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THE MONTHLY MASK OF VOCAL MUSIC, 1702–1711: A FACSIMILE EDITION
ED. OLIVE BALDWIN AND THELMA WILSON

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One might be forgiven for thinking that the commercial music of eighteenth-century London is of interest only to the scholar and never to the performer. This facsimile edition, like those in the series ‘Music for London Entertainment, 1660–1800’ (London: Stainer & Bell, 1983–1997), to which the present editors have contributed, provides insightful commentary. Indeed, this volume’s impeccable scholarship exceeds that of comparable editions both in amplifying and in correcting our knowledge of *The Monthly Mask*, a periodical through which the publisher John Walsh repackaged musical numbers from London’s theatres, concerts and privately organized entertainments. The edition reproduces that periodical and also explains how Walsh came to play a central role within London’s entertainment industry. As with earlier facsimile publications, though, it begs the questions that a modern performer would have to answer to bring this repertory alive: which compositions are worth listening to, and how should they be realized?

Until 1711 *The Monthly Mask* was the most ambitious and successful enterprise of its kind. Editors Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson assess clearly for the first time the significance of this publication not only for Walsh, but also for British audiences. Drawing together a broad range of sources – prints from European and American collections, newspaper advertisements and recent scholarly writings, among others – they present *The Monthly Mask* in full, contextualize its selections and trace its genesis. Particularly helpful are their appendices, through which one can follow the initial publication dates, the reuse of plates and the dispersal of copies throughout international collections. The song annotations, which contain information about each air’s composer, performance background, singer, words and publishing history, illuminate the complexity behind urban vocal music production. Indices of composers, authors, singers, first lines and stage works or odes featured in *The Monthly Mask* allow users to identify songs easily and to trace who or what was most popular. Crucial background information about the military victories celebrated in song also helps to explain the popularity of such airs.

The Musical Mask was a natural outgrowth of London’s burgeoning print culture. From November 1702 Walsh began issuing monthly ‘the newest Songs, made for the Theatres and other Occasions’ in four engraved song sheets, eventually overtaking Henry Playford’s earlier, similar periodical *Mercurius Musicus*. Unlike Playford, Walsh promoted his publication strategically, advertising in newspapers on days when these were delivered throughout Britain, and reissuing the monthly collections as an annual volume. By using engraved plates rather than the labour-intensive type that Playford had employed, and pioneering reusable passepartout title pages, Walsh also shrewdly economized and succeeded in increasing efficiency. It was, however, the content of *The Monthly Mask* that was key to his success: always the ‘Newest’, always in English (only two of 360 songs are not in English, but in Italian), and always appealing to fashion, either in entertainment or politics. The target audience was the domestic music-maker, such as the music master, lady or gentleman wishing to sing or play airs transposed and printed ‘For the Flute’. Walsh’s *Monthly Mask* thereby offers not just snapshots of currency in taste, but a rich testimony as to how publishers, theatres, composers and performers cooperated to shape and profit from musical trends.

Most fascinating about this collection is the way it reflects changing trends. We see how song production until about 1705 followed seventeenth-century patterns, with London’s composers for theatre and concert venues – most prominently John Weldon, Daniel Purcell at Drury Lane and John Eccles at Lincoln’s Inn Fields – dominating production. Stylistically, Henry Purcell’s legacy lingered until about 1708: bipartite Restoration theatre airs, opening mottos exchanged between voice and instrument, florid arioso writing and dotted rhythmic figures for word emphasis abound in the works of many composers.



From the start of this music periodical, quality does not necessarily triumph; Weldon's presence in the collection far outstrips that of any rival, despite Eccles's greater sophistication. *The Musical Mask* also maps clearly the growing appeal of Italian opera in London. After issuing two Italian songs in 1704, Walsh increasingly fed his audiences from May 1705 with airs from Thomas Clayton's opera *Arsinoe*, devoting the July and August issues exclusively to this work. To capitalize further on demand, Walsh issued separate sets of songs from Italian operas while stimulating interest in the genre by including English songs and cantatas 'after the Itallian Maner' in *The Monthly Mask*.

Walsh's periodical shows the rise of star singers of English theatrical and Italianate vocal music, such as Richard Leveridge, Mary Hodgson and Catherine Tofts, whose names recur persistently in song titles ('A Song sung by Mr. Leveridge'). Because *The Monthly Mask* also included music 'for other Occasions', it recalled for audiences the airs Tofts and others performed in concerts organized privately in and outside of London.

Alongside the high-style airs are numerous low-style compositions: strophic songs from farces, catches from gentlemen's clubs, drinking songs and ballad-style tunes, many of which praise military triumphs. In the periodical's non-theatrical music after 1706, these types become more prominent, while love songs turn stylistically simpler and more clearly pastoral. By 1708 ballad-style airs such as 'The British Accountant', advising 'Lasses' to 'try ye bold Briton', or 'When Lithia first I saw so heaven'ly fair' were appearing regularly alongside high-style airs such as Daniel Purcell's 'Cantata after the Italian Stile', signalling a shift in function and fashion in domestic song.

Quoting the clergyman Arthur Bedford, whose attacks on 'Debauchery' allegedly put 'an immediate Stop to the Monthly Masks', the editors attribute the change in musical content and *The Monthly Mask*'s 'decline' to a rise in propriety. Ladies' domestic music-making demanded more polite fare than Walsh was offering, and his apparent targeting of male audiences in drinking and political songs is said to have failed to sustain his enterprise. But this is not entirely convincing. From 1711 Walsh was caught up in his pivotal role as the main publisher of Handel's music, and his involvement with Handel and other high-style composers, rather than the vogue for 'nice' songs, appears the more compelling reason for Walsh ceasing to issue his periodical. Rather than 'declining', *The Monthly Mask* foreshadowed during its last years the major categories of vocal music and the means of promotion that publishers later in the century would vastly expand: 'Common tunes', ballad airs, Italianate cantatas, anacreontic songs, catches and drinking songs, whose popularity was nourished through London's increasing private wealth and the growing sophistication of its theatrical promotion.

This facsimile edition makes accessible a musical legacy and highlights its historical significance. The precision and richness of the commentary orients the general reader while going beyond any existing modern edition to aid research into this repertory. The editors' underlying assumption, however, seems to be that this music will not be performed today. Unlike facsimile editions of 'great works', this volume is a record of forgotten compositions, valued largely for the historical data it can yield rather than any aural delights it might contain.

For the uninitiated performer seeking to explore the edition's contents, the editors offer no warnings about the challenges of performing from Walsh's prints, no mention of the performance practices one must command to meet these challenges and no guidance on which compositions might appeal most. For instance, Walsh's reduction of the orchestral parts to a vocal score leaves performers with only obligato voices and bass lines from which to recreate an instrumental score; an outline of which instruments were regularly used in theatres would therefore have been helpful. The songs frequently lack instrumental introductions, conclusions and full ritornellos; performers would benefit from knowing where guidance on these matters might be found, such as the writings of Roger Fiske (*English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)) or Jeremy Barlow (*The Music of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)). Bass lines are typically sketchy, and players should be warned that they must often add figures as well as realize the continuo part. Dynamics are almost always absent on the page but were certainly used. Singers approaching this music should be alerted to the



rhetorical rules informing dynamics, from which both singing and declamation in the theatre drew. Finally, faced with 360 vocal numbers, performers would surely welcome guidance on the relative merits and weaknesses of the musical content.

While not wishing to detract from this volume's achievement, I would call for future editors of facsimiles – an economic choice for disseminating a music whose notation is legible and whose print sources are abundant – to consider users of this material whose primary endeavours lie beyond the walls of the academy. Inviting performers, and therefore listeners, to tackle this repertoire might help correct the misguided picture of Britain as *das Land ohne Musik*.

BERTA JONCUS



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RECORDINGS

JOHANN ADOLF HASSE (1699–1783)

FLÖTENKONZERTE

Laurence Dean (flute), Christian Ahrens-Dean (flute)/Hannoversche Hofkapelle

Christophorus CHR 77294, 2008; one disc, 72 minutes

The transverse or 'German' flute seems to have been a relative latecomer to the ranks of concerto soloists. True, *The Guardian* of 24 March 1713 advertised a London concert the next day that would include 'several new Concerto's for the Hautboy, Flute [that is, the recorder], German Flute, Trumpet and other Instruments' by William Corbett; but as far as can be ascertained the first published flute concertos are Nos 7–9 of Robert Woodcock's *XII Concertos in Eight Parts*, which were advertised in *The London Journal* on 18 February 1727 (they beat Vivaldi's Op. 10 by two years). Not inappropriately for the solo instrument, they have a rather Germanic air, especially in the cut of their themes, but what can have been Woodcock's model? One might be inclined to suspect Quantz, were it not that his ten-week visit to London began a month after Woodcock's concertos were published. We do know, however, that several concertos for the 'German Flute' had been performed in London in the years 1718–1724, so perhaps the style was already current.

Hasse is, of course, best known as an opera composer, but wrote a number of flute concertos at around the time he became Kapellmeister to the Dresden court in 1733. This time Quantz, who had returned to Dresden in July 1727, must surely have been the inspiration for these works; he may even have advised Hasse about the layout of some of the solo passages, which are very well tailored to the instrument. The music is highly inventive, in an up-to-date galant style such as one might expect from a German opera composer trained in Naples; the slow movements are particularly beautiful. Unfortunately, the sources for these concertos are scattered and are somewhat unreliable. Op. 1 and Op. 3, two sets published around 1740, appeared in Amsterdam and London respectively, but they include some spurious viola parts: for example, a score of Op. 1 No. 4 (identical to Op. 3 No. 10) copied by the Dresden Konzertmeister Johann Georg Pisendel is headed 'Concerto a Flaut. Traver: Conc: 2 VV e Basso'. There is also a Dresden manuscript set for Op. 3 No. 2 that cannot date from much after 1730, since the copyist has been identified as J. J. Lindner (1653–1734).

The performances of four of Hasse's flute concertos on this recording are excellent. The flute playing is a model of its kind: the tone is even, the intonation is impeccable and the range of dynamics down to the softest of pianissimos is astonishing. But I am puzzled about the size of the band. The publicity photograph of the 'Hannoversche Hofkapelle' in the liner booklet shows no fewer than twenty-six musicians (including some