

Sound Heritage

REPORT - Study Day 1

Friday 6 November 2015

Hartley Suite, Building 38, Highfield Campus, University of Southampton

Introduction: Professors Jeanice Brooks and Jonathan Wainwright

An introductory talk by Jeanice Brooks (University of Southampton) and Jonathan Wainwright (University of York) laid out the aims and rationale of the Sound Heritage project. Although research into music in country houses has flourished in recent years, the necessary focus on individual houses in the first instance has meant that a larger picture has been slow to emerge. We are now at a point where larger-scale collaborative effort can address this gap and tackle some of the issues that have arisen in research and interpretation so far. There are still substantial unexploited musical collections in properties throughout the UK, though in many cases the absence of materials with provenance to the house can be problematic. There is a notable lack of research tools for assembling relevant materials, including contextual information that may be held in more than one location other than the house. Even when the music collections and musical history of a house have been thoroughly catalogued or studied, questions remain about how to deploy that knowledge to best effect in interpretation. Heritage managers must often rely on volunteer effort, and early music performance expertise can be lacking. One-off events such as concerts cause considerable difficulty because of space and curatorial constraints; often do not faithfully represent the character of domestic music-making; and rarely translate into a lasting element of visitor experience. The Sound Heritage network aims to foster better understanding of the role of country houses in musical culture, and better knowledge of the role of music in country house architecture, decoration and social life. We hope to discover links between music and the artefacts and objects preserved in country houses today, enriching understanding of connections between tangible and intangible heritage. Music was an important activity for many past residents of country houses, and evoking that activity in interpretation today can help to people the properties in visitors' imaginations and provide new possibilities for visitor experience innovation.

Presentation: Dr Karol Mullaney Dignam (University of Limerick) – “Back to the future: consuming music in the country house”

Dr Mullaney-Dignam's paper offered perspectives from Ireland, highlighting connections with the UK and suggesting avenues for collaborative research. She contends that the consideration of music as a form of consumption informs an abundance of interpretative narratives that represent a shift away from the divisive and less propitious elements of landlordism to the communal and more accessible aspects of past lives, above and below stairs, in and out of doors.

The restoration, interpretation and presentation of historic properties are recent developments in Ireland. For decades after independence in 1922, the homes and material possessions of the former landowning and governing classes were not seen as part of the national patrimony. During the economic boom of the 1990s, however, a growth in national confidence produced a gradual change in political, public and academic perspectives.

Questions of political independence and land ownership have long dominated Irish historiography and while there has been a significant expansion in country house research, investigation of the daily lives and accoutrements of elite or landowning families are lacking. Music has been overlooked, despite being a key facet of social and cultural life amongst landowners and estate communities. Music was not simply a passive form of entertainment but an active form of consumption, featuring among the goods and services used by elite households.

Plotting the nature, extent and social spread of 'private' music-making, however, is fraught with difficulties, not least the survival of source materials. Extant records of consumption (account books, inventories, invoices) have proved to be among the most useful sources for constructing narratives of musical activity. Music, as a form of consumption, was utilised for the purpose of acquiring or maintaining status or prestige. Musical choices were made across a range of provincial, Dublin and London suppliers for a myriad of reasons. Urban providers played vital roles in articulating music consumption but further study will uncover more about social hierarchies generated by aristocratic patronage among music and dance professionals, as well as continuities or ruptures with traditional practices among the rural population. Engaging with issues of social transmission and cultural commodification will also allow some obviating of questions of nationality or ethnicity, long predominant in the historiography of Irish music, and illustrate the value of applying 'other' ideologies of individual and collective identity (gender, class, religion).

Heritage custodians strive to offer fresh forms of interpretation to meet heightening visitor expectations, with ever-increasing numbers of domestic and repeat overseas visitors. There is a need to ensure quality in the interpretation, presentation and promotion of our cultural heritage and academic research produces a range of new, relevant and reliable information that can be redeployed to this end. The key to realising the heritage potential of historic houses and landed estates is a careful, fair and judicious handling of their history. Music is a useful vehicle for exploring the social and cultural history of country houses and for unlocking the stories that make them accessible to the 21st-century visitor. Scholarship on the systems of supply and demand will shed more light on the cultural and intellectual worlds inhabited by country house owners, occupants and employees, and their respective roles as patrons and purveyors. Musical activity embodied notions of propriety, promoted positive interactions with peers, supporters, servants and tenants, and informed the design and decoration of spaces within the home. The study of music in the country house offers perspectives on the place of landowners and their families in their local communities, as well as the social and familial relationships fostered by music-making. In Ireland specifically, the adoption of more rounded cultural histories might deter the habitual presentation and perception of individual properties as hollow, lifeless architectural monuments and encourage their greater consumption as resonant spaces, lived and living.

Concert: Emily Van Evera (soprano) and Martin Perkins (fortepiano)

Public lunchtime concert at Turner Sims (see <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/humanities/news/events/2015/11/06-charlotte-bridgemans-music.page> for venue and event information).

Martin Perkins (Birmingham Conservatoire) presented a concert based on his research on music at Weston Park (Staffordshire), exploring the musical tastes of Lady Charlotte Bridgeman (1761-1832), eldest daughter of 1st Baron Bradford of Weston Park. Bills for music lessons, books and harpsichord strings/tuning from her tutor survive for the year 1782 as well as several inventories of the family music collection. Much of this music survives at the house today, including manuscripts in Charlotte's hand of songs of the day (English, French and Italian, opera and folk-songs) and keyboard pieces. In 1784 she married Henry Greswold Lewis (d. 1829). The marriage lasted less than a year, after which Charlotte returned to Weston Park, but not before writing out more songs and keyboard works.

Workshops

The remainder of the study day involved small group workshops on project themes, organised through a series of discussion questions allocated to different groups. Questions and summaries of discussions:

*How can we make academic research more accessible and useful for heritage professionals?
How can music researchers most fruitfully engage with curators, conservators, and scholars working on other aspects of a house?*

Tools that would substantially facilitate knowledge sharing include an online resource that would host (1) a simple handbook or document for curators with limited musical knowledge, pointing them towards basic questions that could be raised by their music collections or instruments, and resources that are available to them (2) case study materials showing various ways of using music in interpretation (3) a list of contacts or way of identifying professionals interested in researching collections and performing in country houses, for example a database of individuals with listed interests whom house managers could approach if they wanted musical performances and/or a music advisor. The database could also be useful for musicians if they knew there was a place to look for houses and/or collections that haven't yet been explored.

Finding a way to summarise academic research and make it more visible for heritage professionals would be useful - theses and scholarly journals can be difficult to access and time-consuming to use. Finding a way to share abstracts (as a component of a resources guide or knowledge sharing database? *see below*) would be a good first step.

While recognising that music research and performance requires specialist knowledge, we need to remember music is not an isolated discipline but forms part of a broader picture. For heritage professionals, it is particularly important to find a story to tell: music needs to fit into larger narratives that visitors find compelling. We can facilitate storytelling by putting people into the story (not just musical instruments or repertoires); asking how academic research can tie into themes that a particular property may be exploring, and how the musical research can shine light on different aspects of that story. It is important to look at music in as wide a context as possible to support engaging narratives, but at the same time, heritage professionals would like specific details about music-making and musical activity in a house rather than generalities. Tools/techniques could include software such as Storyscope (decipher-research.eu) - which sits on top of collections management software, linking objects to form narratives.

Sound Heritage could be involved in planning ahead within the National Trust or other bodies to build towards significant composer or music-related anniversaries, that could be used to intersect with wider questions and explorations of culture, and which could incorporate research funding and/or PhD research. In this way Sound Heritage might influence longer-term planning in the heritage sector. At the same time, higher visibility of music research in visitor experience could inspire people who work in other houses (both private and public) to come forward with information about their own holdings and histories and/or further research and interpretation opportunities in their own spheres of activity.

How can research in collections be facilitated - are there particular research tools we can build? How can individual research findings be pooled in a way that enables other researchers to access materials? How can resources be combined to enhance existing knowledge and support further research - what sources of funding and support are available or desirable?

We urgently need to pool the information that we already have, even just amongst Sound Heritage participants (e.g. properties that we've worked on/looked at, archives we've looked at, bibliography of work that has been done so we don't keep reinventing the wheel, general historiography, collection of resources and links to websites). Using the Sound Heritage website to provide research/activity profiles would be helpful: each of us can identify particular areas we engage in (e.g. musical instruments, music history, music conservation), so that if someone comes across something interesting that might not be specific to their area, they can pass it on. These profiles could link through our own experience and expertise, to large-scale resources but also to our own outputs (e.g. bibliographies, handlists, dissertations, articles, databases), even things that we have created for ourselves that would be useful to other participants (these wouldn't necessarily need to be made widely public, for example if they involved rough work or work in progress). A blog or other social media format could serve to share work in progress, sharing key words so that people can know there is something new that's coming up that's

related to their areas of interest/expertise, and also to share queries. We might want a webpage that gives the most common keywords to facilitate using keyword reference capabilities as fully as we can.

A broader information retrieval and sharing project could use the Concert Programmes initiative as a model - this involved funding for a British Library librarian to do a scoping exercise on collections of historic concert programmes, which resulted in a huge amount of material coming from all directions (more than had been anticipated, and providing a good model for motivating a range of communities). A similar type of scoping exercise could produce an online database/list of brief descriptions of musical materials associated with houses. What we want to know are simple things and at least initially, we should aim to keep it quick - if we could get a paragraph on each collection or source, this would later serve to get more detailed information. Simplicity may be the best approach to data pooling, to draw in as many collections as possible since providing basic information does not involve large commitments of staff time or funding (see Museums Metadata Exchange for a model - www.powerhousemuseum.com/museumexchange and <http://museumex.org>). We could begin with a regional approach, starting with existing contacts and expertise and aiming to generate one paragraph on each house with links. Private collections may be unwilling to give that kind of information, because of consequences for access and photocopying of materials, etc. - some thought to this question before approaches would be desirable.

There is a strong need for expertise of librarians (RISM and others, e.g. BL and university libraries) to make the project work, and it could also be the first building block for catalogues (eg international cataloguing initiatives such as RISM, and catalogues of individual houses for COPAC and local use) and eventually for digitisation, on the model of experiments at Tatton Park and with the Austen Family Music Books.

What are the best resources and approaches for gathering additional archival material relating to domestic music making? How can the musical history of a property be reconstructed when there is no extant music collection?

Collections of scores and/or instruments provide a useful starting point but are only one part of the picture, usually insufficient for deep scholarly understanding of country house music making, engaging interpretations and innovative visitor experience work. The information retrieval project (*see above*) could emphasise the range of different kinds of documents/objects that can feed into better musical understanding of a property, perhaps by using a questionnaire approach - listing music-related archives (accounts, bills, family correspondence), objects (eg paintings with musical themes, furniture) and other resources that might not be thought of as "music" at first sight.

At the same time material with provenance to one house may be stored in another, and there is abundant source material that will not be in historic houses at all but in other repositories. Trade records, parish records, diaries, letters, memoirs, journals, newspapers and other materials exist in libraries and public record offices. Visualisations may be useful, e.g. a map showing the current location of material and its location of origin (which could be constructed for an individual house or group of houses, to provide researchers with examples of where to look for supporting material).

Where there is no extant music collection, we can use these other sources to build a musical picture of the house, generating music itself from BL online score project, Austen Family Music Books and digitised material from other houses and collections where there are gaps. We could identify a couple of properties (would need to identify the ones that had staff members, volunteers, an idea and a space in which this could be developed) willing to act as pilots for interactive multimedia projects that would aim to evoke music no longer there (*see below*). This could tap into sources of funding have to do with technological development of interactive multimedia (e.g. NESTA) or immersive listening (S3A - EPSRC).

What properties/collections are still in need of exploration?

Erdigg has extraordinarily rich musical resources in terms of instruments, and range of genres suggested by them. Laycock holds diaries of a French governess who was teaching music to the children of the house in the late 18th century. Knole, Charlecote, Westwood Manor are further possibilities. Snowhill may have the biggest collection of instruments of any house - is there music there as well? (NB result of 20th c collection - provenance to house is recent). Similarly, Fenton House holds archival material with the instrument collection, which forms part of the history of the early music revival (those harpsichords being seen as a social phenomenon of the early twentieth century). Other sources include the Spalding Gentleman's Club - astonishing collection of archives, entirely volunteer run but improving its professional outlook. Every property in Ireland is in need of exploration - very little has been done. Private houses are a rich resource, and a larger network such as Sound Heritage may be able to help open doors by helping owners to understand the benefits of better understanding and interpretation of their collections.

What can we learn from international comparisons?

International comparisons provide an excellent mode of sharing expertise in both research and interpretation. At the same time, a rich and challenging discourse can be found in attitudes towards colonialism in USA, Ireland and Australia. It will be important to use this difference in a national outlook to propel discussion and representations of class and other social divides when working on the musical worlds of elite households, including the socio-economic issues of musicians themselves. Outlying nations are connected by reaction against colonisation and against the oppressive force of the empire. Class and economic divides are much more pronounced and addressed in the music itself, and there is tension between music of the general populace and high culture. We need to ensure that our work is informed by understanding of the very different relationship that these countries had to the English elite, and attitudes towards/against it. These questions are crucial to the way that domestic repertoires travelled (or didn't travel, in some cases) and to how they were understood by the people who used them elsewhere.

What projects could the Sound Heritage group do that would be most useful/ interesting to you? Any smaller-scale, focussed projects around a particular house or collection, that we might use as a way of piloting the network as a research and consultancy group?

(1) Online research tool gathering knowledge about houses with musical collections and/or musical connections (*see above for details*)

(2) Online guide for house managers/curators and researchers, including links to resources that could be useful for someone starting out on this topic (*see above for details*). Some resources that could be included: COPAC (no one quite knows how to use it or how to find country house music within the catalogue - provide a guide); National Trust collections database (perhaps with help in accessing musical content in particular); the NT also has a bibliography which is not accessible through their main site - can we make it available?; the NT is also part of the Public Catalogue Foundation (which could allow, for example, scrolling through paintings in each house that have musical content, which might give a good idea of which houses to investigate for musical instruments and collections as well). Aim to provide Signposts for Self-Help to enable properties/researchers to use existing tools.

(3) Sound library of music researched and recorded for particular properties, tagged so that they can be deployed in others where instruments and scores are not available. Tagging and keywords would need to be well thought out and searching easy. Sound Heritage could potentially work with the British Library to record sound materials and help with ways in which this could be disseminated. Another possibility would be to create a paywall for external use (in advertising, theatre, creations of CDs for shops, etc) and to have heritage staff from participating bodies (NT and/or others) to have free access for interpretation use. Recording of this kind

would be crucial to completing multimedia interpretation projects (*see above*). Where properties have music collections, these could be displayed with recorded music that visitors could control. Where there is no extant music, recordings could represent 'Ghosts of Music Past' – deploying appropriate works that were known to be widespread amongst country house collections to give an approximate aural sample (although this would need to acknowledge that country houses have various musical histories and stories to tell across generations; some thought on how to handle the time spans would be good).

(4) One or more pilot projects involving multimedia visitor experience experiments. Interpretation possibilities could involve audio, projection, and/or live performance. Music could be performed in one space and streamed elsewhere to other properties/homes. Auralisation - modelling the acoustics of a room - could be a way of making intimate performance spaces available to larger numbers. Small spaces such as bedrooms and day rooms where collective music making did not necessarily happen, but where an instrument may have been housed and where residents may have played privately, could be made into an intimate and meaningful hands-on experience. We could organise an Eric Whitacre-style live participation event or virtual drawing room around *Messiah* or domestic songs. We need to identify properties with appropriate staff and volunteer resources and attract funding (*see above*).

(5) Collection of essays on music/sound in the 18th and 19th century country house, covering both historical topics and the challenges of interpreting music for visitors today. This needs to be framed in such a way that the rationale is clear i.e. what has been done and what we could do in the future, and should aim to bridge gaps between academia and practical heritage sites, including consideration of e.g. visitor expectations and specific needs of heritage sector. Consider having essays online with embedded pictures/sound.

(6) Residencies for houses with musical associations, which could be of any length. Among other things, residents could dream up a program of music that would relate to the particular property and hold continuous musical interventions in these houses (concerts, training volunteers, providing information toward interpretation etc). Ideally this could turn into a rolling programme of musical residencies/interventions (helping, for example, to cascade music cataloguing and/or digitisation of musical resources through a series of properties).

(7) Events and/or summer schools for training and knowledge sharing between academics and heritage professionals, embedding music into heritage training and making academics aware of larger context

General points

Today there is an occasion mentality relating to musical performance that is hard to get around: historically music making was for everyday, but we have lost the experience of music making in the home, and don't fully understand how widespread the activity of domestic music performance was in the past. Participants stressed the importance of education of house owners and curators on the significance of music in country house culture and history, through for example e.g. exhibitions, concerts, talks, guided tours. We need always to bear in mind 21st-century perspectives of visitors and owners. Access to private houses will be contingent on convincing owners of the benefits of exploring their properties' musical history. Some connection to the Historic Houses Association will be key - potentially through professional channels?

Our activities need to highlight existing examples of good practice including videos and recordings, and case studies which could be made easily available online. For a given house, it would be good to have even a single page on their website, or linking to the Sound Heritage website, and including examples, pictures, and sound, so that music is embedded, rather than being just something special for one-off events or subject experts.

On translating music into funds – there are plenty of musicians who would be interested in this kind of music-making, and who might be prepared to take on some of the burden of looking for funds. If National Trust or Sound Heritage was able to develop a template plan for how to go about it and achieve cost-effectiveness, that would be an incredibly valuable tool for/in private houses: that is, the NT does the groundwork in developing how to make this work, and HHA or Sound Heritage could be involved in disseminating the framework to other houses/institutions. Projects could use student musicians as well as professionals for cost effectiveness, and there could be a spectrum of musical activities from masterclasses/low-cost or free interventions to premium ticketed events.

Long term, to ensure follow-through and substantial, enduring results, it will be important to link Sound Heritage to other bodies - not only in the historic houses part of the heritage sector, but also to libraries, archives, and museums.