; <<http://www.let.uu.nl/~Rudolf.Rasch/personal/Roger/Catalogue-Saint-Hélène-Swaen.pdf>> (last accessed 28 April 2017).

32 Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, London 1776 (reprint 1963), vol. II, p. 806.



(Roger: Amsterdam, 1703). In the dedications to all three collections, the composers submit that Russell had heard and approved of the sonatas before publication. As a gentleman amateur composer Sherard was obviously not operating under the same pressures as professional musicians such as William Williams, but his musical talents and ability to recreate an effective facsimile of the Italian style were clearly an advantage in ingratiating himself with Russell and helped to pave the way for his commission to design the gardens at Woburn Abbey, the Russell family seat in Bedfordshire.

### Matthew Novell

William Sherard returned to England by Christmas 1698 and by the summer of 1700 agreed to tutor Henry Somerset, Marquess of Worcester (1684–1714), who had succeeded his grandfather as the second Duke of Beaufort on 21 January 1700. The young Duke of Beaufort was among the wealthiest men in England; he inherited a substantial fortune and augmented it by fortuitous marriages.<sup>33</sup> The tutelage was to prove short-lived, lasting only eighteen months, terminating with Henry falling seriously ill.<sup>34</sup> While Sherard was engaged as Henry's tutor, Wriothesley Russell was among the visitors to Badminton, in 1701, accompanied by Haym and Cosimi. We know nothing of the music they presumably played while at Badminton, but such meagre evidence hints at how the trio sonata was likely disseminated via a network of elite patronage. Unfortunately we know little of music in general at Badminton, though another collection of trio sonatas offers tantalising clues. In May 1704 one Matthew Novell advertised his self-published *Sonate da Camera or Chamber Musick being a Sett of Twelve Sonata's, consisting of Preludes Allemands Sarabands Jiggs Ayres & Gavotts with many other Musical Intervals composed for Two Violins and Bass with a Through-bass for the Theorbo-lute, Spinett or Harpsicord*, elaborately engraved by Thomas Cross and dedicated to Beaufort. While the dedication implies that the sonatas were not written explicitly for Beaufort the titular use of

33 It is estimated that his annual rental income was in the region of £ 30,000. He also entertained Queen Anne and Prince George at Badminton in 1702. See, Molly McClain, "Somerset, Henry", in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB] <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> (last accessed 30 December 2015).

34 See D.E. Allen, "Sherard, William", in: ODNB (last accessed 11 October 2015).



“*da Camera*”<sup>35</sup> and his reference to the Duke’s “diversion” clearly suggests the original performance context as Badminton House:

*Musick like other Arts and Sciences is Exceedingly improv’d, and especially in this our Nation, as it is now adorned with so many Excellent Masters: which considered I must of necessity own my Presumption, in laying these my Endeavours at your Grace’s feet; and aspiring to shelter them under so noble a Patronage, and Protection. But having lately had the Honour to be made one of your Graces Servants, I thought myself under and indispensable obligation, and that I could not make this offering to any other without derogating from the dignity of your Grace’s most Eminent Worth and Quality. [...] If I have been so happy in these Compositions as to have done any thing that may contribute to your Graces diversion; I shall think the time of my Forreign Travels successfully spent, and all my past labour and Pains amply rewarded [...]*

No more is heard of Novell after this, his only, publication.<sup>36</sup> However, the collection must have appealed to the London market, such as it was; Roger issued a pirated edition in 1705, with a fully Italianised title-page: *XII Sonate à tre Due Violini e Basso Continuo Del Signore Novelli*.

## William Corbett

Unlike John Walsh, Roger was no stranger to publishing English sonatas, though when he did it was typically with Italianised names and titles. He appears to have enjoyed a connection with Wriothsesley Russell’s household, publishing the sonatas of Cosimi and Haym, as well as those of James (Giacomo) Sherard. It is less obvious how Roger came into contact with another English composer, William Corbett, whose first opus of trio sonatas he published in 1702, styling him as “Guglielmo Corbett” on the title-page.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, of his English contemporaries, Corbett had the most sustained engagement with the trio sonata: he published four

35 They are in the style of Corelli but unusually for an English composer, Novell favoured the *da camera* type rather than *da chiesa*.

36 He is presumably the same “Mr Novelli” listed as a gambist in Johann Sigismund Cousser’s address book compiled around the turn of the century: see Holman, *Life after Death* (see n. 29), pp. 33–34.

37 For Corbett, see Owain Edwards, “William Corbett’s Instrumental Music”, in: *Svensk tidskrift för Musikforskning* lxiv (1982), pp. 9–28; Edwards, “Corbett, William”, in: *GMO* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06448>> (last accessed, 14 November 2015); *BDECM*, vol. I, pp. 299–302. Edwards gives the publication date of opus 1 as c.1700 on the grounds that the Violino Primo part only of the copy in the Rowe Music Library, Cambridge, is dated 1700.



collections between 1702 and 1713. A virtuoso violinist, Corbett's sonatas also appear to have been informed by first-hand encounters with the Italian style. He made a number of visits to the Continent and later in his career settled in Italy, where he acquired a collection of instruments so valuable that Hawkins suspected him of supplementing his income through espionage.<sup>38</sup> Corbett first comes to attention in the late 1690s as a violinist. As a soloist, he was regularly billed as the main attraction at benefit concerts in London and in the provinces, over the next decade or so. In the early years of the century, he also wrote music for several theatrical productions for Thomas Betterton's theatre company at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and became leader of the band at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket when it opened in April 1705, receiving £40 per annum. It was presumably through the theatre that he became acquainted with Lord William Byron (1670–1736), fourth Baron Byron, the dedicatee of his opus 1, whom he entreates in familiar rhetoric as an educated critic:

[...] I humbly offer to your Patronage this Muscical Essay, which will not fail of success, if honour'd with your Approbation; but if (forbid it – Euterpe) if I say it proves so unhappy as to be disliked by you; so much I relye in all things on your Lordships Judgement, that I will not for a farther proof appeal even to an Apollo. England, as well as Greece, can boast of an Orpheus & Amphion: Musick being here a study not only appropriated to the use of its professors; but practiced or admired by most of our Nobility, & Gentry, among the former of which, your Lordship may claim a due Preeminence, as excelling both in composition, & performance. The many other Accomplishments, & perfections, which the World justly attributes to you, I leave to the more accurate Writers to transmit to Posterity; since they are so much beyond the power of my Pen to describe. [...]

In Byron's case certainly, this was no mere hyperbole. He became a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Prince George of Denmark in 1695 but also appears to have been active as a composer over the next decade. He composed four suites for plays given at Drury Lane, and is also assumed to be the "Esteemed" author of a number of songs.<sup>39</sup> Corbett's sonatas also appear to have been closely connected with the theatre. In 1792 William Tytler recalled that "Corbett's sonatas for two violins and a bass were esteemed good, and often played as act tunes in the Play-house".<sup>40</sup>

38 See Hawkins, *A General History* (see n. 32), vol. II, pp. 822–823.

39 See, Peter Holman, "Byron, William, 4th Baron", in: *GMO* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42032>> (last accessed 29 November 2015). Holman suggests that Nicola Matteis may have been Byron's violin teacher.

40 William Tytler, "On the Fashionable Amusements and Entertainments in Edinburgh in the Last Century", in: *Transactions of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland* 1 (1792), pp. 499–510. Tytler was born in 1712; the article is discussed in detail in Peter Holman, "An Early Edinburgh Concert", in: *Early Music Performer* 13 (2004), pp. 9–17.



This is presumably a reference to opus 1, and given Corbett's connections with the theatre there is little reason to doubt the assertion despite the late date; indeed, the occasional indications for "solo" and "tutti" passages in his opus 1 (and also in his opera 3 and 4) seem to be indications of orchestral performances. Amplified performances of this sort were presumably one of the main ways in which the trio sonata repertoire was experienced by the public in London (see also below).

Corbett entrusted publication of his second set of sonatas to John Walsh: *Six Sonatas for two Flutes and a Bass Consisting of Preludes Allemandes Corants Sarabands and Jiggs Compos'd by William Corbett Opera Secunda Note that the 1<sup>st</sup>. 3<sup>d</sup>. and 5<sup>th</sup>. Sonata may be Plaid with two Flutes without the Bass or Transpos'd 3 Notes lower for y<sup>e</sup> Violin* (1705). The only complete copy includes no dedication.<sup>41</sup> A pirated edition was issued by Roger the following year as *VIII Sonates VI de M<sup>r</sup>. Corbett [...] & II de M<sup>r</sup>. Finger*. Corbett's opus 3 sonatas followed in 1708: *Six Sonatas with an Overture and Aires in 4 Parts for a Trumpet, Violin's and Hautboys Flute de Allmain Bassoons or Harpsicord [...] Note that all these Sonatas are to be Play'd w<sup>th</sup> 3 Flutes & a Bass in y<sup>e</sup> French Ray 3 notes Higher*. The collection was dedicated to Prince George of Denmark. It is undated but presumably was issued before the latter's death on 28 October:

[...] *Having composed the following Pieces for your Royall Highness private Musick I humbly beg leave to inscribe em to your Royall Highness I shall esteem in the greatest honour and happiness of my life if they are capable of contributing to your private diversion [...]*

Corbett's scoring is reminiscent of that in Gottfried Keller's *Six Sonatas, The First Three for a Trumpett, Houbois, or violins, with Double Basses. The Other Three For two flutes, and two Houbois: or two violins, with Double Basses* published in 1700 and dedicated to the then Princess Anne. The sonatas were presumably intended for members of the wind band such as the trumpeter John Shore, the oboists Thomas Chevalier and Peter La Tour and the oboist and recorder player James Paisible. Corbett's sonatas appear to have been part of his petition for a formal court place, through his influential patron. Corbett was officially admitted to the Private Musick, without fee, in December 1709.

<sup>41</sup> Lincoln College, Oxford: I am grateful to the College's Librarian Mrs Fiona Piddock for providing me with a copy of the sonatas. The British Library has a copy of the second flute book (Music g.161.n.(1.)), though it also is without a dedication.



After the publication of his opus 3, Corbett spent some time in Italy where he was reputedly associated with Nicola Cosimi.<sup>42</sup> Corbett was back in England by February 1713, and two months later was admitted to a fully-paid place in the Royal Music upon the death of Francis Jones. Soon after his return to England he also published his fourth and final opus of trio sonatas, in two books of six.<sup>43</sup> He undertook publication of the collection himself; division into two books also allowed him to maximise his patronage. The scorings delineated the two books, but also presumably reflected the different tastes of (and instruments played by) the dedicatees. The first book, for two recorders or flutes and bass, was dedicated to Henry Bentinck, Earl of Portland (1682–1726):

*The offering to y<sup>r</sup> L<sup>d</sup>.ship (who are so Good a Judge of Musick) such trifles as these Compositions, well shews what Dependance is had upon y<sup>r</sup> Goodness, & Condescention, & I begg y<sup>r</sup> L<sup>d</sup>.ship wou'd judge from hence how great my Respect is for y<sup>u</sup>, that no other Consideration could have induc'd me to it, but a Desire of taking y<sup>e</sup> first opportunity publickly to profess my self with all possible Zeale & Veneration [...]*

Bentinck was the eldest surviving son of Hans William Bentinck (1649–1709), the First Earl of Portland,<sup>44</sup> who as one of William III's closest friends had amassed a substantial fortune and large estate. In April 1701, the young Bentinck was sent on a grand tour that took him through Italy and Germany in the company of the historian Rapin de Thoyras (1661–1725). He returned to England in 1703 and in June of the following year married Lady Elizabeth Noel (d. 1733), who as the eldest daughter of the Second Earl of Gainsborough had inherited a fortune of some £60,000 and the family estate of Titchfield in Hampshire. In 1705 Bentinck was elected as a Member of Parliament for Southampton and remained so until his succession to his father's earldom in November 1709. Upon the death of his father, Bentinck inherited the family seat of Bulstrode in Berkshire and estates in Cheshire, Cumberland, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Sussex, Westminster and Yorkshire: in total worth an estimated £850,150. Corbett is likely to have become acquainted with Bentinck through Lord Byron, who married Henry's sister, Lady Frances

42 It may have been during one of his trips that he acquired his copy of Torelli's opus 1: *Sonate a Tre Istromenti con il Basso Continuo. Opera Prima*. It was later owned by John Hawkins, and is now in the British Library (Music Collections g.50.).

43 One assumes that the publication pre-dated his official appointment to the Royal Music, as he made no mention of it in the volume.

44 The following biographical account is based on that given in: <<http://www.history-ofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/bentinck-henry-1682-1726>> (last accessed 28 April 2017).



Wilhelmina Bentinck, in December 1706; she died on 31 March 1712, at age 28. The second book, for two violins and bass, was dedicated to Richard Edgcumbe (1680–1758), first Baron Edgcumbe. Edgcumbe had been in Rome in 1697–1699, before being returned as a member of parliament for Cornwall in 1701. While in Rome he studied with Corelli and it seems likely that it was there too that he first encountered Nicola Haym, who dedicated his opus 2 trio sonatas to him in 1704. In the dedication Corbett recounts Edgcumbe's approval of the sonatas pre-publication:

[...] As you have been pleas'd, when they were performed before you, to over look their faults, it has encourag'd me to publish 'em, not doubting but y<sup>e</sup> Approbation of a Gentleman of y<sup>r</sup> nice Taste & Judgm<sup>t</sup>. in all y<sup>e</sup> politer Arts, will recommend em to y<sup>e</sup> Town, [...]

Of his patron, Corbett also describes the “repeated instances I have rec<sup>d</sup>. of your Friendship & good Nature”. The association was evidently long-lasting: Corbett also dedicated his concerti grossi *Bizzarie Universali*, opus 8 (London, 1742) to Edgcumbe.

## William Topham

Between the publication of Corbett's opera 3 and 4, there were only two collections of trio sonatas issued by native composers working in London. Sometime between 1708 and 1710 John Walsh issued a collection of six sonatas by Daniel Purcell (younger brother or cousin of Henry): *Six Sonatas, Three for Two Flutes & a Bass, and Three Solos for a Flute and a Bass. The Whole Fairly Engraven & Carefully Corrected by y<sup>e</sup> Author*. Daniel moved from Oxford to London shortly after Henry's death in 1695. He composed music for over forty plays, mostly before 1700. Purcell was one of many English composers in the first decade of the century to suffer from the increasing tendencies towards Italianate opera. After 1707 he appears to have mostly worked as an organist (Dunstan's-in-the-East, and after 1713 at St Andrew's, Holborn). His sonatas did not include a dedication but were performed in concerts at York Buildings.<sup>45</sup> The other collection was William Topham's opus 3. Aside from his publications we

45 See Mark Humphreys and Robert Thompson, “Purcell, Daniel”, in: *GMO* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41799>> (last accessed 16 September 2015).



know almost nothing of Topham. Walsh published his opera 1 and 2 of solo sonatas for recorder and continuo in 1701 and 1706, respectively; the two volumes were subsequently reprinted as a single edition in Amsterdam, in 1707–1708 (Roger) and again in 1710–1711 (Mortier).<sup>46</sup> By the winter of 1709 Topham was ready to publish his first collection of trio sonatas, *"In Imitation of ArchAngelo Corelli"*. Frustratingly we know nothing of the context for which Topham wrote his sonatas, which included an unusually terse dedication to William Henry Granville, third Earl of Bath (1692–1711):

These following Compositions are w:<sup>th</sup> Most profound Respect Dedicated to your Hono:<sup>ble</sup> Patronage by My Lord Your most humble and most Obed<sup>t</sup> Ser:<sup>t</sup> William Topham

Granville's patronage was short-lived. He died of smallpox on 17 May 1711; he was buried at Westminster Abbey.<sup>47</sup> After this collection no more is heard of Topham, though he may well have taken over the Villiers Street room in York Buildings: in 1727 it is referred to as "Mr. Topham's Great Room in York Buildings".<sup>48</sup> By the following year it had changed name again.

The terseness of Topham's dedication may be a reflection of the circumstances surrounding the publication. He engaged Luke Pippard to engrave and print the collection. Pippard was a former apprentice to John Walsh and had struck out on his own in early 1709. Walsh did not take the competition kindly. Pippard claimed that his former master had threatened to "spend a Thousand Pounds to ruin me, if I do not discontinue Printing".<sup>49</sup> The dispute between the two men raged for much of 1709. Matters came to a head when Walsh made a pre-emptive strike and advertised his own edition of Topham's collection in the *Post Man and the Historical Account* for 15–17 November. He did so at the price of 2s 6d: exactly half the price advertised by Pippard and Topham. The publication

46 Rasch, *Estienne Roger and Michel-Charles Le Cène* (see n. 31); <<http://www.let.uu.nl/~Rudolf.Rasch/personal/Roger/Catalogue-Taglietti-Trios.pdf>>. (last accessed 28 April 2017).

47 *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, ed. by G.E. Cokayne et al., 13 vols, London 1910–1959, reprint in 6 volumes, Gloucester 2000, vol. II, p. 22.

48 Hugh Arthur Scott, "London's First Concert Room", in: *Music & Letters* 18 (1937), pp. 379–390, at p. 389.

49 *The Post Man*, 26–29 November 1709; quoted in William C. Smith, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by John Walsh During the Years 1695–1720*, London 1948, p. 103. See also David Hunter, "Music Copyright in Britain to 1800", in: *Music & Letters* 67 (1986), pp. 269–282.



gave rise to a heated newspaper debate.<sup>50</sup> In brief: both parties accused the other of piracy, stretching back to the previous spring with Pippard's first publications, which Walsh claimed he had stolen. Walsh resolved to discourage Pippard – and any other potential rivals – by underselling Topham's opus 3 “for the value of the Paper and Printing”.<sup>51</sup> Pippard was eventually forced out of business in 1713, shortly after engraving and printing Corbett's opus 4.<sup>52</sup>

Walsh's deliberate underselling of the Topham sonatas may appear quite aggressive, but in fact his price of 2s 6d was roughly in line with his general prices for collections of six trio sonatas, which he tended to sell for 3s or 4s apiece.<sup>53</sup> Topham's sonatas were priced at 3s in later Walsh

50 Much of which is included in Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49), pp. 102–103. The saga concluded with the following in the *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 1–3 December 1709 (which to the best of my knowledge has not been reprinted elsewhere): “Whereas Wm. Topham has published a scandalous Advertisement in the Post-Man of Tuesday last against me, the scurrility whereof I think beneath me to answer, considering the Person from whom it comes; and as to the Sonatas, which I alledge are of a fairer Character, and more Correct than those done by Luke Pippard, and to put an end to this Cavil, I have deposited 20 Guineas in the Hands of the Author of this Paper, which if Wm. Topham or Luke Pippard will do the same, two Masters of Musick shall be chosen by each Party, and whose Edition of the two shall appear upon their Proof to be the fairest Character and most Correct, shall have the 40 Guineas. If they refuse in Ten Days to comply with this far Proposal, what they have published to the World must be deem'd to be malicious, false and groundless. A Specimen of each Edition is sealed up together, by which the Matter is to be determined. As to Luke Pippard, who wou'd insinuate, that I have been the Aggressor in Copying on him, whereas 'tis evident he first Copied my Symphonies of Thomyris, without the least provocation, and since that the Symphonies of Pyrrhu; the Symphonies of Camilla, my Books of French Dances, and the Opera and Symphonies of Clorida, to which he has impudently put my own Sculpture Plate for the Frontespiece, which did belong to Mr Leveridge's Song Books, which the said Luke Pippard has Sureptiously got, and pretends he bought it, yet at the same time owns he knew it to be mine: He likewise maliciously reports, that I have threatened his Ruin, I do hereby declare, I have been so far from the least endeavouring it, that from his first beginning I have supported him with Goods, Work and Money, till he used those base Practices, to discourage which I now sell the Originals of those he copied on me for the value of the Paper and Printing.” No more is heard of the matter, though based on a comparison of the surviving copies Topham and Pippard would have been foolish to pick up the gauntlet. There are in fact only minor differences between the two editions, and both typically transmit the same minor errors such as reversal of continuo figures or omission of accidentals.

51 *The Post Man and the Historical Account*, 3 December 1709; Walsh's notice is dated 2 December.

52 There were large concert benefits advertised for Pippard in the *Daily Courant* on 21 December 1718 and 22 December 1718.

53 Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49), p. xv.



catalogues,<sup>54</sup> which may suggest that his profit margin was roughly 6d on this kind of publication.<sup>55</sup> Walsh advertised a number of single trio sonatas with a solo sonata for 1s 6d.<sup>56</sup> This was the same price as other sonatas sold individually, though Purcell's "Golden Sonata" (no. 9 of the second set) cost only 6d.<sup>57</sup> To c. 1715, Walsh's usual price for collections of six trio sonatas was 3s; the most expensive trio sonata collection he advertised to that point was Johann Christian Schickhard's opus 5 set of six sonatas, priced at 6s in 1715.<sup>58</sup> This was the same price as Finger's opus 1 and a shilling more than some of the Corelli opera, all of which comprised twelve sonatas.<sup>59</sup> With the general value of money remaining reasonably constant, this represented a significant decrease in prices when compared with sonatas sold by Henry Playford in the 1690s. As a representative example from his sale catalogue of 1697 which included a number of imported prints and manuscript copies of Italian and German sonatas, a print of Bassani's opus 5 (1683) cost 10s, while a manuscript copy of the same was advertised for £1 10s.<sup>60</sup> Purcell's sonatas were similarly priced. When the second set was eventually published in July 1697 Playford sold them at 10s for subscribers and 15s for non-subscribers, though this was reduced to 12s by 1698.<sup>61</sup> Walsh acquired unsold copies of both sets upon the death of Purcell's widow in 1706. By 1741 he was advertising copies for only 6s, but evidently still had copies by 1747.<sup>62</sup>

54 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

55 Prices are often lacking but it appears that Walsh's prices remained relatively fixed unless he was in direct competition: see David Hunter, "The Publishing of Opera and Song Books in England, 1703–1726", in: *Notes*, Second Series 47/3 (1991), pp. 647–685. Thus where a collection appears priced only in a later catalogue we can generally assume the price has not fluctuated greatly from when it was originally advertised.

56 See, for example, Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49), p. 48 (N° 150a): "Sonata in D# for Violins in 3 Parts by Chrisophoro Pez As also a Solo for a Violin by Signr Pepusch [...]".

57 Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49), p. 48 (N° 149); the only one of Purcell's sonatas to be re-printed. Another example: in April 1704, he also advertised "A Sonata for two Violins and a thorow Bass with a Trumpet part by Archangelo Corelli [...]", priced 1s 6d: *ibid.*, p. 48 (N° 150).

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137 (N° 467). This is difficult to contextualise fully, however, as we do not have prices for most of the volumes of twelve sonatas that Walsh sold.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 56 (N° 177), Finger, opus 1; pp. 24–25 (N° 76), p. 39 (N° 129), p. 40 (N° 131), Corelli. Walsh was most likely selling off old stock of Finger's opus 1, perhaps acquired from the composer after his departure from London.

60 See Kang, *The Trio Sonata in Restoration England* (see n. 10), pp. 129–30.

61 See also, Holman, *Henry Purcell* (see n. 5), pp. 92–93.

62 As advertised in William Boyce's *Twelve Sonatas for Two Violins; With a Bass for the Violoncello or Harpsicord*.



It seems that William Williams used Purcell's non-subscription price as the basis for his set of six sonatas, which he advertised for 7s 6d. We have no price for Walsh's pirated edition of the Williams sonatas which appeared in 1703, though in 1730 he was selling copies for 4s. This was more in line with Walsh's general pricing structure though still more expensive than average.<sup>63</sup>

## Cultural economics and the commercialisation of the cultural memory

These few examples serve to illustrate the point that within a decade prices of collections of trio sonatas in London were lowered significantly as a result of an increasing range of repertoire in printed format (not just imported originals) and direct competition between Walsh and Roger's London agents. There is perhaps a temptation to imply that the introduction of these relatively cheaper prints brought with it somewhat of a democratisation of this repertoire, enabling the trio sonata to reach a fairly wide audience in printed form.<sup>64</sup> However, in two recent articles, Robert D. Hume has challenged received perceptions about the value and cost of elite culture in England in the Restoration period (i.e. c. 1660–1740).<sup>65</sup> In the first of these, Hume posited two observations: "First, no more than about 5 percent of the total population of England and Wales could have had the discretionary spending capacity to indulge

63 We do not have 1713 prices for Corbett's two books opus 4; book 1 was advertised by Walsh for 4s in 1742: William C. Smith and Charles Humphries, *A Bibliography of the Musical Works Published by John Walsh, 1721–1766*, London 1968, p. 91 (N° 400).

64 Certainly we see fewer manuscript copies of trio sonatas after 1700; of the English sonatas discussed above, there are only two related manuscript copies: GB-Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mus. Sch. D.252, a scribal copy of James Sherard's opus 2 with autograph emendations (lacking N° 11, though space was left for it to be copied); GB-London, British Library, Tyson MS 2, which includes poorly copied violin parts for five of Matthew Novell's sonatas.

65 Hume, "The Economics of Culture" (see n. 17); Robert D. Hume, "The Value of Money in Eighteenth-Century England: Incomes, Prices, Buying Power—and Some Problems in Cultural Economics", in: *Huntington Library Quarterly* 77/4 (2014), pp. 373–416. See also David Hunter, "Patronizing Handel, Inventing Audiences: The Intersections of Class, Money, Music and History", in: *Early Music* 28 (2000), pp. 32–49.



significantly in the purchase of elite culture [which includes music]. [...] Second, most of our 5 percent [...] could indulge in relatively cheap books or amusements but could not regularly afford expensive ones".<sup>66</sup> In Hume's analysis he concluded that up to 2s was generally affordable, but that "A price of 5 shillings made a book costly or simply unobtainable for fully 99 percent of the population."<sup>67</sup> He further concluded that by 1709, six shillings "represented a normal top price for a book for which substantial sales were anticipated".<sup>68</sup> Hume was referring to non-music books, and acknowledges that music books tended to be more expensive and had a smaller market than literary volumes. It is also worth noting that Walsh's prices for trio sonatas were roughly in line with much of the music he sold. William C. Smith noted Walsh offered items ranging from 6d to 9s or so and that 3s or 4s was a "good average" overall.<sup>69</sup> Even so, at an average of 3s or 4s such collections were relatively expensive in the context of Hume's findings. Of course, as we have seen some sonatas were available severally, and the cost of purchasing music in parts could well have been spread across the performers, rendering them more affordable. The practice of selling parts individually may also be implied by the reasonably frequent quotations in advertisements that the cost was for a certain number of partbooks (e.g. William Williams' sonatas were advertised with "Price of the 4 Books 7s. 6d."<sup>70</sup>); it may also explain the way in which some partbooks survive individually. Nevertheless, partbook format implies performance and Hume's findings also suggest that "musical instruments would have been decidedly costly for all but a tiny percentage of the population".<sup>71</sup> For example, in 1702 Nicola Cosimi imported a Mattia Albo violin from Rome, which he sold for £7 6s and sold a Cremona violin for 30 guineas. His accounts also show that in London he paid £5 for "Rehair and new nuts for two of my bows" and a whopping £10 for "Engraving of my initials on the case of my new violin".<sup>72</sup>

66 Hume, "The Economics of Culture" (see n. 17), p. 497.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 532.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 509.

69 Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49), p. xv.

70 *The Post Man and the Historical Account*, 18–20 January 1700.

71 Hume, "The Economics of Culture" (see n. 17), p. 531.

72 See, Albert W. Cooper, "Nicola Cosimi 1667–1717: His English visit, 1701–1705", in: *The Strad* 108/1285 (1997): <<http://www.thecoopercollection.co.uk/art11.htm>> (last accessed 12 October 2015).



The implication is that, *inter alia*, trio sonatas were primarily purchased by music societies,<sup>73</sup> wealthy amateurs or patrons, and by professional musicians. Indeed, as we have seen, the dedications of the trio sonatas written in England suggest that much of the repertoire was conceived explicitly for the diversion of the nobility or for the court. The same small demographic was also the main intended market for purchasing the printed collections – largely as music to be played in the context of their households. Moreover, the repertoire was generally written by composers who were actively seeking patronage. Given these circumstances, it would seem that composers were not liberated creatively by the growth in opportunities within the expanding sphere of commercial music publishing but rather were stifled by its dependence on patronage, directly and indirectly. Thus, rather than seeing the overtly Italianate – or indeed, Corellian – traits in the works of Topham and company as lacking in invention or as a sign of their lack of creativity, it is perhaps more accurate to say that these works demonstrate how composers were conditioning their creativity in order to meet the expectations and requirements of their patrons, whose social class was also the primary market for such works in printed format.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, it is also worth noting that in many of the dedications patrons are described as knowledgeable critics whose approval is sought as part of the compositional process. Steeped in conventional language, one has to be cautious in taking dedications at face value and to what extent this was a genuine intercourse of ideas is impossible to say, but there is no reason to think that it represents mere hyperbole. Many of the grand tourists received training on an instrument,<sup>75</sup> and as Michael Tilmouth has noted,

73 See, for example, Bryan White, “‘A pretty knot of Musical Friends’: The Ferrar Brothers and a Stamford Music Club in the 1690s”, in: *Music in the British Provinces, 1690–1914*, ed. by Rachel Cowgill and Peter Holman, Aldershot 2007, pp. 9–44.

74 For an example of this as a wider phenomenon among seventeenth-century artists, see James A. Winn, “Creativity on Several Occasions”, in: *Concepts of Creativity in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by Rebecca Herissone and Alan Howard, Woodbridge 2013, pp. 35–59.

75 One example will serve for several: Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, who met and became friends with Wriothesley Russell in Rome. According to his diary, Clerk later recalled that his “two great diversions at Rome [September 1697 to December 1698] were Musick and Antiquities. I excelled to a fault in the first, but the practise of musick gave me easier access to the best company in Rome than other strangers had. My masters were Bernardo Pasquini [...], and Archangelo Correlli, whom I believe no man ever equalled for the violin. However, as I bestowed most of my time on the Harpsicord and the knowledge of musical composition, I profited but little on the violin”: Sir John Clerk, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Baronet, Baron of the Exchequer*, ed. by John M. Gray, Edinburgh 1892, p. 28.



in Restoration England, "there is plenty of evidence to show that even as musical ability was not regarded as indispensable, some theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject was still considered proper to the 'complete' and well-educated gentleman".<sup>76</sup> Of course, Corelli's sonatas became undeniably popular across Europe and especially so in England after the turn of the century, primarily through the generation of grand tourists.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to being familiar and fashionable – and in most cases experienced first-hand by grand tourists – music composed in a recognisably similar style to that which Corelli symbolised gave patrons an opportunity to contribute to the compositional process: in short, the style was intellectually accessible to the educated amateur. It was in effect a form of dialogue between composer and patron, using a common language. And it is in this context that we must understand William Corbett's titling of the gavot from his opus 4, book 2, no. iv as being in "Imitation of Archangelo Corelli". The collection appeared shortly after Corelli's death and the book's dedicatee, Richard Edgcumbe, spent 1697–1699 in Rome where, according to Hawkins, he studied with Corelli and even commissioned Hugh Howard to paint Corelli's portrait. In this light, Corbett's reference seems less public and commercial and more private and conversational.

Given the importance of patronage in the development and dissemination of the trio sonata in England, it could be argued that not only was imitation a well established and still common mode of composition, "originality" – or rather a response, such as Henry Purcell's, that incorporated English elements with those of the new Italian style – simply was not in the composer's interest. Indeed, we see this precisely in Roger North's oft-quoted remark that while Purcell's sonatas were considered "very artificiall and good musick" they were "clog'd with somewhat of an English vein, for which they are unworthily despised".<sup>78</sup> One sus-

76 Tilmouth, *Chamber Music* (see n. 10), p. 135.

77 See Peter Allsop, *Arcangelo Corelli: New Orpheus of our Times*, Oxford 1999, chapter 11, especially pp. 188–199; Lynette Bowring, "The coming over of the works of the great Corelli: The Influence of Italian Violin Repertoire in London, 1675–1705", in: *Reappraising the Seicento: Composition, Dissemination, Assimilation*, ed. by Jonathan Wainwright, Joseph Knowles, Andrew Cheetham, Newcastle 2014, pp. 181–212.

78 Roger North on Music (see n. 1), p. 310 n. 65. The most convincing analysis of Purcell's sonatas is Howard, *Poetics of Artifice* (see n. 5) in which he notes (*ibid.*, p. 242) that "At the heart of North's comments was a conviction not that fuge was old-fashioned and therefore to be censured ... but that the extent of Purcell's artifice was actually obstructive to good air [melody]".



pects that North was here referring to the tastes of patrons.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, this appears to have been partly borne out in the slow response to the subscription calls and subsequent poor sales of Purcell's second set of ten sonatas. Nevertheless, even as late as 1711 (around the same time as North was writing), the cleric and writer on music Arthur Bedford was still urging English composers (in quite nationalistic terms) to study the trio sonatas of Henry Purcell alongside those of Corelli and Bassani, in the hopes of writing sonatas that blended English elements with those of the Italian style.<sup>80</sup>

He who would attain skill in composing Instrumental Musick, ought above all other sorts to be well versed in the score of Sonata's, as being the perfection of all modern improvements of this nature; for such I principally recommend to them the Sonata's, Setts of Musick, &c which were compos'd by the late famous Mr Henry Purcel [...] We if this nation have had many eminent Masters, and are at this time wonderfully improv'd, yet no one who would be eminent, ought to rest here, but joyn to this what may be learn'd from other Nations; and in this respect the Italian Musick both Instrumental and Vocal, especially their Sonata's and more especially yet the Sonata's of Bassani, and Corelli, are the fittest for the Score. And I believe, there is no Artist, who will not think it well worth his while to be acquainted with the Italian Musick; since from hence it was, that the late Mr Henry Purcel gain'd so much skill in Composition, that his memory is honour'd upon this account, and he is justly esteem'd to be the Glory of this Nation.

Bedford's championing of Purcell was linked to his views of the increasing degradation of the state of music in England.<sup>81</sup> Like North, he was deeply connected to the cultural context for which such works were intended. He was chaplain to Wriothsley Russell, second duke of Bedford, from 1702 and tutored his son, Lord John Russell, later fourth duke of Bedford. And from the late 1730s Arthur Bedford styled himself chaplain to Frederick, Prince of Wales. Given the shared milieu of the Russell household, it is perhaps no accident that James Sherard's library (now mostly in the Bodleian Library, Oxford) included sonatas

79 North came from the same social class as many of the patrons discussed above; his father was Dudley North, Fourth Baron North and his elder brother Francis became Lord Chancellor. In 1696 he married the daughter of Sir Robert Gayer. See, *Roger North on Music* (see n. 1), especially pp. xv–xxviii.

80 GB-London, British Library, Add. MS 4917 ("Observations concerning Musick Made Anno Domini 1705 or 1706"), quoted in Tilmouth, *Chamber Music* (see n. 10), pp. 157–158.

81 His most influential tract on music was *The Great Abuse of Musick*, London 1711, in which Bedford offered the works of the Elizabethan masters as counterbalances for what he perceived to be a lack of good taste and morals in music for the home and for the theatres.



by Corelli, Colista, Purcell and others, in parts and in score.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, most tantalising of all is Sherard's commonplace book, which contains over a hundred musical excerpts showing how he was assimilating the Italian style through an analysis of cadential progressions, modulations and sequences: Stephen Rose has recently identified many of these extracts as taken from a wide range of trio sonatas by Italian composers including Antonio Luigi Baldassini, Ippolito Boccaletti, Giovanni Maria Ruggieri and Giovanni Battista Tibaldi, as well as from Purcell's sonatas.<sup>83</sup> But this is not to suggest that Sherard aligned himself with Bedford's ideas. While Sherard may have studied (and played) the sonatas of Purcell, the end result of his own compositions was firmly in the Corellian *da chiesa* mould. So much so that Hawkins was later to claim (in a complimentary sense) that "an ordinary judge, not knowing they were the work of another, might mistake [them] for compositions of this great master [Corelli]".<sup>84</sup>

Despite the esteem in which Purcell was held and the ever increasing weight of his memory carried in the cultural imagination,<sup>85</sup> and the prominent position that his sonatas hold for us today, arguably the most significant figure in terms of the wider dissemination and cultivation of the trio sonata in England in the late seventeenth century was in fact Gottfried Finger. Finger's opus 1 sonatas were published in 1688 and dedicated to James II, with the intention that they were to be performed in the Chapel Royal. Finger, a virtuoso gambist, was in London by early 1687 and was appointed to James's new Catholic chapel in July of the same year. The Glorious Revolution put paid to James and his Catholic chapel almost a year later, but Finger persevered in London until he finally left after coming in last place in a competition to set Congreve's masque

82 For Sherard's library, see Margaret Crum, *Revised Descriptions*, unpublished typescript (GB-Oxford, Bodleian Library, Mus. AC. 4); see also the catalogue in Kang, *The Trio Sonata in Restoration England* (see n. 10).

83 GB-Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mus. Sch. A.641. Stephen Rose, "An Englishman Analyses Corelli: James Sherard's Commonplace Book", unpublished conference presentation, in: *Music in Transition: Changing Styles and Approaches in the Mid-Baroque (1650–1710)*, Birmingham Conservatoire 2–3 July 2015.

84 Hawkins, *A General History* (see n. 32), p. 678. North was less generous; he found Sherard's counterpoint "over-driven" in the fugal sections and lacking in the ability to "entertain some variety" in thematic development: Wilson, *Roger North* (see n. 1), p. 138.

85 For Purcell reception history, see Rebecca Herissone, "Performance History and Reception", in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell*, Aldershot 2012, pp. 303–351.



*The Judgement of Paris* in June 1701.<sup>86</sup> In the 1690s Finger seems to have been active as a teacher, and James Sherard appears to have been one of his pupils; Sherard's aforementioned library includes several manuscripts of gamba music, including a number of German manuscripts.<sup>87</sup> After the close of the Chapel Royal in 1689, Finger also became heavily involved in London's emerging public concert scene at York Buildings in Villiers Street. He established a weekly concert series, first advertised on 23 November 1693.<sup>88</sup> We know little of the repertoire that was performed at these concerts, though the sale catalogue of Finger's substantial library, left in London after his departure (advertised between November 1704 and April 1705), may shed some light on it. The catalogue was recently rediscovered by Peter Holman and includes over fifty sonatas, trios as well as large-scale sonatas; wind instruments feature prominently.<sup>89</sup> It describes many of the sonatas as being "*prick'd 3 times over*" and lists Purcell's Golden Sonata as "drawn out for several instruments", suggesting large-scale performances including amplified trio sonatas. Indeed, Holman has further suggested that Finger introduced large-scale sonatas mixing wind and brass instruments with strings to England.<sup>90</sup> "Large-scale sonatas of this sort [...] were just what was required for London's new public concerts. Their mixture of novel sonorities and brilliant virtuosity would have appealed to audiences that were becoming accustomed to sitting and listening to instrumental music rather than playing it at home or just experiencing it as background music in the theatre".<sup>91</sup> We know little of the financial circumstances of Finger's concerts. But given the physical limitations of the venue (including the size of the band), it seems that audience numbers were not large. In order to account for the concerts as commercial enterprises Holman suggests that it is possible "that events of this sort were partly financed by a group of aristocrats prepared to pay much more than the advertised ticket price".<sup>92</sup> If this was indeed the case, it would further highlight the significant role played by the patronage of a vanishingly small minority

86 For Finger, see Robert Rawson, *From Olomouc to London: Performance, Transmission and Reception of the Music of Gottfried Finger (c. 1656–1730)*, PhD thesis, University of London 2000; Holman, *Life after Death* (see n. 29).

87 Holman, *Life after Death* (see n. 29), pp. 78–80.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

89 Peter Holman, "The Sale Catalogue of Gottfried Finger's Music Library: New Light on London Concert Life in the 1690s", in: *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 43 (2010), pp. 23–38.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 32.



in the dissemination of the sonata in England. Perhaps another representation of this patronage is found in several published collections. It was for this type of mixed ensemble that Gottfried Keller composed his set of six sonatas, issued in 1700, and dedicated to Princess Anne (later Queen Anne), implying that they were written for her wind band: *Six Sonatas, The First Three for a Trumpett, Houbois, or violins, with Double Basses. The Other Three For two flutes, and two Houbois: or two violins, with Double Basses*. They seem to be intended either for trumpet, two oboes, tenor oboe, bassoon and continuo or trumpet, two violins, viola, cello and continuo. With their scoring and "patchwork" structures, Keller's sonatas are more typical of the central European repertoire of consort music. There are also similar trumpet sonatas by Henry and Daniel Purcell, William Croft and John Eccles.<sup>93</sup> William Corbett's opus 3 sonatas (1706) also appear to have been written for the same courtly ensemble: *Six Sonatas with an Overture and Aires in 4 Parts for a Trumpet, Violin's and Hautboys Flute de Allmain Bassoons or Harpsicord*, further demonstrating how influential these public concerts had become in the early eighteenth century, as well highlighting how far the court had declined as a centre for the production of sophisticated chamber music. While after 1700 the court retained a certain prestige it ceased to become a driving force for musical innovations; after 1700 members of the royal family tended to more frequently attend public concerts. The last piece in William Topham's opus 3 is a sonata "in seven parts" for two trumpets, two violins, viola, cello and continuo suggesting that its origins may lie in concerts at York Buildings. William Corbett also wrote trumpet sonatas. Indeed, Holman has suggested that Corbett too may have studied with Finger as a teenager in the 1690s, and it may have been Finger's influence that encouraged Roger to publish Corbett's opus 1 sonatas in 1702;<sup>94</sup> Roger went on to issue several collections including sonatas by both composers. Finger influence is most obvious in the first and last of Corbett's opus 1 sonatas.<sup>95</sup> The first is scored for violin, viola da gamba and continuo; a scoring unusual for Italian sonatas but perhaps modelled on the three sonatas for violin, bass viol and continuo that open Finger's opus 1, which may have also been the model for Purcell's sonata in G minor (Z780).<sup>96</sup> Corbett's twelfth sonata gives a trumpet and

93 See Peter Holman, "The Trumpet Sonata in England", in: *Early Music* 4 (1976), pp. 424–429.

94 Holman, *Life after Death* (see n. 29), pp. 27–29.

95 See also *ibid.*

96 Purcell's sonata survives incomplete, lacking the bass viol part: see Holman, *Henry Purcell* (see n. 5), p. 92.



an oboe as alternatives to the violins. The most likely model is Finger's sonata in C major for trumpet, oboe and continuo, which survives in British Library, Add. MS 49599, no. 2 (RI170).

## Conclusions

In conclusion: This essay offers a preliminary exploration of the cultural contexts in which English composers were writing trio sonatas after Purcell. The sonatas written by English composers working in England represent only a small proportion of the market. For example, according to William C. Smith's catalogue, by the end of 1715 Walsh published or advertised around 50 items that included at least one trio sonata.<sup>97</sup> There are also a sizable number of trio sonatas written in England in the first decade or so of the century by émigré musicians, the most substantial body of which are by J.C. Pepusch: while they are uneven in quality and often rather insipid, he was the first composer in England to seriously engage with the sonata *à deux*.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, despite the obvious influence of Corelli for English composers, it is misleading to suggest that his was the only influence. The unique perspective offered by James Sherard illustrates this fact and demonstrates the complexities of tracing stylistic influences.

Nevertheless, the "English" trio sonatas discussed above are given short shrift in modern discourse, where they are often described as examples of composers' inability or unwillingness "to resist the challenge of Corelli's instrumental chamber music".<sup>99</sup> This interpretation echoes that of Hawkins in the mid 1770s: "The natural and familiar style of Corelli's music, and that simplicity which is one of its characteristics,

97 Smith, *A Bibliography* (see n. 49). This represented about 10% of the total items listed for the same period.

98 For Pepusch, see Herbert Fred, *The Instrumental Music of Johann Christoph Pepusch*, PhD thesis, University of North Carolina 1961; Donald Cook, *The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch, 1667–1752*, PhD thesis, University of London 1982.

99 Michael Tilmouth and Christopher D.S. Field, "Consort Music II: from 1660", in: *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Ian Spink, Oxford 1992, pp. 245–281, at p. 281. In truth the literature is not extensive, other than Purcell the English repertoire generally passed over quickly: see, for example, William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Baroque Era*, 3rd edition, New York 1972, pp. 301–320.



betrayed many into an opinion that it was easily to be imitated; [...] but the experiment has been made, and has failed".<sup>100</sup> The impression of a rather passive pandering to Corelli – as perhaps exemplified by William Topham's opus 3 – is further reinforced by the conventionally self-deprecating nature of many of the dedications. For example, Sherard's opus 1 dedication has been described as "a counsel of despair" because of the composer's submission to his patron that "*The most we can pretend to [...] by our faint Copies, [is] to put your Grace in mind of the excellent Originals*".<sup>101</sup> But as we have seen, patrons were the driving force behind the development of the trio sonata in England. And patronage seems to explain why composers whom we tend to hold in higher esteem (e.g. John Blow, William Croft, John Eccles, Jeremiah Clarke, John Weldon) largely avoided the trio sonata: they largely enjoyed regular employment in sacred institutions or in the theatre and thus had no recourse to the genre.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, it is perhaps no accident that it was these areas specifically – church and theatre – that William Williams chose to exemplify the English "genius" compared to his own "Labours" in the Italian trio sonata.

Rebecca Herissone has highlighted the prominent role played by imitation in musical creativity in Restoration England, noting that it was only during the eighteenth century that "the increasingly market-led nature of creativity brought a new significance to the qualities of originality and individuality".<sup>103</sup> Certainly it is true that commercial opportunities for composers in London increased in the late 1690s with

100 Hawkins, *A General History* (see n. 32), p. 678. Indeed, by around 1714 we begin to find the adjective "inimitable" first associated with Corelli in some English writings, though this appears to refer to Corelli's playing: see, for example, *The Spectator*, vol. ix, p. 189.

101 Tilmouth and Field, "Consort Music II" (see n. 99), p. 281.

102 There is one trio sonata surviving by John Blow, as well as a ground written for a trio sonata ensemble (see n. 8). There are four sonatas written by William Croft but they are found in only a single manuscript source, copied by one of Croft's apprentices. It is not known exactly when the Croft sonatas were written or for whom. Croft had been a chorister at the Chapel Royal under Blow. It may well be that these sonatas were written as a compositional exercise, in a similar way to Purcell's fantasias; Harry Johnstone has suggested that they may have been performed at Thomas Britton's Clerkenwell concerts (William Croft, *Complete Chamber Music*, ed. by Harry Diack Johnstone, London 2009 [Musica Britannica 88], p. xxiv). Croft's trio sonatas are unremarkable and in the Corelli mould, though as Johnstone notes, "the resemblance [of the last movement of Croft's sonata in E minor] to the corresponding movement of sonata 8 in Purcell's 1697 set is so close that it can only be a deliberate parody" (*ibid.*, pp. xxiv–xxv).

103 Rebecca Herissone, "Introduction", in: *Concepts of Creativity* (see n. 74), pp. 1–12, at p. 9.



the rise of John Walsh and his competitors; however, the evidence suggests that the market was heavily subsidised and controlled by wealthy aristocrats. In his memoirs, Roger North could conclude that “nothing advanced musick more in this age [in England] then the patronage of the nobility, and men of fortunes, for they became encouragers of it by great liberallitys, and countenance to the professors”.<sup>104</sup> But in terms of developing a truly “English” response to the trio sonata, along the lines of Purcell, this patronage served only to stifle the creative responses of competent but mediocre composers. Purcell’s sonatas were by no means ignored by English composers. Indeed, Arthur Bedford’s plea for an Anglo-Italian style was arguably most in evidence in the trio sonatas of William Williams. Like Sherard, Williams adopted the four-movement structure of Corelli but especially in slow movements there are many quite Purcellian touches, such as the often bold modulations of the slow movements. But such experiments were perhaps doomed to failure, for while Purcell’s sonatas were evidently respected by musicians their style was difficult to assimilate and replicate. And fundamentally their “English vein” was beyond the grasp of the amateur patrons who quite literally called the tunes.

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104 *Memoirs of Musick by the Hon. Roger North*, ed. by Edward F. Rimbault, London 1846, p. 117.