

Music in Eighteenth-Century London

What was there about London in the 18th century that attracted such composer-musicians as Francesco Geminiani, Georg Friedrich Händel, Johann Christian Bach, Franz-Josef Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (and others such as Johann Christoph Pepusch, Carl Friedrich Abel, and Jean-Baptiste Loeillet) from all over Europe? In a word: *audiences*, that is to say, prosperous and musically sophisticated patrons eager to attend the many musical theatres, opera houses, music societies, and “pleasure gardens” of London. And many of these patrons were sufficiently musically literate that they were willing and able to take lessons from professional musi-

cians and purchase printed music by their favourite composers to play their works themselves. To composers whose only other possible lifestyle would be as a lowly servant in a nobleman’s court or as a music director in a church, London’s audiences offered independence and respect.

The Influence of Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713)

Arcangelo Corelli was the main musical influence in 18th-century England, though he never set foot there. Starting in 1681, his six published works sold like the proverbial hotcakes all over Europe. Corelli’s music was elegant and melodious, but not so challenging that it was beyond the capabilities of competent amateur musicians. In 1726, Roger North described the impact on English musicians as follows:

[There] then came over [from Italy to England] Corelli’s first consort [his Op. 1 trio sonatas] that cleared the ground of all other sorts of musick whatsoever. By degrees the rest of his consorts, and at last the concerti came, all of which are to musitians like the bread of life.

Here is a 1776 account by Sir John Hawkins of how Corelli’s Op. 6 *concerti grossi* had first arrived in England (in 1714):

Mr. Prevost, a bookseller, received a large consignment of books from Amsterdam, and amongst them the concertos of Corelli, which had just then been published; upon looking at them he thought of [the violinist] Mr. Needler, and immediately went with them to his house, but being informed that Mr. Needler was then at the concert at Mr. Loeillet’s, he went with them thither. Mr. Needler was transported with the sight of such a treasure; the books were immediately laid out, and he and the rest of the performers played the whole twelve concertos through, without rising from their seats.

So when Francesco Geminiani, an Italian violin virtuoso and former student of Corelli, arrived in London in 1714, he was able to make a comfortable living performing, teaching and publishing music in Corellian style.

Concerto Grosso in C Minor (Op. 2, No. 2) by F. Geminiani (1687–1762)

Geminiani's first publication was a set of arrangements of Corelli's Op. 5 sonatas as *concerti grossi*. Corelli's Opera 1 to 5 consist of sets of twelve trio or duo sonatas, that is to say, music with three or two *melodic* lines (allocated in Corelli's sonatas to a cello and one or two violins), which might be supplemented by additional instruments, such as harpsichord, bass lute or organ, to support the bass line or fill out the harmony. The *concerto grosso* form, exemplified by Corelli's Opus 6 set, allowed for additional so-called *ripieno* string players who would play along with the conventional melody instruments (the *concertino*) when the composer wanted contrast or emphasis. Of course, the *ripieno* players were generally less able than those of the *concertino*, who would play the more demanding passages by themselves.



Francesco Geminiani

In 1732, Geminiani published a set of his own *concerti grossi*, his Op. 2. These used the viola as a *concertino* instrument for the first time. The Opus 2 No. 2 concerto is similar in form to most of Corelli's Opus 1 and Opus 3 trio sonatas. An *Andante* introduction leads to a contrapuntal *Allegro*. The following slow movement involves imitative interplay between the upper parts and leads directly to the final *Allegro*, in which *concertino* and *tutti* sections are contrasted.

More *concerti grossi* by Geminiani followed in 1733 (Op. 3) and in 1746 (Op. 7). In all, Geminiani composed 42 *concerti grossi*; he also published sonatas for violin, violin trios, and violin concertos, and treatises on violin technique, accompaniment technique, and the art of guitar playing.

Trio Sonata in A Major (Op. 5, No. 1) by G. F. Handel (1685-1759)

Handel's first visit to England was in December of 1710. His primary focus was *vocal* music, especially Italian opera and chamber cantatas. Handel had travelled in Italy between 1706 and February 1710, composing many such works; Corelli himself had led a performance of Handel's *La Resurrezione* (HWV 47) in 1708. But publishers were primarily interested in *instrumental* works such as trio sonatas and *concerti grossi*. It's

thought that Handel had also composed several such works either in Italy or soon after and that music publisher John Walsh somehow got access to this material; the surviving autographs of the sonatas Walsh published in London in 1733 as Handel's Opus 1 and Opus 2 are mostly on a type of paper that would have been available in Hanover in 1710 after Handel left Italy. However, Handel himself probably had very little to do with these publications, nor with the Opus 3 set of concertos published in 1734, apart from originally composing *most* of the music; there are numerous typesetting errors and some of the sonatas and concertos in these Walsh-published collections were not even composed by Handel.

In 1736, John Walsh died and the business was taken over by his son, also called John Walsh. After the earlier fiascos, the younger John Walsh wanted to establish better relations with Handel. It would seem that they agreed to the following mutually beneficial arrangement: Handel would provide material selected from his vocal works for a second set of trio sonatas (Opus 5) and compose a set of completely new *concerti grossi* as his Opus 6, obviously meant to be compared with Corelli's iconic Opus 6.

Sonata 1 in the Opus 5 set consists of five movements, all recycled from earlier works. The first three (*Andante*, *Allegro*, and *Larghetto*) are taken from the instrumental introduction to *I will magnify thee, O God*, one of the anthems composed by Handel for the Earl of Carnarvon (later the Duke of Chandos) in 1717. The fourth movement (*Allegro*) is from his 1736 opera *Giustino*, and the concluding *Gavotte* is from *Arianna in Creta* (1734). The Opus 5 trio sonatas are rarely performed but Handel rose to the challenge of out-doing Corelli with his Opus 6; the twelve *concerti grossi* are considered to be among the best of his instrumental works.

***Harpichord Concerto in D minor* (BWV 1052) by J. S. Bach (1685–1750)**

What is a concerto by J. S. Bach doing in a program dedicated to music in 18th-century London? The official answer¹ is that we are honouring Johann Sebastian for having fathered Johann Christian Bach, the so-called "London Bach," who will be discussed below. But J. S. Bach's career gives us an instructive example of why so many other 18th-century composers migrated to London.

¹The real answer is that our ebullient soloist, Aurora Dokken, really really wanted to play this particular work and could not be denied.



G. F. Handel

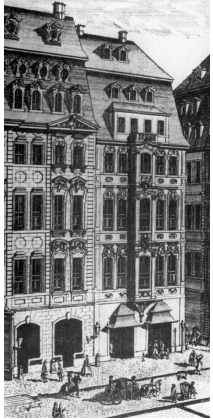
The two most important phases of Bach's career were as a court composer at Cöthen from 1717 to 1723, and as a church music director in Leipzig starting in 1723. At Cöthen, Bach composed mostly secular instrumental works (sonatas, concertos, and orchestral suites) for Prince Leopold who loved music and appreciated Bach. But when Leopold married a woman who didn't, Bach was forced to seek new employment.

In Leipzig, Bach wasn't *required* to compose music but of course he did, producing hundreds of sacred cantatas and larger liturgical works such as the *Magnificat* and the Matthew and John passions. But the Leipzig city councillors didn't appreciate these extraordinary efforts. Bach looked for a more satisfactory situation, but was unsuccessful. He must have realized then that he would have to spend the rest of his life in Leipzig and he had better make the best of it.

In 1729, Bach took on the directorship of the *Collegium Musicum*, a music society founded in 1702 by Georg Philipp Telemann. The membership consisted mainly of university students and musically talented amateurs. They gathered every Friday evening in Gottfried Zimmermann's coffee house on the *Katherinestrasse* to present informal concerts of keyboard and chamber music, much like a jazz or folk club today. Why would J. S. Bach, one of the greatest musical geniuses ever, consider this a congenial milieu? It was almost certainly for the same reason that composers from across Europe migrated to London: to find appreciative audiences.

Bach composed a few new works specifically for this context (such as the familiar "Coffee Cantata," BWV 211), but for lack of time and because of the limited capabilities of the society members, he began to re-cycle concertos from his Cöthen period, with Bach himself and, as necessary, his sons, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Wilhelm Friedemann, and his student Johann Ludwig Krebs, playing the solo parts on harpsichords, up to four at a time. So some of the very first keyboard concertos were heard in Zimmermann's coffee house in Leipzig.

The concerto in D minor (BWV 1052) is thought to derive from a concerto for violin, almost certainly from Cöthen but now lost. The arrangement for keyboard is very virtuosic and was popular as a work for piano in the Romantic era: Felix Mendelssohn played it and Brahms composed a cadenza for it. There is evidence that Bach intended to publish several of these harpsichord concertos, but this project was abandoned for unknown reasons.



Zimmermann's

Two Anthems by Maurice Greene (1696–1755)



Maurice Greene

Maurice Greene began his musical life as a choirboy at St. Paul's and by 1740 held all of the most important musical positions in England: organist at St. Paul's, organist and composer in the Chapel Royal, Professor of Music at Cambridge, and Master of the King's Musick. Unfortunately, he had unintentionally antagonized Handel by being friendly with Handel's operatic rival Bononcini. Charles Burney recorded that "Handel never spoke of him [Greene] without some injurious epithet."

Greene's most significant published work was a collection of 40 Church Anthems, including *I will greatly rejoice* and *Lord, let me know mine end*. He also began a massive project to publish a collection of church music, ancient and modern, suitable for use in every cathedral in England. Greene died in 1755 before completing this project but his student William Boyce saw it to completion and three volumes of *Cathedral Music* were published between 1760 and 1778.

Trumpet Concerto in E♭ by F.-J. Haydn (1732–1809)

In 1761, Haydn began to work as a composer and musician in the employ of the wealthy Esterházy family where he was to remain for almost 30 years. In 1790, Nicolaus Esterházy died and was succeeded by an unmusical Prince who immediately dismissed all the musicians. But Haydn's music had been widely published and was much appreciated throughout Europe, and impresario Johann Peter Salomon immediately offered him a concert tour of England. This was an enormous success, both artistically and financially. According to Charles Burney,

the sight of that renowned composer so electrified the audience as to excite an attention and a pleasure superior to any that had ever been caused by instrumental music in England.

In 1791, Haydn attended a Handel Celebration in London. He was profoundly moved by how the English venerated that composer: when the *Hallelujah* chorus started up, the whole congregation, including the King and Queen, rose up in homage; this would be inconceivable in imperial Vienna. A second tour was quickly arranged for 1794. Haydn composed some of his best symphonies for these tours. He even had a romantic fling with Rebecca Schroeter, a musically talented widow who was living in London.

When Haydn returned to live in Vienna in 1795, he was wealthy, independent, and motivated to do great things: he was now going to compose music for posterity, not just for the next Esterházy banquet. One of his first compositions from this period

was a commission from an old friend, trumpeter Anton Weidinger, who in 1793 had constructed a *keyed* trumpet and wanted a show-piece to demonstrate its capabilities.



keyed trumpet

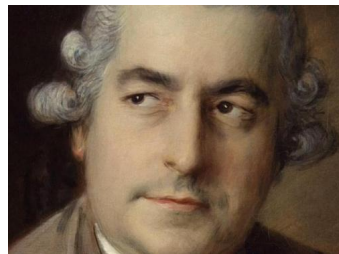
On the standard 18th-century *clarino* (natural) trumpet only some chromatic notes in very high registers could be played; Weidinger's keyed trumpet allowed all chromatic notes, even in low registers. English trumpeters since Purcell's time had played chromatic notes using a *slide* trumpet with a trombone-like mechanism to adjust pitch, but this instrument had not become popular on the continent.

Haydn's concerto for the keyed trumpet uses chromatic intervals in low registers extensively, particularly in the lyrical *Andante* movement; to an audience familiar with only the natural trumpet, this would have been startling. In the 1830s, a valve mechanism for adjusting pitch without reducing the volume of air through the flared bell was developed and valved trumpets soon supplanted both keyed and slide trumpets, as well as natural trumpets. But Haydn's concerto, his last purely instrumental work, has become a favorite of trumpeters and audiences alike.

***Concerto for Harpsichord in E \flat* (K. 107, no. 3) by W. A. Mozart (1756–91) after the *Sonata in E \flat* (Op. 5, No. 4) by J. C. Bach (1735–82)**

Johann Christian Bach was only 14 years old when his father, Johann Sebastian, died. His musical education was taken up by his much older half-brother Carl Philipp Emmanuel at the court of Frederick the Great in Berlin and continued with Padre Martini in Bologna from 1756. In 1762 he travelled to London to present three of his operas, which were so well received that he stayed until his death in 1782, becoming known as the “London Bach.”

J. C. Bach's music is in the *galant* rather than baroque style, emphasizing expressive melody rather than counterpoint. His Opus 5 is a set of keyboard sonatas published in 1766. In April of 1764, the nine-year old Mozart was being shown off in London by his father Leopold and was taken to get instruction from Bach. Mozart likely received a manuscript copy of the sonatas because in 1772 he arranged three of them as keyboard concertos, adding string parts and slightly modifying the material. It is not clear exactly why Mozart did this: perhaps as an exercise in concerto composition or as homage to J. C. Bach, for whom he felt much affection and respect.



J. C. Bach