



fashioned as a piece of living history – inhabitants roam the streets dressed in late eighteenth-century attire, craftsmen work their trades and merchants sell replica items. Most interactions between these inhabitants remain within the bounds of what would have been typical in the 1770s. They take great pride in educating the public about Williamsburg's history. This weekend, however, they came into contact with people who are as immersed in eighteenth-century history as they are. Both parties seemed delighted to carry on a conversation with the other without breaking character.

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THE MELODRAMATIC MOMENT, 1790–1820
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON, 27–29 MARCH 2014

This conference, a collaboration between the two projects 'French Theatre of the Napoleonic Era' at Warwick University and 'Music in London, 1800–1851' at King's College London, was intended to foster interdisciplinary dialogue about early melodrama. In particular, the aim was to investigate the relationship between melodramatic techniques (spoken word over or alternated with instrumental music), melodramatic aesthetics (such as strong contrasts between good and evil and extremes of emotion) and the generic category of melodrama (given to various concert and theatrical forms). While discussion necessarily engaged with phenomena either side of the thirty years specified by the title, participants focused on the period in which melodrama came to prominence as a stage genre, a period in which several of the key European traditions coincided. Influenced by the *Pygmalion* of Rousseau and Horace Coignet (written in 1762; first performed in Lyon, 1770), the line of German melodramas produced at court and national theatres (most famously Georg Benda's *Medea* (Leipzig, 1775) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Gotha, 1775)) continued into the early nineteenth century through both performances of older works and the composition of new ones. The same period saw the emergence in Paris of the so-called 'popular', boulevard melodrama associated with Pixérécourt, which found success throughout France and was exported in translation to a number of European centres as well as to the United States. Categorization according to national style or division into high and low art forms has often led to the treatment of these traditions in isolation from each other. Yet this 'moment' saw significant overlap of repertory as well as obvious similarities in content and technique. The aim of the conference was thus to allow these two melodramatic practices (the German one typically the object of musicological interest, the French one more a literary concern) to be brought into conversation, particularly given the attention that has recently been paid to issues of transnational circulation, adaptation and performance.

The format of the event, organized by the current writers, Katherine Hambridge (University of Warwick) and Jonathan Hicks (King's College London), combined seminar-style discussion of pre-circulated papers with public paper sessions. In addition, there was a performance-based workshop on the first day, which aimed to explore the various relationships between text, music and stage action in the opening act of the French and English versions of Pixérécourt's *La Forteresse du Danube*, a melodrama that had been adapted from a German play: August von Kotzebue's 1803 *Hugo Grotius*. First performed in January 1805 at Paris's Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, with music by Francesco Bianchi, *La Forteresse* received its London premiere as *The Fortress* at the Haymarket in 1807, translated by Theodore Edward Hook and with music by Hook's father, James. The close textual relationship, as well as the availability of scores for both (in the case of the English, a piano score; in the case of the French, orchestral parts from a regional production), allowed for a useful comparison between the two versions.

The workshop was directed by Professor Gilli Bush-Bailey (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) and involved actors from the RCSSD and a small orchestra directed by Mark Austin. The actors, who had



been given a short introduction to early nineteenth-century acting styles the previous day, had to attempt to unlearn their contemporary training very quickly, and adjust to externalizing emotion via gesture and by creating and holding tableaux, often to music. Notwithstanding these challenges, and the restraints of time, the rehearsals proved enormously revealing. At the start, the team shortened musical cues as much as possible by omitting repeats – because the stage directions seemed not to correspond to the stage time of the music – but later in the day, shifts in musical textures, musical figures, and tonal progressions and resolutions were used to pace and suggest sequences of stage action. Learning to use the musical cues as a form of stage direction highlighted the extent to which musicologists tend to abstract ‘gesture’ in music, taking it away from its physical origins; the actors, for their part, were more used to music being added after stage action had been mapped out.

Comparing the two scores was also instructive. Both showed a variety of diegetic and non-diegetic musical functions, with varying degrees of dramatic specificity: some cues used generic idioms to cover stage ‘business’, while others seemed to chart emotional reactions specified in the text. There was considerably more music in the French score, however, often extending and emphasizing moments that were not given cues at all in the English version. Father–son farewells received particularly emotional treatment in the French score, perhaps reflecting the role that theatre in France played in encouraging social reconciliation after years of upheaval and division. By shining a spotlight on issues of performance, this workshop highlighted new aspects of these particular texts, and of melodrama as a form; it also provided a productive basis for further historical forms of enquiry, as the lively discussion afterwards demonstrated.

The second day of the conference featured a public session of presentations attended by a large audience from a range of disciplines and institutions. An address by Jonathan Hicks touched on the complexities of studying early melodrama and the value of tracing individual careers as well as observing general patterns of performance style and technique. There followed three papers – by Sarah Hibberd (University of Nottingham), Nicholas Mathew (University of California Berkeley) and Carolyn Williams (Rutgers University) – chaired by David Charlton (Royal Holloway, University of London) and responded to by Jacqueline Waeber (Duke University). Hibberd drew attention to designers Louis Daguerre and Pierre-Noël Alaux in order to place boulevard melodrama in the context of recent innovations in scenography as well as novel entertainments such as the panorama, Eidophusikon and *spectacle pittoresque*; melodramatic music, Hibberd suggested, was sometimes structured according to the visual modes of perception encouraged by these phenomena. Mathew’s paper shifted focus from the public stage to private performance. He suggested that ‘occasional melodramas’ – here, souvenir scores for piano and voice linked to Viennese commemorations – might be thought of as mediating or mimicking the pageantry of civic memorial. On a formal level, the figure of the urban walker was introduced to account for the peculiar syntax – a kind of paratactical accumulation – that characterizes such pieces. Williams’s argument was also concerned with melodramatic form and, once again, linked the musico-dramatic text with contemporary cultures of display. After a rich account of late eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse and its links, particularly in Britain, to traditions of empiricism, Williams observed the importance of ‘interruption’ to melodramatic structure; this feature is most evident in the use of stage tableaux, but can also be found in alternations of mood and register as well as styles of speech and music.

The second half of the afternoon began with Matthew Buckley (Rutgers University) introducing his Melodrama Research Consortium. After this, David Mayer (University of Manchester) chaired papers by Michael Pisani (Vassar College) and Kate Newey (University of Exeter), both then responded to by Katherine Hambridge. Pisani’s survey of ‘proto-melodrama’ in Britain and France helped to establish the theme of transnational exchange that ran throughout the conference; it also underlined the generic instability of the term ‘melodrama’ and the links between pantomime, affective gesture and orchestral music across many late eighteenth-century stages. Newey’s paper picked up on another cardinal theme: visual culture. Focusing on W. T. Moncrieff’s *The Shipwreck of the Medusa; or, The Fatal Raft* (Coburg, 1820), she argued for the importance of understanding melodrama not only in terms of speech–music relations but also through



association with printed or painted depictions of ‘real’ events, in this case the 1816 sinking of the French ship *La Méduse*, famously represented by Théodore Géricault. The day was rounded off with an open discussion that prompted challenging questions for the speakers and organizers: what is at stake in foregrounding a repertory of works and a set of performance conventions hitherto derided for their ‘sledgehammer semiotics’ and sensational effects? Is there a danger that interpreting melodrama via traditional aesthetic categories such as the sublime risks appropriating a popular form too easily into an academic framework designed to keep it out? Or, conversely, has historical musicology become so preoccupied with attending to ‘bad art’ that it has abandoned the aesthetic altogether?

The first seminar-style session of the conference grounded discussion in the eighteenth-century tradition of melodrama and its permutations in a German context. Thomas Betzwieser (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main) used the rich source material surrounding Peter von Winter and Joseph Franz von Goetz’s *Lenardo und Blandine* (1779) – including 160 illustrations of gestures accompanying single lines of text – to probe contemporary theories of the relationship between emotion and musical, physical and textual expression. Given that the genesis of text and illustrations predated the musical score in this case, there was considerable discussion as to whether the illustrations bore any relation to performances: might the source be considered as a unique set of performance instructions or should one approach it more as an abstract theoretical exercise? The essay by Thomas Radecke (Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar) focused on North German musical settings of Shakespeare plays, suggesting an affiliation between melodramatic technique and the ‘unusual’. Melodramatic moments within non-melodramatic genres, such as opera or spoken plays, often coincided with supernatural incursions – an association that can certainly be found in later repertoire, most famously in Weber’s *Der Freischütz* (Berlin, 1821). In the paper by Barbara Babic (Universität Wien) on the arrival of the Parisian biblical melodramas in early nineteenth-century Vienna, the transnational themes of the conference came to the fore. Processes of adaptation and critical reception in the city reveal anxieties about the on-stage portrayal of the Bible in Catholic Austria, and about the artistic merits of French boulevard fare, as well as differing generic expectations concerning the musical treatment of religious material.

The final day of the conference saw more seminar-style discussion of pre-circulated papers, this time by Diego Saglia (Università di Parma), George Taylor (University of Manchester) and Jens Hesselager (Københavns Universitet); there was also further opportunity to discuss papers given the previous day in the public session. Saglia’s essay went to the heart of our notion of a ‘melodramatic moment’ by addressing the fraught issue of the genre’s perceived nationality via reception texts from early nineteenth-century Britain. One such text, published in *The Satirist* (1808), was even accompanied by a cartoon of ‘The Monster Melodrame’ whose speech bubble reads: ‘How I came into the world, or to whom I am indebted for my birth, appears to be A TALE OF MYSTERY’, a reference to Thomas Holcroft’s celebrated translation of Pixérécourt’s *Cælina, ou l’enfant du mystère* (Ambigu-Comique, 1800), first performed at Covent Garden in 1802. *The Tale of Mystery*, widely recognized as the first English melodrama after the Pixérécourt model, was the focus for Taylor’s paper, which asked why a passionate advocate of rational enlightenment translated a popular melodrama by a disinherited French aristocrat. By considering a single playwright and author, as opposed to a selection of critics and audiences, Taylor was able to approach the issue of theatrical circulation from a biographical perspective, suggesting that Holcroft’s interest in melodrama’s mute characters mirrored his own metaphorical silencing at the hands of British censors. Finally, Hesselager offered a timely riposte to assumptions about overdetermined communication in popular theatre by analysing music in subterranean scenes from both melodramatic and operatic stages (sometimes the same stage, of course). In addition to identifying the orchestra’s role in establishing ambience and heightening tension, Hesselager proposed an intertextual model for the production of melodramatic meaning, one that may have made such cave settings not only familiar but also funny.

A few months on from the event, plans are now well under way for a volume of essays building on the material and arguments presented at the conference. There have also been related events hosted by Warwick’s



Napoleonic Theatre Project, providing further opportunities for workshopping melodramatic scenes. In due course, Warwick will host a website including edited footage of the Melodramatic Moment rehearsals along with accompanying commentary discussing the French/British comparison and insights, both pragmatic and theoretical, gleaned from this form of performance as research.

One of the reasons the conference proved so productive was the meeting of minds (and performing bodies) from distinct fields of enquiry – musicology, performance history, literary studies, French studies – with a common interest in theatre, display and popular poetics, as well as music's role therein. Though melodrama scholarship has undoubtedly displayed its own internal divisions – most notably between the 'concert' melodramas emphasized in musicology and their literary cousins theorized by Peter Brooks and others – this seems to be a field particularly suited to conversations across disciplinary boundaries. Needless to say, such conversations could not take place without considerable support from funding agencies (European Research Council and UK Arts and Humanities Research Council), academic institutions (King's College London and the University of Warwick) and energetic individuals, among whom special thanks must go to Roger Parker (King's) and Katherine Astbury (Warwick).

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AMERICAN BACH SOCIETY BIENNIAL MEETING: JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND HIS SONS
KENYON COLLEGE, 1–4 MAY 2014

The biennial meeting of the American Bach Society inspired the participation of around fifty scholars, performers and other Bach enthusiasts from the United States, Canada and Germany. Organizers included Ellen Exner (University of South Carolina), Markus Rathey (Yale University), Don O. Franklin (Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh), Steven Crist (Emory University) and Reginald Sanders (Kenyon College), who deserves particular thanks for serving as local arrangements chair, a task he dispatched with characteristic aplomb. Kenyon College offered a beautiful and stimulating setting for the conference, and the American Bach Society owes a great debt of thanks to Kenyon President Sean M. Decatur and Provost Joseph L. Klesner, as well as to their Executive Assistant, Pamela J. Faust, for their warm welcome and help with logistics.

In his excellent keynote address, Christoph Wolff (Harvard University) contemplated C. P. E. Bach's sense of his own place in history. This was a composer who constantly revised earlier works and even burned a ream of music he had composed in his youth, a purge which made him feel 'glad that they [were] no more', probably because he was shortly to be visited by a musicologist (Dr Charles Burney). Bach curated a gallery of around 150 portraits of composers, acquiring whatever he could, wherever he could. He also took it upon himself to preserve the 'Old Bach Archive', which consisted of crumbling manuscripts of music prepared by a variety of his ancestors. Wolff devoted the end of his presentation to an analysis of the double-choir *Heilig*, Wq217 (1778), a work C. P. E. Bach composed in hopes that he would 'not so soon be forgotten in the future'. The music is technically flawless and full of striking effects, with a choir of mortal nations and a choir of angels uniting at the end. Wolff argued persuasively that the *Heilig* is based upon J. S. Bach's 'Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum' from the Symbolum Nicenum of the Mass in B minor, BWV232, a movement C. P. E. Bach spent extensive time trying to correct in his father's original manuscript. (It served in turn as a model for the 'Oro supplex' section of the 'Confutatis' movement in Mozart's Requiem.) Wolff suggested that the work is thus emblematic of C. P. E. Bach's central position in the history of eighteenth-century music.