

Finzi Trust Report

By Micaela Schmitz

I set up several research trips to investigate '18th century English and Scottish song'. The plan had always been to focus on solo songs, because these have the most usefulness to my ensemble and it was a useful way of narrowing the rather large topic. The purpose of the enquiry was to find original source material, to compare different versions of songs, to investigate some of the social history that might explain these, to create practical performing editions for works, and ultimately to have the materials to be able to take these to modern audiences.

My research trips were six in number. I will give the dates and explain what took place.

Before the Trust's Support

Prior to the Finzi Trust support I had pored through Birmingham Central Library's collection. The library itself is not a paragon of organisation, but the stacks were the area where the librarian came to their forte. They had unearthed for us already the Muses Delight as well as some collection not seen much- The Badley Collection, a bound together compilation of many single songs, and another one simply bound and entitled 'Seventy Songs'. I did not realise until later how unique some of the single songs were. It is to be hoped that some day all the songs in all the collections could be catalogued – a gargantuan task of typing in every table of contents and cross referencing them.

I was to discover that the Wighton Collection was unique in having done just this for a majority of their holdings- because they realised that vocal music and fiddle tunes with titles would need concordances. Expecting this of the British Library would be impossible, but I do think that the work people such as I do could be somehow collated in a Gutenberg-Books fashion.

1. 3-6 April 2007 to Edinburgh and Dundee

Ready with new laptop backpack, I flew from Birmingham to Edinburgh. I called in briefly at the National Library of Scotland in George IV Bridge, then travelled to Dundee, where my quest was the Wighton Collection. This proved to be the most useful source of materials in understanding the vast amount of material.

Whilst at the NLS I looked at some original, early sources, such as the Leyden Lyra Viol Book and the Margaret Sinkler MS. Both were quite early and for the viola da gamba- definitely prior to the 18th century. I looked through them to see if any of the titles would come up in other editions. There were some well-known Scots tunes that appear quite often- 'Thro the Wood Laddie' 'Hiland Laddie' 'The Bush aboon Traquahair' 'Katherine Ogie' - and I wondered how far back I might find these. Bound in with the

Sinkler MS was the Kincaid MS (starting on the reverse side of the book (no wastage of paper); it contains music for keyboard and I've ordered a copy (from my own funds). What a nice find for me! I also looked at the Straloch MS (1627-9) and Skene MS (1620) which are for lute. I also saw part of the David Young MS (mainly dance/fiddle music) which showed that dancing was of course an important part and that this fit in with the many balls that were held in addition to concerts.

The Wighton Collection proved to be invaluable. It is a well stocked and organised collection covering anything that can be considered Scottish or to have been important to Scots musical culture. Because the Scottish middle class was important in leading cultural musical elites, this included many sources that for reasons of prestige (and convenience) were printed in Glasgow or Edinburgh as well as London. I knew I would need to return and planned accordingly. The collection is part of an ordinary library in the middle of a shopping mall and many were amazed I'd trekked all the way there. However, the staff knew what a treasure they had. I was graced with a weekly Scots singing session for the community led by Sheena Wellington, who was instrumental in bringing to light many of the vocal treasures in the collection. I also met Simon Chadwick, a harpist, who is involved with the collection. I hope, through their offices, to return to perform there and share the fruits of this research.

I found myself looking at indexes for quite a lot of the time; trying to figure out which sources to order (to view). In fact just making lists of what to order, then ordering them, then trying to decide which to retain for comparison was quite a to-do. The collection had much dance music as well; this was a peripheral item having to do with the pleasure gardens but not quite the solo songs, so I had to stay disciplined.

With many collections a limit of 6 is all you can view; for some it is only 3, and it makes comparison quite difficult. In Dundee I was largely left with a stack of microfilms that were taken from a glass cabinet and given to me by the librarian. She'd go on and do her own work in the next room; I was left in the Wighton Collection room which had desks, microfilm readers, and the entire collection itself plus its microfilms in a locked glass cabinet. The only item not freely given out to view is their crowning jewel- the Blaikie MS of 1685, 1692). I was rarely interrupted. I would go through them quickly to see which should take longest; looking at the quicker ones first meant I could tick them off my list and then go through the more involved ones. For the odd comfort break, I'd leave everything as is- tell the librarian and whisk back. At length a lunch break was required at which point I packed up and switched off my computer, went downstairs for 45 minutes, and was back again until closing. I am sure the staff were pleased to see me so hungry for knowledge.

I made lists of repertoire that I might like to either copy or compare or put into notation software. Looking back it was initially 4 pages double sided of handwritten pencilled items; that's list of books in which I was yet to find more materials!

Copies are very expensive and it turned out that I had to do them myself at Dundee; if the microfilm reader connected to a copier wasn't working or the machine was out of paper and the staff were out to lunch, I was out of luck. I also had to pay for copies on a card or by coin. I soon learned to assess the need for copies, making a very detailed list of these, and prepay at the beginning of the day and try copying then, rather than waiting until the end of the day.

A note on copying at libraries.

Copying is always a bit of a to-do. Once you've gained access via letters, id's and a list of holding you'd like to view, understanding the copying policy is the next task. Getting a sense of this, which varies with each institution, is an art in itself, and combing websites prior to travel is de rigeur. Instant gratification it is not. At the British Library they either let you make them yourself, if you go to the music reference desk to get permission first and wait in line, then go to the copy room and pay a very high price, including all your spoilt copies, or you put in an order for them to do it and wait 1 to 2 months for the result to come. It's very expensive – sometimes 40p per page, and items that you think might fit on an A4 come on an A3, at a higher price. Saving up the need to get a whole lot done digitally is worth it as you know the copies are unspoilt by yourself and it takes the overall price down. In future I hope collections become more routinely digitised as it saves time and money. I ended up ordering digital images from two whole microfilms from the British Library as it made financial sense and there were loads of useful songs on there.

At the Wighton Collection you have to make the copies yourself and if you're not there physically, it's not clear what you'd do. However, most is on microfilm so at least you do not have to pay extra fees to have it photographed.

Knowing I was going to create my own performing editions, in many cases I did the notation on my laptop there; the only risk is that if you get something wrong, you have to go back to check it. The annoying part was when I did not have the chance to finish an edition I'd started.

This is why I am so pleased to see the Broadside Ballads Collection now digitised and on the Bodleian Library Website. There were several 18th Century sources that I found, but when I left the British Library I no longer had access to them. I went home and found my lecturer privileges at the Open University Library got me access. I do wonder why these libraries cannot be truly open to all. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* is a great source. I hesitate to list it on my bibliography because it's not truly open to all; unless you are sitting in one of these research libraries or are a member of a university with a subscription, you cannot view them. Besides this, it's just a database referencing items which you would need to list, and I cannot list them all.

2. 10-13 April 2007 to London

I went to London, trying to ascertain which sources were more available there than in Dundee so that I could make sure that I was not wasting valuable time in Dundee finding sources that were more easily found in London.

I made a short list of often occurring songs and had some photocopies done so I could carry them around with me and look out for similar, decorate or more modified versions. These included:

The Lass of Paties Mill
The Bush Aboon Traquahair
The Bonny Scot
Bony Christy
Tweedside
Katharine Ogie
Peggy I must love thee
Auld Rob Morris
Bessy Bell and Mary Gray
The Boatman
My Apron Deary
Auld Robin Gray

3. 29 May -1 June 2007 to Glasgow

I went to the University of Glasgow Special Collections and looked at some early items- which by this point I could probably have left- such as the the famous Forbes Cantus of 1682 (R.c.12). I browsed and found a treatise on music performance (vocal and instrumental) by Peer Prelleur (published in London in 1731) which was interesting and gave examples of people's vocal transgressions! I browsed the Traquair Collection (18th century) which included delights such as 'The lady's entertainment' from 1709. By this point I realised Dundee had most of the 18th Century items and the ballads were the more interesting

Here I consulted the Herd source which gives texts for many ballads and also saw William Dauney's *'Ancient Scottish Melodies'* from the time of James VI. All this was useful in showing how ballads were a 'poor relation' and antecedent to the tavern cum pleasure garden ditty. It also showed the importance the Scots began to place on their tradition and the care they took to encapsulate achievements, which, though not all truly from 'antient time', were themselves achievements none the less. Some examples such as 'William's Ghost' and 'Margaret's Ghost', found in Herd, and in some of our song sources, were compared with Child Ballads text as well, and versions are now in our programme entitled 'Georgianna's Ghostly Adventures'.

Neither do I wish to make it seem that pleasure garden music was all low-brow. In fact much was beautiful and well-crafted, and eminent composers such as Handel wrote for these venues. But I wanted to show myself and others that the popular element was alive and well; clearly this had to stem from an earlier source and tradition, and fiddle/dance music, early ballad, and broadside ballad all had their stories to tell. There were also some chapbooks, but I couldn't find the time to delve into them more. The tantalising title and the statement that the Wylie collection was a particular strength of their holdings in chapbooks did not actually define what these were and I had precious little time!

I went on a day trip to the AK Bell library in Perth and looked at the William Dixon MS as well as many sources relating to the 19th century. The Dixon MS is from 1634 and so is quite early; a visit to this library had to include this as it is the prize gem of the collection. The book is small and has doodles in it, giving a sense of the regular human use these books receive. There was a helpful transcription of the book (as it's not written in a normal 5-line staff) by one Dorothea Ruggles Brise, her name along supplying many a giggle. 'Highland Laddy', 'An thou wert my own thing' were juxtaposed with more courtly music such as 'Minuet Edward the Second'.

This library was delightful as it was again just a regular library in a regular town. This one specialised in local history so my researches were peppered with over-heard conversation about people's family histories; the librarians were absolutely fantastic and enjoyed guiding people.

Here I found some items written by Scots composers for pleasure gardens, such as *The Caledonian Pocket Companion*, published by J. Simpson, 1756. At this point I was looking for instrumental version of well-known tunes. Ornamented fiddles music, keyboard versions without words, ornamented keyboard versions, and vocal versions with new accompaniments. It became a lesson in how to ornament; and it showed how the material had metamorphized depending upon who was using it. I also found some works for guitar and mandolin, which previously had not figured largely in my finds. Pieces by J. Oswald, an important Scots pleasure gardens composer, were more plentiful, and these tended toward the more high-brow end of the spectrum, with pastoral themes featuring the swains Philander, Strephon, Damon, and the nymphs Celia, Laura, and Phyllis did nothing more serious than wander the countryside admiring its beauty. Also some of his sonatinas for cello were useful- as our group has a good baroque cellist and audiences like to hear instrumental music and solos. In addition items catering to a growing upper middle class were abundant—in particular periodicals featuring music, such as *The Musical Magazine or Monthly Orpheus*. London; J. Coote, 1761. By this point I realized that whilst some songs had the same title and were in fact the same tune, many songs which shared names did not share the same tune or words; I realized I had more unique items from Birmingham than I'd realized. 'The Milkmaid' was one such

song, which I have yet to find elsewhere.

My trip out featured a Chinese takeaway purchased at 8pm before boarding the train; the quizzical look on the lady's face as she heard my accent and took in my story showed I was not a normal visitor to these parts.

4. 10-13 July 2007 to London

I returned to the British Library and investigated more background on the social history of the pleasure gardens and found more sources of music by Thomas Arne. I ordered some microfilms for the items that proved particularly useful. By this time I had decided to narrow my research to those items that would have been heard in pleasure gardens as well as theatres, taverns, etc. I read a bit from Woodfield's *Opera and Drama in 18th century London* and learned a lot about the various owners of theatres at the time—the King's, the Haymarket, The Pantheon, Sadler's Wells, etc. and how these related to pleasure gardens. I learned of the relationship of important figures such as Sacchini, Lady Mary Coke, Dr. Burney and Garrick to the theatre and pleasure gardens. I was interested in the story of Pacchierotti, a famous singer who also owned pianos, and the ties with the composers Abel and J.C. Bach, whose music I have long admired.

5. 31 July- 3 August 2007 to London

I returned and made a further microfilm order. The two orders from the British Library were some of the most useful sources in that they were early and had great quantities of items. The two, which are listed in my selected annotated Bibliography were *The British Musical Miscellany, or the Delightful Grove* C.382. vol. 1-6 (6 volumes of tunes with a simple bassline) and *Collection of English Ballads* v.3 G.308. In addition I found very useful *The Vocal Magazine, adapted for the harpsichord or violin*. (Edinburgh: C. Stewart and co, 1797, which includes three volumes with again a melody, the bass line and sometimes suggestions of other instruments.)

I looked at items which are available in modern editions. I traced Arne's masque 'Love in a Village' which had many references and found some of the cheaper format sources as well. I read more in detail from Warwick Wroth's useful book on the pleasure gardens and the Sands book, which show the wide extent of the pleasure gardens, mainly in London. I followed these to their logical conclusions, in particular relishing the link with the present day Proms, and therefore the book by Orga. By this point I was thinking about the talk I was to give in Edinburgh in October and these details provided a vital link to the present day. I also traced other important impresario-composers such as Samuel Arnold, Stephen Storace (whose surname I use in my stage name), and found links to literature such as Fanny Burney, and her famous novel *Evelina*, which now features in one of Lady Georgianna's programmes, 'Ladies of Misrule'.

6. 16-20 August 2007 to Edinburgh

I flew into Edinburgh and visited Edinburgh University Special Collections and saw the Rowallan MS (1620) and Guthrie MS (1680 for viola da braccio), but made two day trips into Dundee, following up sources, having copies made and creating examples such as the one in the talk for 'My apron deary' which showed the usage by different social classes.

After the Finzi Trust funding.

In addition I gave an illustrated talk (not funded by the Trust) on 24 October 2008 at the Edinburgh University Early Keyboard Symposium. Whilst there I made a short trip to Dundee to double check some sources and to order copies.

I also followed up on a few items at the British Library when I had to be in London anyway, in particular the small format, cheap publications such as *The Warbler's Delight* and others. One intriguing little rag, 'Jemmy Twitchers'.... Had after dinner jokes, some of colour, other peppered with satire that showed political content. From this period of research I started to crystallise my ideas for 'a day in the life of a pleasure garden' which featured in my talk as well.

By the illustrated talk in October 2008, we had managed to get our new panniers made (collapsible yet very authentic, using cane for the frame. These taught us much about movement (sideways through doorways), the need to actually keep a few items of weight in the paniers so they would keep their shape; their actual practical function as pockets; and the ways we had to move in them whilst walking.

Then came a long hiatus as I had been working quite a lot and the impetus to get our ideas into a new programme involved us considerably. We made a music video of the song 'Take Heed' which in itself was a small feat and incorporated the ideas of gardens; port wine and plum cake as refreshments, and the idea of the garden as meeting place or even place of intrigue. We created new costumes that were more authentic, and generally learned how well the musical and background material worked.

We worked further with costumes and had corsets made as well as new dresses. It brought home the reasons why women needed to be escorted in public places –in such clothing it is difficult to manoeuvre. It clarified the upper class aspect of the dresses; their materials might be expensive but their real expense is that one cannot do anything physical in them; therefore a working woman could not possibly have worn a dress like this. The dresses also had to be pinned on, and this is actually quite difficult to do for oneself hence the need for someone to help with dressing. In fact it really showed that there was very little a high-born woman could do for herself; dressing her hair had to be done by someone else once she had her corset and dress on, as once it was on she could not easily lift her arms above her head. It certainly made it clear why women did not play the violin in large numbers! We learned much about posture, since one could not easily

slouch and it was easier to see why baroque gesture tends to be in large movements that are well outside the outline of the body; the clothing prevents a gesture close to the body and it might also be missed from a distance. We did learn that it is possible to sing in a properly fitted corset, as it simply redistribute a body shape rather than necessarily constricting it as we'd first thought.

It simply remains for me to state that the work begun by the impetus of this Trust found its way into ever more practical results. Far from being just another 'costumed drama' group, we are bringing our music to real people, and having worn the clothing in many contexts, we can speak with more authority about the 18th century experience. My final few months of work have been spent on making the materials usable by others and with this report are some of the arrangements for performance.