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1 Introduction

Palestrina was their Homer.[1]

John Marsh (1752–1828), an accomplished gentleman-musician and indefatigable diarist, had a great deal of difficulty finding breakfast on the morning of May 26, 1784. The opening concert of the first Handel Commemoration was being presented that day, and Marsh tells us in his diary that he was so eager to "insure a seat in a good situation for seeing & hearing [he] got up & had my hairdresser at 7," arising early in order to "be at the doors about half an hour before they open'd w'ich they were to be at 9 o'clock tho' the performance was not to begin until 12." The only problem he faced was where to have his morning meal. He first went "to Anderton's to breakfast at ½ past 7," but "found the house fast shut up & not a window open." Equally futile were his attempts to find an open coffee shop "in the Strand," and even at the "Golden Cross Charing Cross from whence coaches were daily going from 4 and 5 in the morning." However, Marsh eventually did have his breakfast at "the coffee house at the entrance of Westminster Hall," half an hour before the doors opened, where he found "coffee, chocolate & tea all ready, with muffins" that would enable him to "keep up [his] attention to the music without flagging." He goes on to describe in detail his exultation at witnessing one of the most significant events in British musical history.[2]

Marsh's excitement at hearing the music of a composer who had died twenty-five years earlier, and the extraordinary efforts he took to do so, tells us a great deal about the reception of the music of Handel at that time. Nor was he alone in his enthusiasm. In 1784, it was shared by over 2,000 members of the audience, including King George III and Queen Charlotte, and more than 500 performers.[3] In point of fact, interest in older music among British

[1] Percy Lovell, "'Ancient' Music in Eighteenth-Century England," *Music & Letters*, vol. 60, no. 4 (October 1979), pp. 401–415, here p. 403, citing Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789)*, 2 vols., ed. Frank Mercer (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), vol. ii, p. 163. This comment reflects Charles Burney's astute observation that since Homer occupies "the most ample and honourable place" in the history of ancient poetry, it is "Palestrina, the Homer of the most *Ancient Music* that has been preserved, [who] merits all the reverence and attention which it is in a musical historian's power to bestow."

[2] *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752–1828)*, edited, introduced, and annotated by Brian Robins (Stuyvesant, NY: The Pendragon Press, 1998), pp. 316–319.

[3] For another, equally colorful description of the wide range of events during the 1784 Handel Commemoration, this time by a professional oboist who actually played in the "band," see W. T. Parke, *Musical Memoirs; Comprising an Account of the General State of Music in England from the First Commemoration of Handel in 1784, to the Year 1830* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp. 36–44. Parke confirms the impressive size of the undertaking, the huge orchestra, and the luxurious accommodations for the elite, such as "the splendid box erected for their Majesties . . . seats covered with crimson cloth." He also echoes what Marsh described about

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
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Excerpt
More Information

musicians and audiences, which can be traced back to the seventeenth century, had become very intense by the middle of the eighteenth. It would continue to grow for the next one hundred years, so much so that the music of not only Handel but also Domenico Scarlatti and Johann Sebastian Bach received more performances, publications, attention, and appreciation in Britain between 1750 and 1850 than in any other country and assumed a central role in British musical life.

Ludwig Spohr (1784–1859), whose music was well known and admired in Britain throughout the nineteenth century, said as much during his visit to London in 1833, claiming in an interview for *The Atlas* that it was in this British city that one finds "the only concerts in the world . . . limited to the performance of old music."[4] Admittedly, Spohr here was commenting on the works of Handel that he had heard during his visit, but he might have well been referring to the numerous performances of older music by other composers that had become prevalent in programs in Britain during this era.

Despite Spohr's assertion that Britain was alone in presenting such concerts, which he probably made to please his English hosts, programs of old music, or "historical concerts," were not unknown in countries on the Continent by the 1830s. France, for example, could boast of the "concerts historiques" presented by François-Joseph Fétis at the Paris Conservatoire, where he was serving as librarian. The first, on April 8, 1832, featured works by Peri, Caccini, and Monteverdi, progressing to pieces by Méhul, Rossini, and Weber.[5] Fétis was apparently a proponent of early music beyond his own "concerts historiques." For example, he seems to have encouraged the Hummel piano protégé Ferdinand Hiller to play early keyboard repertoire (on the piano) when he lived in Paris, such as a performance of pieces from a "Virginalbook" on

the timing and crush of people at the doors, including a confirmation of Marsh's account about trying to get a good seat when the doors opened at 9 a.m., writing: "the curiosity of the public was so great, that although the performance was not to commence till twelve o'clock, the doors were besieged by nine."

4 *The Atlas*, August 11, 1833, no. 378, p. 517. As an indication of Spohr's popularity with British audiences and musicians, 228 of his works were performed by the Royal Philharmonic Society on 130 subscription concerts between 1820 and 1896, more than almost any other composer.

5 See Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), p. 19. Haskell tells us that "the audience was so enthused" by the program and performances at the second concert in December "that it demanded five encores – after sitting through no less than four hours of sixteenth-century vocal and instrumental music interspersed with Fétis's learned discourse." For further information about Fétis and his "concerts historiques," see Robert Wangermée, *François-Joseph Fétis: musicologue et compositeur* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1951); Robert Wangermée, "Les techniques de la virtuosité pianistique selon Fétis," *Revue belge de Musicologie*, vol. 26 (1972–1973), pp. 90–105; and Robert Wangermée, "Les Premiers Concerts Historiques à Paris," in *Mélanges Ernest Closson* (Brussels: Societé belge de musicologie, 1948), pp. 185–196, here p. 188.

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
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Mark Kroll
Excerpt
More Information

a concert of April 15, 1835.[6] Hiller would perform at least one unidentified Bach violin sonata with Pierre Baillot (1771–1842) in Paris while living there in the 1830s, and again, probably due to Fétis' influence, played an "Allegro" from a "Concerto pour 3 pianos" of J. S. Bach (BWV 1063?) on March 23, 1833, repeating it on December 15 of that year, his fellow pianists being none other than Chopin and Liszt.[7]

Historical concerts were also being presented in Germany around this time.[8] For example, on April 4, 1835, the music association Euterpe sponsored a *historische Konzert* in the Leipzig Hotel de Pologne, titled "Characteristics of German Eighteenth-Century Composers." The early music on the program included an "overture" by Bach [the *Overture in D Major*, BWV 1068?] and the "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah*, along with an overture by Gluck, a chorus from Haydn's *Creation*, the overture to *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*.[9] Felix Mendelssohn's musical historicism is well known, and will be further discussed in the sections on Handel and Bach.[10] To cite one example here, Mendelssohn, in his capacity as music director of the *Grosse Concerts* in Leipzig, put on three cycles of *historische Konzerte* in 1838, 1841, and 1847, integrating them into the usual subscription concerts of the Gewandhaus.[11]

Spohr made his own contribution to the field with his *Historische Sinfonie*, op. 116 (1839), which consisted of four movements, each dedicated to a different style and era. The first, "Bach-Händel'sche Periode 1720," begins with a short "Largo Grave" in the French Overture style (see Exx. 1a–e), followed by a longer section marked "Allegro Moderato," (See Exx. 1d-e) its

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[6] Dieter Gutknecht, "Hiller und die Alte Musik: Die Kölner Erstaufführung der *Matthäus-Passion* 1859 von Johann Sebastian Bach," in Peter Ackermann, Arnold Jacobshagen, Roberto Scoccimarro, Wolfram Steinbeck, Laure Schnapper, *Ferdinand Hiller: Komponist, Interpret, Musikvermittler* (Berlin: Merseburger, 2014), pp. 401–414, here p. 405.

[7] For the Baillot performance, see Gutknecht, "Hiller und die Alte Musik," p. 407. For the Bach concerto, see Malou Haine, "Les concerts communs de Ferdinand Hiller et Franz Liszt à Paris dans les années 1830," in *Ferdinand Hiller: Komponist, Interpret, Musikvermittler*, p. 309–327, here pp. 312 and 326.

[8] Early music was not unknown in Germany before the nineteenth century. Prime examples are the salons of wealthy Jewish families in Berlin, where works by J. S. Bach were frequently performed. For further information, see Rebecca Cypess and Nancy Sinkoff, eds., *Sara Levy's World: Gender, Judaism, and the Bach Tradition in Enlightenment Berlin* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018).

[9] See Nicole Grimes and Angela R. Mace, eds., *Mendelssohn Perspectives* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), p. 148.

[10] One of the best sources of information about this aspect of Mendelssohn's activities is Susanna Großmann-Vendrey, *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy und die Musik der Vergangenheit* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1969), pp. 159–169.

[11] Grimes and Mace, *Mendelssohn Perspectives*, pp. 146–148. Mendelssohn also played Bach violin sonatas with Pierre Baillot in Paris between 1831 and 1832. See Grimes and Mace, *Mendelssohn Perspectives*, p. 320.

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(a)

Largo Grave ♪ = 69

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

(b)

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

(c)

Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Db.

Example 1a–c Ludwig Spohr, *Symphony No. 6*, op. 116, "Historische," Movement I, "Bach-Händel'sche Periode 1720," mm. 1–6 (wind parts omitted)

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
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Mark Kroll
Excerpt
More Information

Example 1d–e Ludwig Spohr, *Symphony No. 6*, op. 116, "Historische," Movement I, "Bach-Händel'sche Periode 1720," mm. 8–13 (wind parts omitted)

opening similar to the theme of Bach's "Fugue in C Major" from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book I. After this section comes a homophonic "Pastorale" in the style of Handel, the movement concluding with the fugal material, marked "Tempo primo."

The second movement, titled "Haydn-Mozart'sche Periode 1780," is in that style; the third, "Beethoven'sche Periode 1810," evokes a scherzo by Beethoven; and the last, "Allerneuste Periode 1840," satirized what Haskell describes as "the contemporary idiom that Spohr deplored."[12]

[12] Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, p. 21.

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Excerpt
More Information

Nevertheless, Spohr's claim in *The Atlas* about London's role as a leader in early-music performance was essentially correct and extended to the rest of the country as well. By the 1830s, and for many years prior to that, Britain was second to none in its commitment to this repertoire, and particularly to works by three of the most important musicians of the Baroque era, who also happened to share the birth year of 1685: D. Scarlatti (d. 1757), G. F. Handel (d. 1759), and J. S. Bach (d. 1750). This Element explores the enthusiastic reception of the music of these three composers in Great Britain between 1750 and 1850, and the artistic, cultural, economic, and political factors that encouraged it, or at least made it possible.

Many of these forces would change, of course, or assume varying degrees of importance and influence over a period of one hundred years, but two that remained constant were money and power. As Nicholas Temperley explains, Britain, and London in particular, became the dominant political and economic force in Europe between 1750 and 1850, as well as the most cosmopolitan, its "lead over all others in wealth and population" translating into musical preeminence as well. This meant more public concerts, more students, and a wider dissemination of all kinds of repertoire because of the city's and the country's global leadership "in the publication of sheet music."[13] The British emphasis on personal freedom and independence, or at least the opportunity to seek it, and the limited state control of cultural institutions also created an atmosphere that encouraged individual entrepreneurship, a valuable advantage for musicians trying to make their way in the world. Such conditions were not easily found on the Continent, if at all, with life in most European nation-states more stringently controlled and proscribed by the upper classes and nobility.

However, it was the British aristocracy, with its complicated social hierarchy and restrictive set of class distinctions, that took the lead in creating the situation that Spohr so admired. For example, the 1784 Handel Commemoration with which we began this section was organized and sponsored by the Concert of Ancient Music, founded in 1776 by a group of "proudly backward-looking" noblemen, as William Weber describes, for the express purpose of performing and listening to early music.[14] Although the Commemoration was open to the general public, the programs of the Concert of Ancient Music were typically limited to fellow nobles and other members of the social elite. Its repertoire was equally rarefied, consisting of works from the beginning of the eighteenth century but also reaching back into the Elizabethan era. Yet nothing like it, in

[13] Nicholas Temperley, "London and the Piano, 1760–1860," *The Musical Times*, vol. 129, no. 1744 (June 1988), pp. 289–293, here p. 289.

[14] William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 2.

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Excerpt
More Information

terms of the scope and number of its concerts, existed outside of Britain, and it is safe to say that it was because of the nobles' efforts that early music in Britain "now rivalled the modern; old works had acquired a certain chic."[15]

Early music also found a natural ally in the religious institutions of Britain, foremost among them the Anglican Church, with its rich musical traditions dating back centuries. A leading figure in this regard was William Boyce, whose monumental publication, *Cathedral Music*, would play a motivating role in the Anglican choral revival.[16] The musicians of the Chapel Royal were also active participants in and proponents of the early music revival. Being able to function equally well in the different worlds of the court, the church, and secular London, they brought, as Weber describes, "a strong professional tradition, and the historical consciousness that went along with it" to foster "new social bases for repertories of old music."[17] A parallel development, the so-called Gothic Revival in religion, included a return to traditional Anglican and Catholic rituals and practices, such as the reinstatement of unaccompanied plainchant. The Gothic Revival would find its way into architecture as well. One such revivalist was Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852). The son of a French émigré who had settled in London in 1792, he acquired a considerable reputation, both as a draftsman and as an editor of illustrated books on Gothic architecture, becoming a fervent advocate for the revival of this style of architecture for both secular and sacred spaces, claiming that it was ideal for England and perfectly "suited to our country and climate."[18] Pugin was not shy about his opinions. On one occasion, he even castigated his fellow architects in 1850 for designing churches "whose appearance is something between a dancing-room and a mechanic's institute."[19]

The role of the royal family was also significant, as evidenced by the enthusiastic support for the 1784 commemoration of King George III. His motivations, however, were perhaps more political than musical. For him the 1784 Commemoration was not merely a series of performances of music by his

[15] Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, p. 2.

[16] The *Cathedral Music* was published in 1760, 1768, 1773, and 1788, and enlarged by Samuel Arnold in 1790. See Lovell, "Ancient Music in Eighteenth-Century England," p. 407. Another example is John Page's *Harmonia Sacra, a Collection of Anthems in Score, Selected . . . from the most Eminent Masters of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries*. See Peter Holman, *Life after Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), p. 303.

[17] Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, p. 9.

[18] George Germann, *Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences and Ideas* (London: Lund Humphries with the Architectural Association, 1972), pp. 69–73, here p. 70, citing A[ugustus] Welby [Northmore] Pugin, *A Letter to A. W. Hakewill, Architect, in Answer to His "Reflections on the Style for Rebuilding the Houses of Parliament"* (Salisbury, 1835), p. 13.

[19] Cited in Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, p. 18.

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Excerpt
More Information

favorite composer. It was an irresistible opportunity to put royal power and prerogative, not to mention royal musical sophistication, on full display before an audience of thousands of his subjects, in no less a venue than Westminster Abbey, itself a symbol of royal continuity. It also came at a propitious time, when the king was dealing with a variety of political problems, such as the fallout and angst caused by the American Revolution (i.e., the recent loss of the American colonies); a constitutional crisis between the Crown and the Parliament; a difficult election that year; and the unification of "Tory and Whig parties within a new political community."[20]

As we shall examine in the remaining sections of this Element, the royal family's advocacy for early music would remain strong through the end of Queen Victoria's reign, thanks in great part to the influence of Prince Albert. The Queen, however, reportedly found most of this repertoire boring, with the exception of Handel, of course.[21] Albert, an avid music lover and skilled amateur musician, even served as the director of the Ancient Concerts from 1840 to 1848 and, starting in 1843, assumed a greater role by choosing the programs. These, as Temperley tells us, could consist of "medieval hymns and chansons, motets and mass movements by Palestrina, a concerto by Cavalieri (played on viols), arias by Cesti and Stradella, fugues and choruses by Bach," in addition to music by Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, and even "curiosities like Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*."[22] Notably, the Queen's subscriptions to the Breitkopf complete editions of Handel and Bach, which were most likely initiated by the Prince Consort, were kept up by Victoria, or a member of her staff, after Albert's death until the editions were complete.

Equally important were influences outside of religious, aristocratic, or royal spheres. These included intellectual and aesthetic movements, such as Romantic antiquarianism. For example, William Shield (1748–1829) and his friend, the folk-song collector Joseph Ritson (1752–1803), collaborated to publish *A Select Collection of English Songs* in 1783, and somewhat later another avid collector and advocate, Stafford Smith (1750–1836), used a large selection from the *Mulliner Book*, which he owned at that time, in *Musica Antiqua* (published in 1812).[23]

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[20] Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, p. 225.

[21] See Nicholas Temperley, "The Prince Consort, Champion of Music," *The Musical Times*, vol. 102, no. 1426 (December 1961), pp. 762–764, here p. 763. Temperly adds: "At two concerts given by her at Buckingham Palace in 1839, every single item on the programme was a vocal extract from an Italian opera, with a heavy preponderance of Rossini and Donizetti. All were sung by Italians, accompanied at the piano by Costa."

[22] See Temperley, "The Prince Consort, Champion of Music," p. 763.

[23] Cited in Holman, *Life after Death*, pp. 305–306. See also Wendy Heller, *Music in the Baroque* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), pp. 46–49.

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Excerpt
More Information

Antiquarianism was also featured in literary movements, such as the Gothic novel, as represented by a host of writers, including Horace Walpole (e.g., *The Castle of Otranto*), Ann Radcliffe (e.g., *The Mysteries of Udolpho*), Frances Burney, Mary Hays, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Sir Walter Scott, who often satirized some of the excesses of both the Gothic novel and Romantic antiquarianism.[24] The influence of historicism that created such a strong interest in early-music performance was also felt in other humanistic disciplines, including painting, sculpture, and scholarship. For example, when the "Elgin Marbles" that Lord Elgin had stolen from the Parthenon in Athens were displayed in London in 1807, the response was "electric" among both the public and British painters and sculptors as well.[25] The same could be said of the nascent discipline of musicology. It is no surprise that it is in Britain that we find the first full-length biography of a composer (John Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*, 1760); the first "musicological" histories (e.g., by Hawkins and Burney); and the first collected edition of a single composer (Arnold's *The Works of Handel*, 1787–1797).[26]

The performances of the music of D. Scarlatti, Handel, and J. S. Bach also received impetus from Britain's academic institutions, such as Oxford University, a topic to which we will return in later sections, and from numerous private or semi-aristocratic organizations formed to support the cause of early music. In addition to the previously mentioned Concert of Ancient Music, the period after 1750 witnessed the formation of many important musical organizations, including the "Sons of the Clergy," "Madrigal Society," "Catch Club," "Glee Club," "Concentores Sodales," and "Motett Society."[27]

Britain's vibrant music publishing industry, which can trace its roots to the pioneering work of John Playford and others in seventeenth-century London, was greatly expanded by a new generation of music publishers that appeared after 1800, chief among them Samuel Chappell, Vincent Novello, and Thomas Boosey. They issued numerous high-quality editions of large swatches of this

[24] See Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and Carol Margaret Davison, *Gothic Literature, 1764–1824* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).

[25] Derek Carew, *The Mechanical Muse: The Pianos, Pianism and Piano Music, c. 1760–1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 169.

[26] Holman, *Life after Death*, p. 305.

[27] The Concert of Ancient Music was initially founded as the Academy of Vocal Music in 1726 and then became the Academy of Ancient Music, presenting a series of biweekly semiprivate concerts of old music from 1733 until its demise in 1796. See Philip Olleson and Fiona M. Palmer, "Publishing Music from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: The Work of Vincent Novello and Samuel Wesley in the 1820s," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, vol. 130, no. 1 (2005), pp. 38–73, here pp. 41–42. See also Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, p. 18; and Holman, *Life after Death*, pp. 303–304.

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Mark Kroll
Excerpt
More Information

early repertoire, while at the same time producing volumes geared to the mass market, such as arrangements of large scores and easy piano versions of popular arias and songs. These were not only profitable, but served an educational purpose, making early music available to a large and enthusiastic market that wanted not only to hear and study these works, but also to play or sing them.[28]

Money, as noted at the beginning of this section, was one of the major factors that made Britain, and especially London, a center for early-music performance between 1750 and 1850. Indeed, its outsize share of the world's wealth during this era enabled it to support a wide range of institutions, businesses, and individual citizens dedicated to the pursuit of this repertoire. Britain also attracted an influx of foreign musicians, who came from almost every country or region in Europe – Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Austria, and to a lesser degree, France and Spain – for a variety of reasons, but primarily to take advantage of the financial opportunities they could not find in their home countries. Leopold Mozart acknowledged this in a letter of 1754, writing that London was a good place "to haul in a good catch of guineas."[29] Some came to visit, others to settle permanently. August Wendborn (1742–1811) wrote about those who came only for a temporary stay: "Many foreign singers, fiddlers, and dancers, are extravagantly paid; and, if they are the least frugal, they are enabled to retire to their own country, where they may live in affluence, enriched by English money."[30] The same was true for Johann Nepomuk Hummel almost fifty years later. After returning home to Weimar in 1830 from one of his successful (and profitable) tours to Britain, he was probably not surprised to receive a letter from his friend Adolphe Wiele on August 20 of that year that did not dwell on the artistic merits of the tour, but rather asked: "How did it go? Did the Guineas perform well and turn out in great numbers?"[31]

While there might have been an occasional grumble by British musicians who felt eclipsed by their foreign counterparts, on the whole these musical émigrés, whether visiting for a short time or settling permanently, gave back to the host country as much as they received. The Italians received an early and

[28] See Colin Timothy Eatcock, *Mendelssohn and Victorian England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 14.
[29] Leopold Mozart, Chelsea, to Lorenz Hagenauer, Salzburg, September 13, 1764, in Emily Anderson, ed., *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, 3rd ed., S. Sadie and F. Smart (rev.) (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 52.
[30] Gebhardt Friedrich August Wendborn, *Die Zustand des Staats, der religion, der Gelehrsamkeit und die Kunst in Grosbritannien gegen das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 4 vols., Berlin, 1785–1788, translated by the author, *A View of England towards the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1791), vol. 2, p. 237.
[31] Details of Hummel's tours to Britain can be found in Mark Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: A Musician's Life and World* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. 102–103, 127–135, and 136–150. For the Wiele letter, see Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel*, p. 135.

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