

# Engaging with the past: a practical manifesto

Ingrid E. Pearson

The launch of *Musica Antiqua* presents an opportunity to celebrate historical performance and to reflect on a movement which has truly come of age. Historical performers now function in highly scholarly ways, teaching future generations by drawing upon the physicality and orality of their own learning, in combination with the literacy of source materials. The rush to the recording studio has slowed to a trickle, sadly due to fiscal pressures as well as a market saturated by a variety of recorded interpretations. None the less, the large number of musicians active in historical performance is now more liberating than bewildering as many second- and third-generation practitioners bring a rich variety of approaches manifest in performance and on recording.

I am convinced that it is our relationship with the rich heritage of source materials which has enabled historical performers to acquire skills across both practice and theory, in both the craft and art of historical performance. I feel privileged to work at London's Royal College of Music, where my colleagues and students and I are able to interact with collection materials of international significance. This valuable legacy of treasures, due partly to the vision of its founders and its first Director Sir George Grove, comprises material dating from the 15th-century onwards, including music manuscripts, early printed music, film scores, diaries, musical instruments from all over the world, as well as modern repertoire and literature. There are also original portraits, as well as prints and photographs comprising the most substantial

archive of images of musicians in the UK, not to mention the vast numbers of concert programmes, documenting concert life from 1720 to the present day.



Sir George Hunter Donaldson  
by Frederick Sandys 1878  
(Royal College of Music, London)

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Aside from the educational impact for members of the RCM community, by which I mean staff, students and members of the public, the archival, historical, documentary, social and cultural significance of these treasures is considerable. Of course people are treasures too and the RCM's list of alumni of historical performers is indeed distinguished, including Roger Norrington, Sarah Connolly, Arnold Dolmetsch, Annette Isserlis, Thurston Dart, Trevor Pinnock, Alina Ibragimova,

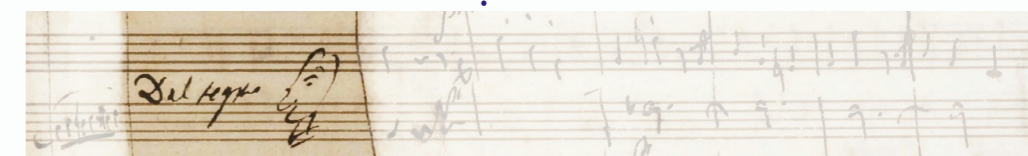
Danny Yeadon, Melvyn Tan and Sue Addison, just to name a few.

Of particular current interest to me, as a performer of 18th- and 19th-century repertoire, are two treasures from the late 18th-century; a manuscript and a treatise. The manuscript is amongst the consistently exquisite, significant and valuable holdings donated to the RCM by the Scotsman Sir George Hunter Donaldson, depicted here in his 33rd year by Frederick Sandys in 1878. In fact, the RCM library's reading room now bears Donaldson's name, as well as a minstrel's gallery from Siena and coffered ceiling that he added to the room for the 1894 opening of the RCM's now-familiar Prince Consort Road premises. Donaldson was a man with both taste and money, confirmed by his gift of the manuscript of Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 24, in C minor, K. 491. The manuscript's journey from Vienna to London began when Mozart's widow Constanze sold it to the publisher and dealer Johann Anton André of Offenbach-am-Main. In 1800 André issued authoritative editions of 'Six Grand Concertos...', as opus 82, which included the concertos numbers 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 27; namely K467, K 482, K 488, K 491, K 503 and K595. Indeed

André's publication was timely, helping to ensure that these works entered the repertoire when keyboard virtuosity and keyboard instruments were both progressing at an exponential rate. Beethoven admired K. 491 and Felix Mendelssohn performed it during the 1830s and '40s. The manuscript of K. 491 then passed to André's son-in-law, Johann Baptist Streicher, of the firm of Viennese piano makers. Then, in 1856, it was purchased by Otto Goldschmidt, the German-born conductor and pianist, and husband of the soprano Jenny Lind, who was one of the first singing professors at the RCM. When Goldschmidt settled in England in 1858 he brought his Mozart manuscript with him. He subsequently auctioned it, through the firm of Puttick &

2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and bass.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that Mozart himself premiered the work on 7 April, at the Burgtheater in Vienna. The rate at which Mozart composed can be gleaned from that fact that, three weeks before this concerto, he had written the A major concerto, K. 488, and, a little over one month after the composition of K. 491, he wrote the opera *Le nozze di Figaro*.

The manuscript of K. 491 is often untidy, with lots of alterations and deletions. In works like this, where Mozart himself was the intended soloist, he often left passages quite bare, knowing that, in performance, he would improvise or decorate as he felt appropriate. On a page from the end of the first movement we see



Simpson, and the manuscript was purchased by Donaldson, who gave it to the RCM in 1894.

In Mozart's own handwritten thematic catalogue, which documents his works from 1784 until 1791, the entry for 24 March 1784 reads: 'a clavier concerto accompanied by violins, violas, 1 flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,

the words 'Dal Segno' and four faces drawn by Mozart. These markings indicate that here in the Coda Mozart wants to reuse material from bars earlier in the movement, where, incidentally he drew another little face on the score! Note also the rapid semiquaver figuration on the penultimate staff of the page. Another page, from the opening

