## Introduction

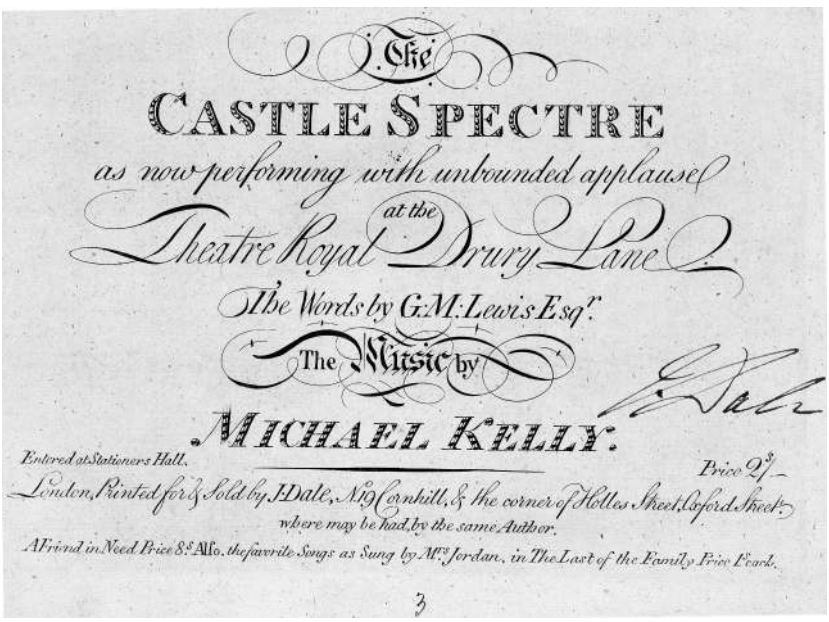


**Figure 1** Title-page of Michael Kelly's vocal score (1798) for Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre*. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Mus. Voc. I, 103 (3)

This Element started accidentally, some years ago. I'd been asked to write a blog for the University of Stirling's Gothic Imagination site. Sitting in the British Library, it occurred to me that I could combine my interests in literature and music. As I happened to be reading Matthew Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (1797) at the time, I ordered Michael Kelly's vocal score for the play (Figure 1). I was immediately taken with the text that arrived. A collection of popular numbers from a hit show, here arranged for piano, was winningly set out in easy-to-read (and easy-to-play) lines, its title page adorned with swirls and flourishes. Equally flamboyant in its rhetoric, it gleefully informed the reader that the work was 'now performing with unbounded applause at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane' (Kelly 1798: Title-page).

As I later wrote in the blog, what I was looking for when I ordered the music was some sense of its having been conceived of as Gothic – either through a deliberate historicism, a recourse to particular instruments (such as a glass harmonica), or the use of idioms associated with the music of *Sturm and*

*Drang*. I managed to find some implied 'ancientness' and duly reported on it but was otherwise frustrated in my search. I had been expecting what Isabella van Elferen has since called '*The Sounds of the Uncanny*'; instead, I found merry tunes, uncomplicated lines, and the music of transcendence. Ironically, Kelly's music profoundly shocked me. This wasn't, by any stretch of the imagination, Gothic music as I understood it.

I had approached the music of *The Castle Spectre* with preconceptions that were, in effect, misconceptions. Convinced I knew what Gothic music sounded like – how it should work, what affects it should cause – I overlaid Kelly's music with anachronistic expectations. I 'knew' that Gothic music is designed to provoke fear or discomfort, to trigger a sense of unease, suspense or dislocation. Asked to provide examples, I might have pointed to the insistent high-pitched screech of strings in the shower scene from Bernard Herrmann's score for Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960); or the Requiem-gone -awry 'Ave Satani' theme of Jerry Goldsmith's music for Richard Donner's *The Omen* (1976); or the demonic-sounding organ runs which form the Phantom's motif in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986). I 'knew' that Gothic music is affect-driven, that it achieves its affects through its close association with Gothic narrative, that it signifies through the relationship it constructs with Gothic content, and that it might evoke particular 'Gothic' spaces or embed Gothic tropes. I 'knew' that contemporary Gothic music weirds other musical idioms, as does Paul Giovanni's folk score for Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973) or Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' song 'The Carny' (1986) with its ghastly fairground sound. Of course, I didn't expect *The Castle Spectre's* music to sound like the soundtracks for *The Wicker Man* or *Psycho*, but I did expect some kind of eighteenth-century equivalent. At the least, I thought that the music would present itself as 'Gothic', add to Gothic ambiance, accompany scenes that were meant to scare, and seek to induce Gothic affect. It didn't.

I started to chase up the music of other Gothic drama in the British Library, the Bodleian, the V&A's theatre archives and the National Library of Ireland, eventually amassing thousands of pieces. I quickly discovered that Gothic drama – which I'd started off by considering as a single category – came in very many different forms. It embraced musical plays, tragedies, comic operas, farces, melodramas, dramatic romances, operatic romances and numerous permutations of these terms, and this was just the spoken word drama. Embarrassed by the wealth of the material, I soon realised that I'd have to limit my research to spoken word drama. I also experienced another kind of embarrassment, as it dawned on me that *most* of the Gothic drama of the period came with music, but that for years I had let it slip under the radar.

I did, of course, sometimes come across the kind of music I expected to find. In the 'Cooper Family' collection in the V&A's theatre archives, I found Mr Nicholson's music (in manuscript) for John Walker's melodrama *The Wild Boy of Bohemia* (Olympic Theatre, London, 1827). It bore a striking resemblance to the music for a silent film. Cues marked 'Murder! Murder', 'Thy Temerity' and 'Help! Help', were accompanied by music that was recognisably 'Gothic', with cliff-hanger cadences, relentlessly agitated rhythms, and chords that provoked alarm and suspense (Nicholson 1827: Cues 9, 34 and 35). However, most of the music I discovered did not sound Gothic; it didn't seem even to want to engender Gothic affect. Much of it was jolly, some of it serene. There was a surprising amount of music sung by peasants and huntsmen engaged in innocent fun.

Reading and re-reading Gothic novels of the 1790s, I was struck afresh by the amount of music in them, not only in Ann Radcliffe's great novels of that decade, but also in Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and a host of other works. They are full of heroines playing lutes, monks chanting, peasants piping and heroes serenading; even demons come with music. I realised that this too is not Gothic music. It might be achingly beautiful, stirring, transporting or mournful, but not sinister. Even the music of the supernatural – ghosts, witches and demons – is sweet. I found myself thinking, as Frits Noske had in 1981, 'it looks as if Gothic literature preceded Gothic music' (Noske 1981: 174). A number of questions soon came to my mind: If the music of the 1790s isn't seeking to create Gothic affect, what kind of affects is it aiming for? When had scary Gothic music come into being? Where had it happened first: on the stage or on the page? What is the relation between the imaginary music of the novels and the actual music of the Gothic dramas? Could looking at the real music of the Gothic drama help us to understand the imaginary music of the novels? How and when did the music of the Gothic become Gothic music?

The more music I played and read about, the more I grasped the complex and dynamic relation between the Gothic novels and drama of the period. It became evident that novels of the 1790s draw on comic opera, and that much 'Gothic drama' is essentially comic opera with imported content from Gothic novels. I realised too that the melodramatic music of the English stage had in turn an impact on music in Gothic fiction.

This Element traces music's transformation from sign of romance to underwriter of the Gothic, examining different stages on that journey. It looks at both the imagined music of novels and the actual music of Gothic drama and asks the same questions of each: What kind of music is featured? How does it signify within the text? What affects is it aiming to cause? Who (if anyone) is playing it? Who hears it? Does it signify differently to audiences/readers than to characters

within the text? By and large, the Element proceeds chronologically but since it is both working within genres and thinking about the connections between them, there is some inevitable backtracking. More attention is given to the music of the first part of the period than to the latter, which has been better served by critics.

The first section looks at the imagined music of Gothic novels, positioning Radcliffe as the great pioneer in the field of musical Gothic, examining some of the innovative ways she employs musical discourse and tropes and arguing that music underwrites the romance of her imagined worlds. Section 2 considers responses to her music in the work of other novelists, most notably Eliza Fenwick and Matthew Lewis. Section 3 examines some of the ways Radcliffe imbeds operatic material and narrative techniques in her 1790s novels and offers some suggestions for hearing her music. The fourth section directs its attention to the actual music of the Gothic drama of the 1790s. It argues that much of what seems anomalous about many of the Gothic plays of the time can be traced back to their origins in a genre which to modern sensibilities seems almost antithetical to the Gothic drama: comic opera. The final part of the section considers operatic romances of the early nineteenth century. Section 5 looks at the music Michael Kelly produced for two of the best-known Gothic dramas of the period, drawing on contemporary accounts of the music's reception and its extra-theatrical life in order to get a fuller understanding of its affects, particularly those relating to the (real and pretend) supernatural. The final section presents some of the characteristic sounds of melodrama, with examples from *A Tale of Mystery* (1802) and *Ella Rosenberg* (1807), and outlines some of the ways in which melodramatic music differs from the music of previous Gothic drama. The Element finishes by considering some of the long-lasting effects of melodramatic music on Gothic fiction.

## The Sound Files

Music is an integral part of most of the Gothic dramatic works of the period 1789–1820. Works which have no music, such as James Boaden's *The Secret Tribunal* (1795) and George Manners's *Edgar or Caledonian Feuds* (1806) (an adaptation of *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*), are in a minority. However, despite its prevalence, music is all too easy for present-day readers of Gothic drama to ignore. In a prose play, lyrics can seem an excrescence, a decoration, a diversion from the main business of the work or an interpretive cul-de-sac; the temptation is to overlook or speed-read them. Sometimes playwrights encourage readers to disregard or downgrade song lyrics. George Colman, for example, in his advertisement to *The Iron Chest* (1796), compares song lyrics unfavourably to '*lyrick Poetry*' and asserts that the play's 'Songs,

Duets, and Chorusses, are intended merely as vehicles for musical effect' (Colman 1796: xxii). Even when modern-day readers make the effort to read and assimilate lyrics, they do not know what the songs would have sounded like, how much stage time they might have taken, or what the impact on an audience would have been like when some of the most powerful and moving voices of the age filled the auditorium with them.

Hearing its music is vital for our understanding of the Gothic drama of the 1790s and the early nineteenth century, even more so for the drama of the 1790s than for the melodrama, which at least has a recognisably 'Gothic' sound. Approaching what we call Gothic drama through its music enables us to restore some of the fullness to texts we've made relatively impoverished because of our insistence on viewing them through what is essentially a reductive lens (the Gothic). It can help us move away from our preoccupation with the 'acoustics of horror' (to borrow Matt Foley's resonant phrase) and entertain a more nuanced understanding of drama of the period (Foley 2018: 460). It can also help illuminate long-running issues in criticism, casting light on what Diego Saglia, writing about Miles Peter Andrews' *The Mysteries of the Castle* (1795), calls its 'modal and tonal variations', 'generic fluidity and instability' (Saglia 2014: 232). Finally, thinking about the Gothic drama through music prompts questions about genre. What do we mean by the term Gothic drama? How useful a term is it? Which genres contribute to and neighbour Gothic drama?

I laid this project aside for some years because I was convinced that, for a work like this to make any sense, the music needed to be *heard* by its readers. There was no point in merely informing literary scholars that this music was not Gothic as we know it: the proof would be in the hearing and, then, I had no means of making such hearing possible. I believed – and still believe – that, to a large extent, the music featured in this Element speaks for itself and that, when it is heard, it can alter our conceptions of certain kinds of Gothic drama. Possibly more controversially, I also believe that hearing the music of the Gothic plays of the 1780s and 1790s can help us to 'hear' the imagined music of Gothic novels of the same period.

Eventually, two things enabled this work to come into being: the digital platform of the Elements series, and a grant from the British Academy and Leverhulme foundation. Receipt of the grant meant that the music I'd been researching could be arranged, performed live and recorded. It also funded the filming of a lecture-recital that I gave with the musicians featured in this Element at the Wallace Collection, London, in October 2022.[1]

The files you will hear represent some of the different contexts in which the music might originally have been heard. The song settings recreate performance in the domestic sphere or at a private concert. Most of the dramatic numbers have

[1] See www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJmOPSVhXS0.

been arranged to represent performance in a theatre. Arrangement was necessary for a number of reasons, the primary one being that London theatre music of the period has fared badly in terms of preservation. On 24 February 1809, Drury Lane theatre was destroyed. Kelly describes in his *Reminiscences* how he had not only: 'the poignant grief of beholding the magnificent structure burning with merciless fury, but of knowing that all the scores of the operas which I had composed for the theatre, the labour of years, were then consuming: it was an appalling sight' (Kelly 1826: II, 281–82).

The previous year, Covent Garden theatre had also been destroyed by flames. If the fires destroyed much musical heritage, the disaster was compounded by 'Victorian librarians' who, as Roger Fiske notes, must have thrown away 'tattered scores and parts of operas they thought would never be produced again' (Fiske 1973: 582). For most of the music discussed in this Element, no full sets of orchestral parts remain. Despite the occasional exception (such as Matthew Peter King's manuscript for James Kenney's *Ella Rosenberg*), most of the theatre music under consideration here only survives in the form of vocal scores, such as that for *The Castle Spectre*.

Vocal scores were primarily aimed at amateur musicians. Their availability meant that theatrical numbers could travel into private houses (where they might form part of amateur productions), into concert halls, school rooms, parlours, drawing rooms, or out onto the street or into the fields. It wasn't always necessary to buy the complete score; frequently numbers could be purchased separately. Samuel Arnold's music for Boaden's *The Italian Monk* (1797) (not including the songs Arnold selected from existing repertoire by other composers) could be bought in its entirety for 6s. The four songs (though not the three-movement, six-page overture) were available separately at 1s apiece. Music could also be copied out by hand; Jane Austen's family, for example, transcribed the vocal score for *The Castle Spectre* into a family album.[2]

Most commonly, vocal scores contain vocal lines and a part for a piano, or less frequently, a harp. Sometimes a guitar or flute arrangement is supplied at the end – not necessarily in the same key. There is considerable variation between vocal scores in the amount of musical information given, in relation to harmony and original instrumentation. The level of detail informed our arrangement decisions. In the case of the 'Chorus of Nuns' from Arnold's music for *The Italian Monk*, for example, lack of detail (and lack of a chorus) meant that an arrangement for a smaller ensemble, representing a domestic or private performance, was preferable (Audio 2).

[2] See https://archive.org/details/austen1676477-2001/page/n93/mode/2up.

The ensemble recorded for this Element consists of keyboard, four strings, woodwind and vocalists; there is no brass or percussion. Though the two woodwind players were able to double up on instruments (which is why you can hear clarinet, flute, oboe and bassoon), you will never hear more than eleven musicians at any time. Obviously, such an ensemble does not equate to the forces – vocal or instrumental – that Drury Lane or Covent Garden had at their disposal. Fiske points out, that, from 1792, Drury Lane 'could accommodate a full Haydn-Mozart orchestra with eight woodwind, four brass, drums, and strings' (Fiske 1973: 281). King's manuscript for *Ella Rosenberg*, which was performed at Drury Lane in 1807, shows him writing for a full string section, woodwind, trombone, trumpets and horns, with percussion including drums in D, and a carillon (a set of bells). Not all theatres and all productions could muster such resources. Our ensemble arrangements represent those for a provincial playhouse of medium size, or for an amateur production in a wealthy household.

As resources would only enable the recording of approximately an hour's worth of music, rigorous selection was necessary. Sometimes deciding what would not be included was not difficult. Much of the music I collected bears the signs of being composed at short notice, with composers supplying only the most rudimentary, generic pieces. More often, my decision *was* difficult. My final selection was guided by the following considerations: I knew I needed examples from the most celebrated literary works (for example, *The Castle Spectre* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse* (1813)), as well as those notable for their paradigm-shifting music (such as Thomas Busby's for *A Tale of Mystery*); I wanted examples from a broad range of genres (song settings as well as Gothic dramas, melodramas, operatic romances, etc.); I needed examples of different kinds of numbers within these genres; I also hoped to represent the best-known composers working in the field and as many of London's theatrical venues as possible, while still giving precedence to Drury Lane and Covent Garden – theatres that attracted some of the best writing and drew the largest crowds. Finally, it was important to give examples of the kinds of songs and sounds associated with some of the familiar characters and situations of the Gothic novel. Thus, you will hear the songs of banditti, heroines, imprisoned heroes, poachers, peasants, boatmen, witches, nuns, retainers, a gypsy and a ghost, as well as storm music, evening numbers and music for the casting of spells. Where I had to choose within a *type* of number, I usually went for the most interesting examples. Sometimes, however, the need to have a piece that represented the work of a particular composer active in the field, or that came from a theatre otherwise unrepresented, took precedence over what I thought was more musically interesting.

**Figure 2** John Braham with Harriet Abrams and her daughters, Harriet (the composer) (front left) and Theodosia (front right) by Richard Cosway (c. 1800). Permission Alamy Images.

There are inevitably some omissions; my most lamented is Thomas Attwood. One of the giants of the latter part of the period, Henry Bishop, is underrepresented (there is only one short number from *The Maniac or The Swiss Banditti* (1810)), but I direct readers to the *Romantic-Era Songs* site which has a great performance of his and Isaac Pocock's melodrama *The Miller and His Men* (1813).[3] As it was late in the day before I realised the significance of John O'Keeffe and Arnold's *The Castle of Andalusia*, there is nothing from that work. There are, however, selections from a host of composers, most of whom are unfamiliar now but whose acquaintance I hope you enjoy making as much as I have: Harriet Abrams (Figure 2), Samuel Arnold, Henry Bishop, John Braham (Figure 2), Thomas Busby, John Clarke-Whitfield, Charles Horn, Michael Kelly, Matthew Peter King, James Sanderson, William Shield and Stephen Storace.

## 1 'Various and Enchanting Powers': Music in the Radcliffean Romance

Though they are full of atmospheric sound effects, the earliest Gothic novels have very little interest in music. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) merely has trumpets sounding challenges and Manfred proposing 'to waste some hours

[3] See www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-miller.html.

of the night in music and revelling' (Walpole 2014: 55, 56, 60, 99), while music in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1778) is confined to martial trumpets and a character who sings 'old songs' (Reeve 2003: 11, 86, 53). Fast-forward to the turn of the century and Gothic novels are full of music. They have titles like *The Nocturnal Minstrel* (1810). Even *Otranto*-inspired novels, like Stephen Cullen's *The Haunted Priory* (1794), with its outsize apparition with a giant helmet, come accompanied by music (Cullen 1794: 127). Otranto collapses to the sound of thunder, but at the spectacular fall of the ruined priory, 'music the most heavenly struck up', 'the De Profundis' is 'chanted by voices more than human, and the whole fabric shook with the notes of an organ' (126). *The Haunted Priory* also features the 'soft music' of an imprisoned, older woman, with a 'voice, as sweet as that of seraphs,' who, accompanying herself on a guitar, sings 'by snatches the most tender, melancholy notes' (204). Likewise, Sarah Green's *The Carthusian Friar* (1814) has a musical prisoner, though this time the gender is reversed; the player of 'melody from the fine full-toned organ … seemingly touched by a masterly hand' is a supposedly 'deceased Count' (Green 1814: III, 85). In Mrs F Isaacs's *Glenmore Abbey* (1805), music associated with maternal disappearance emanates from the thrilling acoustic setting of a cave. The novel's musical heroine (who plays 'a plaintive air on her guitar' whilst on a 'moss-grown rock') has the nous to realise that the music disturbing the servants is not supernatural (Isaacs 1805: I, 49). 'It is a very musical spirit,' said Ellen 'for I am now quite certain that the sounds were not imaginery [*sic*], and that it was a harp played with no common degree of execution' (II 205).

The musicality of Gothic novels of the period can also be seen in their cultural penumbra, or extra-textual reach. Gothic novels spawn song settings. James Hook set 'Ah Gentle Hope' the 'favourite sonnett' [*sic*] from Regina Maria Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (1796), Krumpholtz (either Jean-Baptiste or Anne-Marie) set 'The Nun's Complaint' from Mary Robinson's *Vancenza* (1792), and both John Percy and John Clarke-Whitfield set Count Morano's song in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Here is the first of the two verses of Clarke-Whitfield's setting (Audio 1).

**Audio 1** John Clarke-Whitfield, first verse of 'Soft as the silver ray that sleeps' (1808) (setting of Count Morano's song from Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*). Sung by Guy Cutting, accompanied by Seb Gillot. This audio is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence. Audio file is also available at www.cambridge.org/McEvoy

## 'Enchanting Powers of Expression'

Ann Radcliffe is the catalyst for the radical musicalisation of second-generation Gothic. Music is prominent amongst the few biographical details handed down