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The listening experiences of John Yeoman (1748–1824)

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Abstract

John Yeoman was a Somerset farmer and potter who travelled to London in 1774 and 1777/8, recording in a diary his experiences of music in and around the capital. As a church choir director in his home village of Wanstrow he was particularly interested in hearing music sung by the choirs he encountered in a number of churches of various denominations. His account of them reveals much about contemporary performance practice, especially relating to the singing of psalms.

In addition to recording his impressions of sacred music, Yeoman was immensely impressed by a performance he heard on a visit to Drury Lane Theatre in 1774. He had never heard anything like it previously and the information he records is of importance to theatre historians and to musicologists, particularly what he describes of the orchestral and choral forces in the theatre. His descriptions also unwittingly tell us something about music making in his home village of Wanstrow.

The accounts of listening experiences in Yeoman's diaries are written in a style usually found in travel literature of the period. They are detailed and factual, and rarely contain information about the author's personal reactions to what he heard. But by examining the language he uses it becomes clear that he was excited by his experiences, especially those that were new to him.

Introduction

The listening experiences recorded in John Yeoman's diaries are intriguing for a number of reasons. Yeoman appears to have had little influence outside of his local community and his diaries have had virtually no impact on music history. Nevertheless, they are a rich source of performance history, specifically of church and theatre music of the late eighteenth century and they are also significant for listening history, because they illustrate how the impact of music on a listener can vary according to the context in which it is heard, especially its familiarity or novelty. Furthermore, detailed scrutiny of the varied ways in which Yeoman recorded his listening experiences provides insights that help us to explore the listening literature of the period more critically. But before we examine these issues in detail, and in order to understand his listening accounts as fully as possible, we need to understand who John Yeoman was – where he lived, his social standing and occupations, and his experience of music in his native county.

John Yeoman

John Yeoman was born in 1748 and died on 9 October 1824.

[footnote] [1] The few biographical details of Yeoman's that exist are found in: Reid, Robert Douglas. *Some Account of the Family of Harding of Cranmore c. Somerset* (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1917); Yearsley, Macleod. *The Diary of the Visits of John Yeoman to London in the Years 1774 and 1777* (London: Watts & Co., 1934); Reid, Robert Douglas. *The Diary of Mary Yeoman of Wantrow, Co. Somerset* (Wells: Wells Journal Office, 1926). [/footnote]

For several generations his family had rented the Manor (or 'Great') House in the small Somerset village of Wanstrow, a few miles from both Frome and Shepton Mallet, about 15 miles from Wells, and 20 miles from Bath (these distances are significant in the consideration of Yeoman's listening experiences). Frome was the main market town of the area, around which the surrounding villages clustered,

[footnote] [2] See Peter Belham, *Villages of the Frome Area* (Frome: The Frome Society for Local Study, 1992). [/footnote]

and another Yeoman family diary written in 1800 by John's daughter contains many references to his work-related and social visits to these villages and to Frome itself.

[footnote] [3] Reid, 1926. [/footnote]

John Yeoman's family ran a pottery business in Wanstrow, as evidenced, for example, in his notes about pottery making in Farnborough, which reveal that the Yeoman family had pottery-making facilities of their own:

*It is Wen(s)day the 30th of Dec^r. we gets up in the morn,
Breckfast, Walk down in the common to See the pothouse
belonging to Mr. Mason. Itt is all the Same as ourn, but their Glaze
Which is much better. they use pigglead and Sand. they Have an
Oven Where they put the Lead in And Stir it till it comes to a
powder.*

[footnote] [4] Yearsley, 1934, p. 52. [/footnote]

John Yeoman was also a farmer. His diary records his interest in pigs and his daughter's diary contains references to their slaughter. She also talks about weighing cheese, presumably for sale. The editor of John's diary comments that he is said to have 'milked sixty cows', but without revealing his information source.

[footnote] [5] Yearsley, 1934, p. 5. [/footnote]

In addition, Yeoman seems to have been involved in the timber business. His daughter's diary makes several references to him unloading timber in Frome and his own diary also mentions his encounter with a timber merchant, although there is no record of any business being conducted on that occasion.

[footnote] [6] Yearsley, 1934, p. 17. [/footnote]

The details described above show Yeoman to have been a working man and trader based in his local community. His daughter's diary goes further, revealing that he had a degree of social status. Not only did he live in a substantial house (albeit a rented one), but he also mixed with respectable people such as 'Dr. Highmore', with whom he journeyed to Shepton Mallet one day.

[footnote] [7] Reid, 1926, 7 March. [/footnote]

Importantly for our purposes, Yeoman's memorial tablet in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Wanstrow records that he 'was Leader of the Choir of this Church for upwards of half a century'.

[footnote] [8] https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/131616183/john-yeoman, consulted 19 September 2018. [/footnote]

The fact that he wrote diaries and letters – albeit in an unsophisticated style – is evidence of his literacy. His diary contains evidence of his reading a novel and a play, as well as newspapers.

[footnote] [9] Yearsley, 1934, pp. 19, 31, 32, 33. [/footnote]

Yeoman was evidently a well-respected, intelligent man with wide interests.

John Yeoman's diary

John Yeoman's diary was published in a modern edition in 1934, at which time the two-volume original was in the possession of 'Mr. R. Gibbons',

[footnote] [10] Yearsley, 1934, p. 14. [/footnote]

but I have been unable to discover its current whereabouts. The edition is therefore our only source of the document.

The diaries record Yeoman's visits to London in the spring of 1774 and the winter of 1777/8 (the account mostly concentrates on his travels in 1774, with only a few pages recording his experiences in 1777/8). There are no accounts of his time spent in Wanstrow, hence his daughter's diary and the memorial tablet in the local church are our only sources of his life at home. John Yeoman's diary begins with a record of his setting out from home on 17 March 1774 and continues with a detailed narrative of his travels until 6 May in the same year, when he began his journey home. He made no diary entries between 6 May 1774 and 28 December 1777, when he departed from Wanstrow on his second visit to the London area. His narrative of that journey ends abruptly, mid-sentence, on 5 January 1778: presumably another volume picked up the story, but it was not available to the diary's editor. The diary is thus solely concerned with his journeys and it reads as a travel narrative, a popular genre of his time, and a theme to which we will return.

Why did John Yeoman write a diary? Unlike contemporary members of the gentry and aristocracy, it is most unlikely that he would have anticipated its publication (see the [Introduction](#) to this collection), either in his lifetime, or after his death. It may be that some of the diary's detail was intended for his eyes only, such as the record of his expenditure on accommodation and food with which the diary begins. But most of the document seems to have been written for an audience, since from time to time he addresses the reader directly, especially in some of his more colourful descriptions of events. The following passage is a striking example:

[Northchurch, Thursday 21 April 1774] after Diner we went to a Farm house about a Mile and half (along) the London Road to See Peter the Wild Boy as they call him. he was found in the woods over in Hanover, as King George the First was hunting the wild boar, when he was about fourteen Years of Age & Was brought Over to England and a hundred a Year Settled on him for his Life, but this gentleman Who have this Money for the care of him gives this Farmer £30 Pounds. So that he is the Best of. he is about five foot four Inches high, Well made, has neither his Beard nor hair cut, neither Can he Speak, so Ill leave you to guesst what a Figure he cuts.

*[footnote] [11] Yearsley, 1934, p. 35. Material in parenthesis here and in all other quotations was added by the diary's editor.
[/footnote]*

Elsewhere in the diary phrases occur which address the reader, such as ‘Ill Leave the Reader to gest ye complection’ and ‘So I leave the Reader to Judge the Pleasantness’.

[footnote] [12] Yearsley, 1934, pp. 40, 41. [/footnote]

The diary does not identify these readers, but, given John Yeoman’s social status and interests, it seems most likely that they were the people close to him – his family and perhaps his friends.

Yeoman’s diary descriptions of his listening experiences occur in just ten passages. Six of these concern what we might broadly refer to as ‘sacred music’: five of them describe the singing of psalms in churches or domestically, and one is an account of organ playing in Westminster Abbey. Not only do they reveal details of sacred music performances in the London area, but they also unwittingly provide insights into rural Somerset practices. These listening experiences form the subject of the first main section of this chapter.

The other four passages are about various sorts of secular musical performance. The first, and by far the most extensive of all the descriptions in his diary, records his visit to Drury Lane Theatre. As with Yeoman’s remarks about sacred music, the account of his theatre visit not only reveals important information about contemporary performance in London, but is also revealing about music-making in Somerset: this passage is discussed in detail below, in the second main section of this chapter.

The remaining three descriptions of listening experiences are much briefer. They tell us little more than that Yeoman was a singer. For completeness they are quoted here:

[en route for Brentford, Monday 28 March 1774] Landed att Hungerford Stairs, from thence we went I cannot well Recolect, Somewhere about the Strand. Drank two or three Bottles of Wine, from thence to Berkly Square up by St James, took a Coach. home where we sung all the way. arived att Brentford about 7 o Clock for that Night went —.

[footnote] [13] Yearsley, 1934, p. 12; the entry ends abruptly, perhaps because of the effects of the wine. [/footnote]

[Farnborough, Thursday 1 January 1778] Went to Willmot Esq., as I found that he makes a General Feast on Every New Years Day ... So my fellow Travelar and me begins to be Smart amongst them (the ladies), Farmer the Violien and I Singing to or three Soft Songs. They was highly diverted att it.

[footnote] [14] Yearsley, 1934, p. 53. [/footnote]

[Farnborough, Friday 2 January 1778] we went out in the Parish for Some Danceing but could find none, but a neighbour of my Kindsmans to Spend the Evening and So we did in Singing and Telling of Some Merry Storys, and thus ends this Days Memoirs.

[footnote] [15] Yearsley, 1934, p. 54. [/footnote]

In addition to discussing the detail of Yeoman's experiences as outlined above, a final section of this chapter explores the differences in literary style of his various listening accounts and how they reflect Yeoman's experience of, and engagement with, music. The observations in this final section are pertinent to the ways in which other writers of personal documents record their listening experiences.

John Yeoman's experiences of sacred music

John Yeoman visited a variety of churches during his stay in the London area, ranging from Brentford's small chapel of ease (chapels of ease were built for those who were unable to attend the parish churches) to the affluent parish church in Ealing and Westminster Abbey. Not only did he visit Anglican churches, but he also attended services of the Presbyterians and Methodists. His accounts therefore provide a rich picture of church music practice in the London area during the period.

Yeoman's first recorded listening experience was very brief:

[Brentford, Sunday 20 March 1774] we went to the Chapel the People Sung all over ye Church.

[footnote] [16] Yearsley, 1934, p. 15. [/footnote]

A similar comment is found in the account of Yeoman's visit to the Presbyterian church in Brentford on 17 April 1774:

after diner we went to the Prisbetariens Meeting where they Sung all over the Meet^g.

[footnote] [17] Yearsley, 1934, p. 34. [/footnote]

The observation that people 'Sung all over ye Church', or 'Meet^g.', is probably a reference to congregational singing, although it is just possible that it refers to the practice of distributing choir members among the congregation.

[footnote] [18] The practice of distributing the choir among the congregation is discussed in Nicholas Temperley, The Music of the English Parish Church (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), vol. 1, p. 126 and Sally Drage, 'The Performance of English Provincial Psalmody c.1690–c.1840', PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 2009, p. 52. [/footnote]

Full congregational singing was not universally practised in this period, as Sally Drage observes:

All denominations wanted congregations to participate, but in practice the singing was divided between full congregational participation, which was most likely to occur in Methodist and nonconformist worship, and select participation, which was more usual in Anglican churches.

[footnote] [19] Drage, 2009, p. 75. [/footnote]

The fact that Yeoman remarked on congregational singing in both the Chapel of Ease and the Presbyterian church in Brentford may indicate that it struck him as unusual, perhaps because the psalms were sung only by the local Anglican choir (which he directed) at home in Wanstrow. However, this is conjecture, because we have no evidence of singing at services in the village.

Yeoman had much to say about singing in Ealing Parish Church, but nowhere in his account does he mention congregational participation, which may indicate that psalms were sung there by the choir only: this tended to happen particularly in churches such as this, where the congregation contained a significant proportion of wealthy members

who had the means to support music financially, and who preferred to leave the singing entirely to the choir.

[footnote] [20] Temperley, 1979, pp. 101, 128. [/footnote]

Yeoman's full account of the music in Ealing is as follows:

[Ealing, Sunday 1 May 1774] Master Tommy and I went to Ealing Church, I chimed the Tenor as the(y) Chime an Hour before Sarvice. We went down to the Green Where it is Very Pleasant. Back again & went In Staring about the Church. ye Clark was So Kind as to come & Put us into a Pew. The Singers Sing the Same as we do the(y) sung Our 5 Tune to 4 Words & as there was but two parts, I was wont to Join with, but was ashamed to go up to them as there Was Shuch a Grand Congregation. the place concis'd mostly of Gentlemans Seats, as I have Mentioned in my Journeys before, So Ill leave the Reader to Jud(g)e the Grandness of the Congregation. but, however, when the Clark named the Psalm the Second I could not forbear going up to Them. the(y) sung the Eight. Soon as Service was over I went down into the Pew after my Hatt and Master Tommy, When we made the Best of our way back to our Aunts, as we Was to Dine that day att Mr. Joseph Honnors, Where was Mr. John Polter. So after Diner We Took a walk up to great Ealing when the Evening Sarvice was Just done, but the Singers was not Gon. I went up and Join'd With them I(n) an Anthem. After we went to one of him House. he Kept a Tavern Just by and after Some Talk about Singing we come home again.

[footnote] [21] Yearsley, 1934, pp. 43–44. [/footnote]

The account of Yeoman's visit to Ealing records several details about psalm-singing, most of which are also mentioned elsewhere in his diary. First, in addition to singing during services the choir also sang outside of that context – in this instance an hour before the morning service and for some time after the evening service. The choir in Northchurch also sang outside of church services, as witnessed by Yeoman:

[Northchurch, near Berkhamsted, Sunday 24 April 1774] Nothing Remarkable happend the forenoon of that day. after Diner My Aunt & cousin & Me went to North Church. the Parson was the worst that ever I heard but Upton Noble (a village near his home village). the clark was Shocking bad Indeed, they Sing the Same Tunes as we do but Very Bad, there was all the Parts. After

Service was over I went up and Joined with Them. I beleive we Sung for an Hour and all the Tunes as we had, Such as the 8th. 105th. 108th. 34th. 47th. my Singing the four Parts made them Stare as they thought It was Imposable for one Man to do. they Said they Should be glad to have me Live In That Part of the World for to Learn them. one on him, who kept a Tavern, had them all to his house & would make me go. they Treated me with the Best the House would (? afford).

[footnote] [22] Yearsley, 1934, pp.39–40. [/footnote]

The fact that the clerk was ‘Shocking bad indeed’, according to Yeoman, was evidently not unusual, as Nicholas Temperley observes: ‘it was rare for a musically well-qualified parish clerk to be appointed to a London church during the eighteenth century’.

[footnote] [23] Temperley 1979, vol. 1, p. 120. [/footnote]

But the poor quality of the clerk’s singing failed to dampen the enthusiasm of the other singers, who sang for their own enjoyment for an hour after the service had finished. This sort of enthusiasm for psalm-singing outside the context of a church service was also in evidence at a gathering a month earlier at Yeoman’s aunt’s house in Brentford:

[Brentford, Thursday 24 March 1774] Home again, where was one Mr. Deely a Timber Merchant waiting for me to go and Spend the Evening With him that night att a Tavern in the Markett Place. come Home with me and one of their party to my Aunts where we spend an Hour in Singing Psalms, Songs and the like.

[footnote] [24] Yearsley, 1934, p. 17. [/footnote]

The domestic singing of sacred music had, of course, been common from much earlier times, when much of the repertoire we now associate with the church was written for domestic consumption.

Different modes of psalm performance are evident from Yeoman’s accounts. In Ealing on 1 May 1774 (see above) ‘there was but two parts’ (presumably two independent musical lines, rather than singing in octaves), a common configuration for psalm-singing at the time, but perhaps a surprisingly sparse texture for a choir in such a wealthy church. At the Presbyterian church in Brentford, however, the members of the congregation all sang the melody of the psalm tunes, but at three different pitches, a decidedly inferior arrangement according to Yeoman:

[Brentford, Sunday 17 April 1774] Went to the Chap(el) of ease in the Morning. after diner we went to the Prisbetariens Meeting

where they Sung all over the Meet^g, the 105th. Psalm, the notes as we Sing them. the Clerk begins first, he Sings a Tenor Voice, the women Eight above and the Men as can go down an eight below the Clerk. they Sing all one Notes but it is a most Dofull Harmony. home to Tea then we went to the Methodist meeting, where they Sing in Like Manner. It's a Preatyer Harmony to the ear, but the three different Religgens which I have been to day to hear does agree more in their Singing then they does in their Doctrin by much.

[footnote] [25] Yearsley, 1934, p.34. [/footnote]

And on 24 April 1774 in Northchurch (see above), where Yeoman commented on the poor quality of the singing, ‘there was all the Parts’, presumably meaning a full four-part texture, since after the service Yeoman joined with them, singing each of ‘the four Parts’.

Yeoman’s account of the singing in Brentford on 17 April 1774, just quoted, makes a broader point about church music of this period: the same repertoire was sung at services around the country, both in Anglican contexts and in churches of other denominations. So at the Presbyterian church in Brentford on 17 April 1774 he commented that they sang ‘the 105th. Psalm, the notes as we Sing them’ while at the Anglican church in Northchurch a week later, during their after-service singing they sang ‘all the Tunes as we had, Such as the 8th. 105th. 108th. 34th. 47th.’ and in Ealing on 1 May 1774 ‘The Singers Sing the Same as we do the(y) sung Our 5 Tune to 4 Words’ (see above for the full quotations of all these passages). The fact that a relatively small number of tunes were shared by congregations was partly the result of the way in which the numerous tune books published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries borrowed tunes from each other, but it was also the result of the dominance of two influential publications. Sternhold and Hopkins’ *The Whole Booke of Psalmes Collected into Englysh Metre* (London, 1562) and Tate and Brady’s *A New Version of the Psalms of David* (London, 1696) dominated the market, both being published in multiple editions over many decades.

[footnote] [26] Temperley, 1979, vol. 1, p. 122. [/footnote]

The account of the singing at the Presbyterian church in Brentford on 17 April mentions a further element of psalm performance – the traditional practice of ‘lining out’, in which the clerk sang a portion of a psalm before the congregation sang it. At least, this is presumably what is implied by the phrase ‘the Clerk begins first’. ‘Lining out’ was a common practice which began by the mid-seventeenth century, as Sally Drage notes:

One or two lines of text at a time were spoken aloud or perhaps intoned on one note by the clergyman or the parish clerk, before they were sung by the congregation. There is no evidence that this lining out was used prior to 1645, but once established it remained a necessary part of Anglican worship in some churches until at least the end of the eighteenth century.

[footnote] [27] Drage, 2009, p.43. [/footnote]

Yeoman's listening accounts emphasise the extent to which psalms formed the basis of choir and congregational singing in parish churches at this time, as it had for decades. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, as some parish and village choirs became more proficient, anthems began to be performed in some places. The only instance of anthem-singing in Yeoman's diary is recorded in his report of the music at Ealing on 1 May 1774 (see above) where, after the evening service, 'I went up and Join'd With them I(n) an Anthem'. Despite the fact that the psalms were sung there in only two parts, the singing of an anthem suggests that there may have been a more proficient choir there than Yeoman encountered elsewhere, since anthem-singing required at least some musical literacy, whereas psalm-singing could be learned without reference to music notation. Yeoman's familiarity with anthems and his ability to sing them probably reflected the practice and the abilities of the singers in Wanstrow: an entry in Mary Yeoman's diary records that 'Mr. Thomas Harding dined here today and went to church. Sang two anthems'.

[footnote] [28] Reid, 1926, 9 February 1800. [/footnote]

None of the accounts of singing in churches that we have considered so far mention the presence of an organ. This is unsurprising. Many organs had been destroyed during the Civil War and at first it was only in the cathedrals, college chapels and the wealthier urban parish churches that they were built, or re-built.

[footnote] [29] Temperley, 1979, pp. 101–118. [/footnote]

By the 1770s at least some of the larger parish churches had organs, such as those in Shepton Mallet and Frome, near where Yeoman lived, but others were still without, apparently including the wealthy church visited by Yeoman in Ealing.

[footnote] [30] See the National Pipe Organ Register, http://www.npor.org.uk/, consulted 20 November 2018. [/footnote]

In smaller churches organs were still few and far between and there is no evidence of any organ in Yeoman's home village of Wanstrow. In such cases barrel organs may have been used to play a limited repertoire of Hymn tunes, or other instruments began to be used (the so-called 'west-gallery tradition'), but I have found no evidence that either

was used in Wanstrow, or in the churches mentioned in Yeoman's diary. The impression given by Yeoman is that he was most used to unaccompanied singing in church.

The only mention of an organ in Yeoman's diary occurs in his account of a visit to Westminster Abbey:

[Westminster, Sunday 3 April 1774] My Cousen John and me went to Westminster Abby were we herd the organs and Saw them play, Wells is in no Comparison with it.

[footnote] [31] Yearsley, 1934, pp. 23–24. [/footnote]

It is not clear from the description whether Yeoman's comparison was of the organs, or of the buildings at Westminster and Wells. However, his comments would make perfect sense if they applied to the organs, since the instrument in Wells was in sufficiently poor state in the 1770s that it needed repair and enlargement in 1786, whereas in 1774 the organ in Westminster was already quite large and in better condition than the Wells instrument.

[footnote] [32] See Roger Bowers and Anthony Crossland, The Organs and Organists of Wells Cathedral (Wells: The Friends of Wells Cathedral, 1974) and http://www.npor.org.uk/, consulted 19 September 2018. [/footnote]

John Yeoman at Drury Lane

On 8 April 1774 John Yeoman and some of his relatives attended Drury Lane Theatre. The occasion was a benefit performance for Thomas Jefferson (1732–1807), a very experienced actor who had performed at the theatre for many years. The main piece of the evening was *The Rehearsal*, a Restoration comedy by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, which had been performed many times in the previous century and remained popular, having five performances in London theatres in 1774 alone. The afterpiece, David Garrick's *Harlequin's Invasion*, was first performed at the theatre on 31 December 1759. It, too, was popular and was also performed five times in 1774.

[footnote] [33] Details of the performances are found in contemporary newspapers and in George Winchester Stone, The London Stage, 1660–1800 (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960–1968), Part 4, vol. 3, p. 1799. [/footnote]

Music had been an important element of theatre performances in London from Restoration times:

Before the play began, two pairs of two pieces each were played, these pairs being called the ‘first music’ and ‘second music,’ respectively ... the next music is the overture or curtain tune, usually played after the spoken prologue.

[footnote] [34] Curtis A. Price, *Music in the Restoration Theatre*, *Studies in Musicology 4* (Ann Arbor, Mich., UMI Research Press, 1979), p. 53. [/footnote]

Following the beginning of the play further instrumental music featured as well as songs and other vocal pieces. Similar incidental music was performed with plays throughout the eighteenth century, although the musical style developed with the times: for example, the prevalence of French overtures gave way to works in the Italian style.

[footnote] [35] See Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 160–163 and 287–293, and Jane Girdham, *English Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 71, 125. [/footnote]

It is impossible to know what music accompanied the performance heard by Yeoman of Villiers' *The Rehearsal*, since no music for it survives. However, an afterpiece based on Villiers' original by Mrs Clive entitled *The Rehearsal; or, Bayes in Petticoats* was first performed at Drury Lane on 15 March 1750 with music by William Boyce, the only part of which that survives being a 'pastoral interlude' entitled 'Corydon and Miranda'.

[footnote] [36] See Ian Bartlett, *William Boyce: A Tercentenary Sourcebook and Compendium* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), especially pp. 72–73. [/footnote]

Twelve further performances of Mrs Clive's piece were given in the years to 1762. Perhaps Boyce's music was used when Villiers' original was revived in later years.

Only three items survive of the music composed by William Boyce for Garrick's *Harlequin's Invasion*. By far the most famous is the song 'Hearts of Oak', still well-known today. Two other songs from the piece were published in the years after the work was performed: 'Sweetest bard that ever sung' and 'Thrice happy the nation that Shakespeare has charm'd'. We know nothing of the instrumental pieces that would have been played at the beginning and during the performance.

[footnote] [37] Bartlett, 2011, pp. 128–129. [/footnote]

Yeoman's description of the performance is much longer and quite unlike any other accounts of events in his diary. It is quoted here in full:

got there before the doors was Open'd, but Soon as ye Door was open'd what a drunge (?) there was, yet we got a Second Seat in the two Shilling Gallery. We waited Some time before there was any thing to Entertain us with but the Looking at the House which is fifty times as Large as our Church, but Ive forgot to Mention that we was at Drury Lane. the Musick begun to play the first Thing, it consisted of:

10 Violens

2 French horns

4 basesoons

2 Base files

and another Great (file?) in the Shape of a Basefile But So Large as Six common ones, it was 2 Foot above the Mans head that Play'd him and I could Hear him Like Thunder att a distance, or like Something a Jowling in the Bowels of the earth. the Curten was then drawn up and the Play begun, but I cannot mind much of it. I can Remember they cauld the Rehersal, it was a composition of Blunders. there was a Variaty of Very Butifull Scens, one I can very well Recolect. att the further end of the feild as it apeard [the]re was a Large Bridge and we could here the Sound of Drums, kettle Drums, then we Saw an Army of Horsemen comeing over that Bridge and an Army of Foot seemd to Draw up to Battle before us with all the Appearance of War. In an instant the Battle was begun & they Fought till there was not a live man left. the entertainment was Harlequins Invation which was very prety. it apeard in ye Scene the first at a little House with a Stump of a dead tree by the Side of it and Harlequin laid down under it, but before I shall go on I'll write do(wn) the Dress this Harlequin t(hat er) apeard in, he has all (...) has a black face and a Sp(angled?) Jacket and Trousers & he will either turn you or himself into Such Different Shapes that it is Impossible to Take him, as I Shall indeavour to make it apeard. as he was laid down by

this little Hutt of a House there came a Man with a Pick in his hand as If he would be Revenge on Somebody att last he Sees Harlequin thout he was dead but Thought to himself he would see where he was or not. he goes to him, Just toucht him with the Pick, he Jumps up and Takes the Pick from him & is gon. then there was a Report made that he has Murderd a Tailor & (gr)eat Search is making for him (all) this wile he is in the Stump (of the) Tree from whence he comes in the Shape of the Tailor with his head cut of(f) so that he frights them all away. then the Seine changes to a Wood and there are Solders after him, but they cannot find him. he gets up into a Tree & it is so Natural as If it was a Wilderness. the Seine then changes to a Large Room with harlequin in it. then they comes in att every Door crying out theres the Murderer, Lock the doors, We shall have him now & they are all going to Seaze him but he Springs from them & Flys through the Window & gets from them. So the Seine changes to a Judge with ye Court of gentlemen and Harlequin is taken & brought before them and his Tryal is Very poet(ical?) but Realy I cannot Mind (it?) Just now, but I Remember he is Very Sacy to them, telling them that if they do not aquit him he will cut all their heads off. so then they all cryed out What need we of further examining of him, but as they are Just agoing to take him away he gives himself a wherl Round on his hile and that instant they are all turnd into old women. now you must know that there is Somebody above that ye instant he gives the Wist rnd the Wooden Board, that they draws up the wigs & gowns of these gentlemen by Wires that we cannot See them and under they are Drest like old Women. Indeed the Seine then Changes to So Butifull a Sight that it is (Impos)able to Decscribe it. the last Seine is I beleive the Whole length of the House, it Seems to be 200 yds. Long, and att the Lower end they Represents the Ocean with the Ships on it Sinken in a Storm With Thunder & Lightning & they Represent it so Natural as if it was the Real thing. they conclude the Play with a Chorus Song about 20 Musitioners and about 30/50 Commeadons which made a Pretty Harmony...

Yeoman's account continues in his diary entry for the following day, 9 April 1774:

[South Molton Saturday 9 April] There was two or three things in ye play I'd forgot to mention; the one was a Flying Chariot drawn

by an Eagle, the Other a Forighn Ambaseger who was drawn across the Stage In his Chariot by Wild Beast & there was a Bear & Monkey appeared on the Stage and danc'd for some (tim)e as Reel (as) the Natural Be(asts). there is Several Scines that I cannot Remember. The Curtun was drawn once and there was neer to twenty boys & girls Danceing, the oldest did not appear above 10 yr. Old. I took that to be a prety Sight; Theres Not That Man Liveing who can form any Idea of unless they See it. Some of the Scines Ive heard say they Represent a Street as Real as any in London, there was one, It is Just come into my Head, It was Charing Cross with King Charl(es) in the Middle of it and all the Streets as Natural as If you was out in Town and it is so much Imposable for any Person to form any Idea of the Town as of the play unless they have. There you may Travel for Weeks together and Never see one place twice, Nor Never out of the Town, and in the Night it is the More Surprising with the Lamps. You can Travel along the Streets and they are so Strait so many Hundred crossways & every St. with the L^{PS} Look so Long. Its beyond the (des)cription of My Thick (br)ains to ponder on, I'll asure y(ou).

[footnote] [38] Yearsley, 1934, pp. 25–28. [/footnote]

Yeoman's account of the performance is remarkable in its detail. It is of considerable interest to both musicologists and theatre historians, but the discussion here will focus more or less exclusively on what the extract reveals about Drury Lane's musical performing forces.

Details of the orchestras in London's theatres in the 1770s is scarce. The most recent commentators on the subject point out that the relatively small orchestras which accompanied plays were placed in the pit, whereas oratorio orchestras played on stage, and were somewhat larger.

[footnote] [39] Vanessa Rogers, 'Orchestras on stage in the Georgian-era playhouse: unravelling the origin of the 'Winston' sketch', *Early Music* 44/4 (2017), p. 610, and Peter Holman, 'Worth 1000 words: Edward Francis Burney at Drury Lane in 1779', *Early Music* 45/4, 2018, pp. 646–647. [/footnote]

A passage in *The London Stage* describes the extent of the forces available from the late 1750s to the end of the 1770s:

The Account Books for Covent Garden during the seasons 1757-58 and 1760-61 specify the names of twenty-one orchestra members, but fail to indicate the instruments they used ... Drury

Lane doubtless employed as many, but actual figures are extant only in its Treasurer's Books for the 1778-79 season, when Sheridan and the new managers were cutting expenses to the bone. Their list included twenty-three in the orchestra, and designated the instruments. They employed five first violinists, two of whom could double on clarinets; four second violinists, two of whom could double on clarinets. There were a first and second viola (and a third who could also play the trumpet); a first and second hautboy; a first and second faggoto (bassoon); a first and second cornu (French horn); four cellos, including a first and second double bass; and lastly one who played a bass bassoon, a tabor, and pipe ... The weekly payroll for these musicians was £48, which is just 15s. under what Garrick laid out for his orchestra in 1774.

[footnote] [40] Stone, 1960–1968, Part 4, vol. 1, p. cxxvii.

[/footnote]

In addition to the instruments listed in the quotation above, keyboard instruments are also mentioned. The forces described by Rogers and Holman, based on iconographic evidence and, in Holman's case, comparison with extant music, are in line with these figures.

[footnote] [41] Rogers, 2016; Holman, 2017. [/footnote]

Commentary on instrumental numbers for the 1780s and 1790s is found in Jane Girdham's *English opera in late eighteenth-century London*, in which she points out that 'our knowledge of theatrical instrumentalists is very limited because eighteenth-century critics almost always confined their commentary to soloists' (no reviews were published of the performance Yeoman attended on 8 April 1774).

[footnote] [42] Girdham, 1997, p. 61. [/footnote]

Nevertheless, she cites evidence from the manuscript diaries of John Kemble, an actor who managed the theatre from 1788 and 1796, and the Drury Lane account books, reaching the conclusion that 'the orchestra comprised about thirty players, not all of whom were needed every night'.

[footnote] [43] Girdham, 1997, p. 62. [/footnote]

The total number of instruments listed by Yeoman is roughly in line with other figures for the second half of the eighteenth century. In his account Yeoman lists '10 violens, 2 French horns, 4 Basesoons, 2 Base files and another Great (file?) in the Shape of a

Basefile' totalling nineteen instruments (the same number identified in Holman's source), excluding the drums (see below) and any keyboards that may have been used.

There is little remarkable about Yeoman's '10 violens' and '2 French horns', although it seems likely that some of the violins were in fact violas. The composition of the wind section is more difficult to understand, since an orchestra of this size is unlikely to have had '4 Basesoons', but no oboes (2 oboes and 2 bassoons appear to have been standard in theatre orchestras of the time): perhaps Yeoman's sight line was partially blocked so that he was unable to distinguish the double reed instruments correctly. It is probable that the '2 Base files' were in fact cellos, since the two terms seem to have been interchangeable in the period – although conclusive evidence is hard to come by.

[footnote] [44] For information on the terminology of bass-line instruments see Drage, 2009, pp. 161–162; Peter Holman, *Life After Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), especially pp. 94ff; Lowell Lindgren, 'Italian Violoncellists and some Violoncello Solos Published in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), especially pp. 125–129. [/footnote]

The most intriguing instrument in Yeoman's list is the last – the 'Great (file?) in the Shape of a Basefile', which he describes as 'So Large as Six common ones, it was 2 Foot above the Mans head that Play'd him and I could Hear him Like Thunder att a distance, or like Something a Jowling in the Bowels of the earth'. The size of the instrument (two feet higher than its player) and its pitch – the description suggests that it was lower than the other instruments, in other words, at 16 foot pitch – surely identifies it as a double bass. But why would Yeoman describe it in the way he does, rather than simply calling it a double bass, or something equivalent? The reason is almost certainly that the instrument was unfamiliar to him and his readers.

Would Yeoman have heard a double bass at home in Wanstrow? Probably not, since it is unlikely that he would have encountered an ensemble large enough to require one in the village. He does not seem to have heard one in Frome or Shepton Mallet and evidently he had not heard a double bass in Wells, whose cathedral he had visited (as we learned from his experiences in Westminster Abbey on 3 April 1774 – see above). The most likely nearby town where he might have heard a double bass is Bath, a major centre of musical culture by this time, which was only 20 miles from where he lived, but it seems that Yeoman had not been to any orchestral events there. Perhaps this is understandable, considering his age – he was only in his mid-twenties when he went to London – but his lack of knowledge of the double bass nevertheless underlines the

limited musical experience that must have characterised many rural musicians in the period.

One further element of Yeoman's description of the double bass is worthy of comment: in order to provide his readers with some ideas of its size, not only does he point out that it was about two feet taller than its player, but he also says that it was 'So Large as Six common ones', meaning viols. This cannot be a reference to bass viols, because surely no double bass could be described as equivalent in size to six of them, so it is most likely a reference to the smaller members of the viol family. If this is so, then it suggests that Yeoman might have been familiar with viol consort performances, which would have been remarkable at such a late date.

During the performance at Drury Lane Yeoman heard 'the Sound of Drums, kettle Drums'. Who played these? Given that the regular instrumentalists doubled on a variety of instruments it seems most likely that one or two of them played the drums as the 'Army of Horsemen' and an 'Army of Foot' came over the on-stage bridge during *The Rehearsal*. Peter Holman points out that the likely identity of the drummer in the performance of 1779 that he discusses was 'John Ashbridge or Asbridge, the third bassoonist in the Drury Lane band, who was also a drummer'.

[footnote] [45] Holman, 2017, p. 651. [/footnote]

The musical climax of the evening occurred at the end of *Harlequin's Invasion* when, according to Yeoman, there was a 'Chorus Song' of 'about 20 Musitioners and about 30/50 Commeadons which made a Pretty Harmony'. Who were the singers? On the day of the performance the *Public Advertiser* announced that Harlequin's Invasion would 'conclude with a Grand Chorus by Mr. Champnes[s], Mr. Davies, Mr. Kear [Kean?], Mr. Fawcett, Mr. Wheeler, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Hunt, &c.'. Champness was a prominent bass singer of oratorios and the other six were regular singers/actors or chorus singers at Drury Lane.

[footnote] [46] Philip H. Highfill Jr. , Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800, 16 vols (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–1993). [/footnote]

It is likely that these seven singers fell into the category of:

Chorus singers, which are people that stand behind the scenes, whose additional voices are sometimes necessary in grand pieces of vocal music, and are made use of in the Tempest, Comus, Macbeth, &c, and seldom in number so many as 6, at 5 shillings each.

[footnote] [47] Quotation from a manuscript dated 1747–1749 by John Powell in the Harvard Theatre Collection, quoted in Stone, 1960–1968, Part 4, vol. 1, p. 124. [/footnote]

Given that chorus singers cost in the region of 5 shillings each in the late 1740s, and that the chorus for the performance on 8 April 1774 was paid £3.11s for two nights,

[footnote] [48] Winchester Stone, 1960–1968, Part 4, vol. 3, p. 1799. [/footnote]

it is likely that these seven singers were the only additional, paid singers who took part in the performance. The others must have been performers from the regular troupe.

John Yeoman's writing style

The account of John's Yeoman's visit to Drury Lane is written in a very different style from the other listening experiences recorded in his diary. How different is it, how do we account for the difference, what does the combination of writing styles found in Yeoman's diary tell us about the way in which he engaged with musical performances, and what might we learn more generally about how listening accounts are recorded?

The most obvious characteristic of Yeoman's account of the Drury Lane performance is its length: it is at least four or five times as long as any other account in his diary, musical or otherwise, because it includes so much detail of so many aspects of the performance. This, and the fact that the performance was still very much on his mind for much of the next day, is evidence that he was deeply impressed by the occasion (he wrote the second part of his diary description of the event on 9 April after walking for a long time and making several visits). Expressions of his mind's turmoil as a result of the performance are found in passages where he confesses his inability to remember, or write quickly enough, with comments such as 'I cannot mind much of it', 'but before I shall go on I'll write do(w)n the Dress this Harlequin t(hat ... er) appear in', 'but Realy I cannot Mind (it?) Just now, but I Remember ...', and so on. These and other characteristics were common to other travel narratives of the period, a category of literature into which Yeoman's diaries fit, according to descriptions of other works of the period:

wonder constitutes a recurrent theme, and a stock trope, in travel writing. Wonder may be defined as the emotional and intellectual response that occurs when a traveller is confronted with something that temporarily defies understanding, and that cannot easily be assimilated into the conceptual grid by which the

traveller usually organises his or her experience. The mixture of awe and bafflement that ensues will often operate at a pre-rational, even somatic level. Travellers report being rooted to the spot, or struck dumb in amazement; and the latter condition is one reason why tropes of inexpressibility and linguistic inadequacy are commonplace in travel writing, with writers frequently protesting that even retrospectively they cannot find the words to convey fully their experience.

[footnote] [49] Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 66–67.
[/footnote]

Expressions of wonder, bafflement, amazement and linguistic inadequacy are all present in Yeoman's account of the Drury Lane performance, and as he struggled to make himself intelligible he used a device common to many contemporary travel writers when describing unfamiliar objects or experiences: simile. The clearest example is his description of the double bass: as we have seen, this was an instrument almost certainly unfamiliar to his readers. He likens it to a large bass viol, explaining that it produced deep sounds 'Like Thunder att a distance, or like Something a Jowling in the Bowels of the earth'. To modern readers familiar with double basses Yeoman's description makes sense, but who knows what mental pictures his description might have conjured in the minds of his readers in the 1770s? If he struggled to portray accurately the features of a double bass, he all but gave up describing a scene in which there were around 20 child dancers on stage: he acknowledged that they made 'a prety Sight', but adds 'Theres Not That Man Liveing who can form any Idea of unless they See it'.

However, for all Yeoman's bafflement and amazement at the scene, he recorded as much accurate detail as he could. In this respect his approach was consistent with the philosophical developments of earlier decades, epitomised in the writings of Frances Bacon, John Locke and others, which stressed the importance of empirical evidence in the formation of knowledge. The principles espoused by these individuals were also advocated to travel writers:

Thinkers such as Bacon and Locke, and institutions such as the Royal Society, set up in 1660 to promote Baconian principles in science and knowledge, issued numerous directives to travellers, seeking in this way to regulate and systematise not only the sort of information they gathered, but just as crucially, the observational methods they used to gather and record data.

[footnote] [50] Thompson, 2011, pp. 73–74. [/footnote]

Admittedly, we have no idea whether Yeoman was familiar with Bacon, Locke, or the Royal Society, or whether he had read any travel literature, but the writing style in his diaries perfectly fits the descriptions of contemporary works in the genre, suggesting that in some way or other he was familiar with the kind of prose expected in such a document. His writing is full of careful, factual reporting. More than that, he generally avoids giving expression to his internal, emotional state as he describes the events he witnessed. Although the style of his account of the Drury Lane performance shows how excited he was, he nevertheless concentrates on recording details of the instruments of the orchestra, the clothing and scenery, and so on. His writing may be much less polished than others of his time, but his general approach follows that of other travel writers such as Addison, whose description of his visit to Rome prompted Thompson to comment:

given the importance of Rome in the itinerary of the Grand Tour, the modern reader might expect Addison's account of the Eternal City to convey a sense of the pleasure and excitement he felt when finally he reached this key destination. ... [however] Addison gives the reader little sense of what he felt as he viewed the various sites and antiquities of Rome; indeed, there is little direct narration of his personal experience at all.

[footnote] [51] Thompson, 2011, pp. 100–101. Joseph Addison's work was published as *Remarks on several parts of Rome, &c. in the years 1701, 1702, 1703* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1705). [/footnote]

This approach seems to have been deeply rooted in the way in which many late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers reported their experiences in journals and diaries and it explains the absence of overt expressions of emotion that is so much a feature of the genre at the time.

Yeoman's factual approach to writing is also seen in his descriptions of church music. Although he sought out performances of psalms and was eager to join choirs when he could, he never overtly expresses the pleasure that he surely must have derived from participating in these performances. The relative brevity of these passages in his diary, compared with the description of his visit to Drury Lane, is accounted for by the familiarity of his readers with the subject material. Yeoman had no need to explain anything about the psalms that were sung, the nature of anthems, performance

matters such as part-singing, and so on. His readers were familiar with all this, hence his need only to record a few facts about each venue.

With the exception of his description of the performance in Drury Lane, most of Yeoman's accounts of listening are brief, and there are few of them in total. Nevertheless, taken as a whole they reveal much about the nature of the way in which writers of the eighteenth century recorded their experiences.

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