

Taking your Music with Fireworks: 18th century songs for theatre and pleasure garden
Micaela Schmitz with Abigail Seabrook (from *Lady Georgianna*)

START BY PLAYING ON ORGAN

John Stanley, Allegro Moderato from Voluntary in D Major op. 6/6, 1752

It's about 9 o'clock in the morning. You've come to the pleasure gardens to take the waters for a few weeks and are enjoying your breakfast to the accompaniment of an organ. It's a delightful way to spend a holiday. Your daughters have gone swimming in the healthful waters and have also been encouraged to drink many servings of water each day. Later on they'll change into their finery and walk along the spacious graveled paths. Here they might meet people from high society and they might find marriage prospects, all under the watchful eye of an older female relation, of course.

The London pleasure gardens were a huge enterprise in the mid 18th Century, the two most famous being Vauxhall and Ranelagh, but with over 40 major ones spread out around what we consider London. Minor venues were sited in hamlets such as Holborn or Hampstead, each of which had their own little establishments and a coach journey was often required to transport people there. People arrived in their thousands, especially for special events.

Don't take my word for it- listen to an advert from 1769 during the heyday of the London pleasure gardens.

[Reading from 1769 about Ranelagh's ridotto] ¹

In reality, such organ pieces were not just at the large establishments; they might be in the main room of an inn. ²

¹ AT Ranelagh House on Friday the 12th May, will be a *Jubilee Ridotto*, or *BalPare*.

It is left to the Nobility and Gentry to come in fancied Dresses, without Masks, or dressed as at the Ridottos.

There will be an Officer's Guard, and the same Number of Men as at the Ridottos in the Haymarket, and every Entertainment given, as at that Place on such Occasions.

There will also be a new Musical Entertainment in the Amphitheatre, in the Manner of a Burletta, with Music and Illuminations on the Canal, in the Temple, and in different Parts of the Gardens.

The Company is desired to come early. The Doors will be opened at Six, and the Entertainments will begin at Seven.

A certain Number only of Tickets will be printed, which will be delivered on Friday next, the 5th of May, at the following Places, viz. The London Tavern; Nando's Coffee-House, Temple Bar; Tom's Coffee-House, Russell Street, Covent Garden; the Smyrna Coffee-House, St. James'-Street; the Mount Coffee-House, Grosvenor Street; and at Ranelagh House, at One Guinea each, to admit one Gentleman or two Ladies.

There will be Horse Patroles, and an additional Number of Lights on the Road. The Footway from Buckingham Gate is lately mended, and enlarged, so as to make it very safe and easy for Chairs.

Besides the usual Days (by Particular Desire), the House will be opened this Evening and Thursday next.

- *Advertisement*, 1769.

[Special ball 1 guinea for 1 gentleman or two ladies]

[Online, 20 October 2008], Victorian London, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/pleasuregardens-3-ranelagh.htm>

² Wroth, 68 at Lord Cobham's Head.

*Let me just introduce and thank Abigail Seabrook, who with the stage name of Miss Allegra Froud, performs with me, Signora Storace, as well as doing the costuming for our ensemble, *Lady Georgianna*. We are loosely based on a certain Duchess but have used a modern spelling to connote also the Georgian period. It saves on those lawsuits as well. Are we purists? Well the dresses fit into a airplane approved bag, so we have modified a few things, and it suits a masquerade doesn't it?

Masquerade Song, in *The Muses Delight*, 1754 [strophic; vocal line with simple bass]

This charming ditty actually has 10 verses and we've used it to start off one of our *Lady Georgianna* programmes. The songs of the time often comment on 'types' of people much like the *commedia del'arte* tradition. Here in this company we would not be surprised to see a parson (the kind that likes early keyboard music), a quack doctor (none such here!) and a swaggering boaster who's all talk and no action (no-, not in this company!).

But let's take a step back. To give a flavour of the times, we shall take a tour through a typical day at the pleasure gardens, and various solo keyboard works and vocal pieces will be performed. We haven't got a whole orchestra today so I'll let you know when I'm standing in for them.

We've started with breakfast, just after a healthful swim. After a change, people take the air and have a stroll. These activities were more used by those of the middle to upper classes who were on a holiday. Many pleasure gardens had started as a **well** known for its cures; a natural spring might be discovered and it would become a site for drinking the water, swimming, and eventually as a natural development, enjoying dancing, music and other entertainments.

An example might be Bagnigge Wells, which happened to be the summer home of Nell Gwynn.³ 'Bagnigge Wells', a song in the *London Magazine*, June 1759 is quoted in Warwick Wroth's very useful book, *The London pleasure gardens of 18th Century*, and is worth quoting:

Ye gouty old souls and rheumaticks crawl on,
Here taste these blest springs, and your tortures are gone;
Ye wretches ashmatick, who pant for your breath,
Come drink your relief, and think not of death.
Obey the glad summons, to Bagnigge repair,
Drink deep of its streams, and forget all your care.

The distemper'd shall drink and forget all his pain,
When his blood flows more briskly through every vein;
The headache shall vanish, the heartache shall cease,
And your lives be enjoyed in more pleasure and peace.
Obey then the summons, to Bagnigge repair,
And drink an oblivion to pain and to care.⁴

(Later this particular place would cater to the lower middle and working class.) These resorts thrived on good weather, so were in operation usually just from May to September. Walking and being seen was important and could be done through the day and afternoon. The gardens were laid out not to show off botanical specimens but to

³ Warwick Wroth, 56.

⁴ *The London pleasure gardens of 18th C*, 1979, 1986
Warwick Wroth, 58.

provides avenue for strolls and promenades, and grand vistas, at the end of which might be a theatre, 'temple, or assembly room.

Around noon time or in the afternoon they might indulge in dancing- this was social dancing and would have most likely have been of the sort published by Henry Playford- these continued to be published well until to the late 18th Century.

Pieces like Purcell's 'Hole in the Wall' (1695/8) and 'Mr. Beveridge's Maggot' (1701) were used and re-published many times into the time of Jane Austen.

PLAY Dance music: Purcell's 'Hole in the Wall' 1695/8

Dancing allowed a certain amount of mixing. In Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, there is a humorous account of a young lady pretending she had promised to dance with someone else, so as to avoid dancing with a stranger, only to have to admit the truth later.

Pleasure gardens allowed people to suspend their normal rules and even more so with masquerades. However, the rules of class persisted despite this mixing. There were certain gardens which merited little more than a small bowling green at the back which attracted the lower classes; there were others sporting a grove to the honour of Flora that might attract the class that, well,... gave favours for money.⁵ In larger, well-appointed gardens, special tables and boxes could be reserved for the middle, upper middle classes, and even royalty.

The beauty of nature and music seemed equally prized. Some waxed poetical about Vauxhall, as in this **account from the London Magazine, in 1735.**

Old winter with icicles spread,
Will soon all his horrors resume;
Those past, spring must lift her fair head,
And nature exult in fresh bloom.
Thy bowers, O Vaux-Hall then shall rise,
In all the gay pride of the field;
Thy musick, shall sweetly surprize;
To thee fam'd Elysium shall yield.
London Magazine, Nov. 1735⁶

At the pleasure gardens the hard working but respectable could be admitted as well as the high born. For a hard working person, it wasn't too expensive that they couldn't go, but the price was high enough to keep out any 'undesirables',⁷ whilst the more well-to-do might take out a season subscription. These were issued in the form of a metal token, and allowed the bearer entry for himself and a guest.

In the afternoons the more well-organised gardens might have music up on a bandstand with an orchestra. The next song, first sung by (the real) Miss Froud at Marybone Gardens, shows the love of the pastoral that persisted; people played at being nymphs and swains. Somehow, the humble milkmaid manages to attract just the right

⁵ Wroth, 4. at the Mulberry Garden, when it went downhill.

⁶ Quoted at [Online, 20 October 2008, Victorian London, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/pleasuregardens-2-vauxhall.htm>

⁷ At Marybone, a shilling was the rate so as to keep out undesirables. Mollie Sands, , **The 18th century pleasure Gardens of Marylebone 1737-77**, 12. 12 shillings for a season pass.

class of landowner who's just slightly higher than her own state This piece is published on one page with the interjections of sybell (trumpet) and 'flutes' written on the same stave as the vocal line. Mr. Hook is most likely James Hook, a composer much associated with both Marybone and Vauxhall Gardens. ⁸

The Milkmaid by Mr. Hook, London, 1768, sung by Miss Froud at Marybone

I should add that this song is not very easy to find elsewhere. We discovered it in Birmingham at the central library in a proverbial 'pile of dusty books' that a helpful librarian fetched from the basement. The book has, bound in, several different publications, all 'singles' from the 'masque hits market' – something like 'greatest Broadway hits' compilations only each one had been bought separately. It is uncatalogued and though we know two of its owners, the songs (a compilation of 'hits') range through the ages prior to these people.

One particular masque, *Love in a Village* by Thomas Arne, had tremendous staying power, with performances and revivals right into 1811, excerpted songs in 1826 and a modern edition in 1928 for the Lyric Hammersmith. My searches at the British Library yielded over 170 references to this masque. Since the pleasure gardens operated in the theatres' and operas' offseason, this was a perfect opportunity to take those old 'chestnuts' out again.

This example is the overture transcribed for harpsichord. This was a good way to enjoy the great shows in your own drawing room.

Overture to Love in a Village. [Abel transcription of Arne, 1761]

Returning to our 'day in the life' we recall that in the evenings, supper could be taken. The normal foods on offer varied by the establishment. Vauxhall served only bread and butter,⁹ tea and coffee, whilst Ranelagh often had a full complement of roasts and other delights. Suppers could be had in special rooms at Marybone¹⁰ and at Hampstead.¹¹ Marybone was famous for Mrs. Storace's plum cakes.¹² Others like pubs, offered only drink. After this, chamber music would take place in an assembly room or in the ballroom where the earlier dancing had taken place (we have modern day remnants of these rooms in Leamington Spa. Whilst 'The Milkmaid' is in essence a rather 'dippy' song, many important and well known composers wrote for the pleasure gardens. Dr. Arne was of course respected and music was performed by Handel, Abel, Purcell, Stanley, and J.C. Bach, to name just a few.

This piece is meant to represent that experience of a chamber event, even though it's really a harpsichord solo. It has the advantage of being written by Maurice Greene who was an admirer and later a rival of Handel. With Boyce and Festing, he left the Academy of Ancient Music over a row, and set up a rival group called the Apollo Society at the Devil Tavern in Fleet Street, and it's very possible many pleasure garden songs and catches were sung there.

Maurice Greene, Allegro from Suite no. 2 in D Allegro pub. 1750

⁸ NG

⁹ Warwick Wroth, *The London pleasure gardens of 18th C*, 1979, 1986, 4, and 203.

¹⁰ Wroth, 95.

¹¹ *The London pleasure gardens of 18th C*, 1979, 1986
Warwick Wroth, 182

¹² Sands, 40.

(instrumental; to represent chamber music in the assembly halls, by a rival of Handel who composed for a gentleman's group that met at the Devil (Tavern)

Others, who were more closely associated with the pleasure gardens include Signor Giardini who worked at Ranelagh¹³, Stephen Storace (who married the daughter of Marybone's gardens's owner, John Trusler, and put on Englished translations of Italian burlettas)¹⁴, James Hook, who played a concerto per night in the 1780's, and Samuel Arnold who took over Marybone Gardens in 1771.¹⁵

Giardini's work was written here with English first, showing its being intended for the British market. The Italian is second.

Voi Amante or Rondeau by Signor D. Giardini, in *Clio and Euterpe* [c.1779]

The evenings in the larger establishments started to include fireworks. This became more common in the last quarter of the 18th Century. From 1742 it was expected for the occasion of a royal birthday or a victory.¹⁶ Some were very elaborate, showing scenes. The great Torre became famous for this at Marybone from 1772. He would have gone to Ranelagh but it was refused its music licence!¹⁷ In addition little lamps were affixed to the trees and other edifices, in their thousands and were called 'illuminations'. Vauxhall was the rehearsal venue in 1749 for *The Royal Fireworks*, to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.¹⁸ I did find a transcription of *Handel's Water Piece* which gives a sense of the pomp.

Handel's Water Piece. Largo– **Allegro** – March [anon. transcr. for harpsichord, 1761]

In Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, the heroine is struck with confusion after a set of fireworks depicting Euridice and she is separated from her party. She ventures mistakenly into the 'dark walks'. At night the gravelled walks became rather unsafe for an unaccompanied lady. Our next song gives an indication of the moral dilemmas facing a young girl. The song was published with a duet- We have adapted the bass vocal part into a regular basso continuo line- but you can still hear the imitation. The song is not so flippant, yet it alludes to some practices best kept within the shadows. It also makes mention of 'blind fortune'. In our recent video for *Lady Georgianna* we have included a blindfolded statue in the background of our scene.

Take heed, thou lovely maid, published by L & B, (probably Longman and Broderip) 1730-1790 (duet texture and moralistic overtones)

From the pleasure garden to the Drawing Room

I mentioned earlier that many songs first performed at Drury Lane or any of the other theatres were performed again at the pleasure gardens in the offseason. Next to these

¹³ Johann Christian Bach, *Favourite Songs Sung at Vauxhall Gardens*. Orig. published in London 1766-1779 Intro. By Stephen Roe. Gen intro. by Christopher Hogwood. (Richard Macnutt: Tunbridge Wells, 1985), xv

¹⁴ Sands, 25.

¹⁵ Sands, 11

¹⁶ Sands, 17.

¹⁷ Sands, 83.

¹⁸ Sands, 27.

in published compilations or private compilations are other songs, which were equally prized in the drawing room.

It is extremely difficult to say which were performed where- If a work has at the top the proclamation that it was performed 'at Marybone gardens' you know it was probably done there. 'Take Heed' with its shadowy history, may be one of these. By the fact of it published, we have an indication that it then made its graceful entry into the drawing room, curtsied and was hashed out by many a young lady at her spinet.

Or perhaps, it was a way to recapture the fun of being there. What is staggering is the sheer volume of publications in which songs of all these sorts could be found. I have a list (longer than four of my arms) of collections alone, that have aided me in my searches, and I'm sure there are more. And these comprise chiefly solo songs, where we know that there was plenty of chamber music, band music, burlettas, such as the *Serva Padrona*, in English translation.¹⁹).

At the same time (of these many publications), there was a massive resurgence of interest in the Scots song, as part of a growing sense of Scottish identity, particularly in the middle classes. This may seem off the point but Scottish songs were in vogue and were published in London and used by many in pleasure gardens. They were also favourites in the drawing rooms of people like Jane Austen. I have tracked just one of these countless Scots songs, entitled 'My apron deary'.

We'll start by performing you just a verse, followed by some ornamented instrumental versions.

'My Apron Deary', in *Thirty Scots songs for a voice and harpsichord... Bremner, 1757, Followed by versions published by Craig (1730) and Peacock (1762).*

What you've heard in the words was a later version of a tune, following by the 1730 version published in Edinburgh, and then a later version published in England in 1762. It is a useful exercise to look at the difference in ornamentation in each of these.

Look at the examples on the reverse of your handout.

You will now be aware that not all the version start with the same words.

Take your very first excerpt from *Orpheus Caledonius*, 1726. This volume was meant to encapsulate the best of Scottish musical culture. The engraving is lavish in its size (I know because I had to pay for an A3 sheet to be copied) and it has a nice scripted text which is easy to read (really it is, on the original!). The subsequent verses have original Scots spelling (you can see the full version after), with no attempt to 'English' them.

Look just below it at the second example, taken from the *British Musickall Miscellany*, 1734. This rather cheaper, smaller format publication also has the bare bones of the song, but probably sold for far less. I think, to be fair, the volume I looked at had had a lot of use, which means at least the music was valued.

What is interesting is that the text (the earlier one) tells a slightly different story than the one about Aminta whom the gentle shepherdess has given up with a sigh. I'll just read off the rest of it for you now. **READ real verses**

The original version is all about teenage pregnancy, the natural outcome to the young maiden's disregard for the advice to 'Take Heed.' When it gets to Bremner, he has sanitized our scene. I may be reading into this; after all many a song has had a gloss and different words provided- it was rather a staple practice from the Beggar's Opera onward and probably a compliment.

¹⁹ Sands, 82.

However, you see that the Bremner publication is a nice item, beautifully engraved and prepared, again probably designed for the middle classes. Something happened. Between 1726 and 1757 the taste seemed to be for the more light pastoral version. Themes covered by the pleasure garden and drawing room would comprise an entire social history and were various: patriotism (roast beef and all that), pastoral amusement, the preference for a simple country life to a city one, fashions, types of people, and courtship, with a particular example being 'The Hours of Love' a set of songs going through the day of a suitor, by James Hook²⁰. Also included were love of good drink and enjoyment, and even self-referential items such as Michael Arne's 'Invitation to Ranelagh a Rondeau'.²¹

Decline of the pleasure gardens

As the pleasure gardens became frequented by great numbers security was important. There was a necessity for coaches to be met and escorted onto the ground, and safe conduct or escort provided for parties alighting. For the most part, the gardens were safe and well run places, but just occasionally there were too many people to handle.

READING about Cremorne gardens, 1885²²

This reading is from a memoir chronicling the period 1747-52, and appeared when people were remembering the decline of many a venue. What happened to the pleasure gardens? There attempts to keep people interested. Hot air balloon demonstrations were big, as were magic, lectures on new science experiments and illusionists. The illuminations were bigger and bigger. Eventually people tired of these and there was a gradual decline. The party had ended but the owners took some time to figure this out. The posh supper boxes and assembly rooms were itemised when the contents and building of Marybone were sold.²³

²⁰ J. Hook, 'The Hours of Love.' Wighton Collection 32009 (mic8).

²¹ Arne, M. in 'Ranelagh Songs 1780, sung by Miss Morris. Wighton collection 7090 (mic 17).

²² [Online, 20 October 2008, Victorian London, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/>

Cremorne Gardens

The gardens were large and well laid out; some of the grand old trees had been left standing, and afforded pleasant relief to the town eyes which had been staring all day at brick and stucco, while their murmuring rustle was pleasant to the ears aching with the echo of city traffic. There were plenty of amusements - a circular dancing platform, with a capital band in a large kiosk in the middle; a lot of *jeux innocens*, such as you find at a French fair; once a week a balloon ascent, and a very good firework display. The admission-fee was one shilling; there was a hot dinner for half a crown, a cold supper for the same money ; and it was not considered necessary, as at Vauxhall, to go in for expense; on the contrary, beer flowed freely and it was about this time, I think, and at Cremorne, that the insidious "long" drinks - soda and "something" - now so popular, first made their appearance. Occasionally there were big banquets organized by certain "swells," and held there, when there would be heavy drinking, and sometimes a row - on Derby night, once, when there was a free fight, which lasted for hours, involving the complete smash of everything smashable; and I mind me of another occasion, when a gigantic Irishman, now a popular M.P., sent scores of waiters flying by the force of his own unaided fists...

Edmund Yates, His Recollections and Experiences, 1885 [chapter on 1847-1852]

²³ Sands, 119. On p. 71 she included a list of assets, from 1768: The 'Schedule of Appointments' included: Crimson festooned curtain, pier glass with carved gilt frame with four brass arms, two pairs of small pier glasses, orch platform, 4 walnut dining tables, 12 green Windsor chairs, 14 benches cov with green baize, sideboard in red baize. Lighting- glass sconces with wax candles. Card room with harpsichord by Harris, music stand, prints by Hogarth, and mahogany card table. Garden house busts of handel etc

After this many pleasure gardens went out of business and returned to their former pub state or if real estate was expensive, were sold. Many a site has been paved over.

In Worcester, a pub called 'The Arboretum' and a gateway are the sole remnant of the once thriving Arboretum Gardens.

What is our legacy today?

Well, if you've ever heard of the 'Blackpool Illuminations' you have an idea. In a certain sense the 'Winter Gardens' at Malvern are a hold over.

The Ranelagh Gardens were first a Hospital for ex-soldiers designed by Wren in 1692, later a pleasure garden from 1741, the rotunda demolished in 1805, gardens removed in 1850 for the construction of the Embankment, re-laid by John Gibson in 1860, and are now the Chelsea Hospital and Ranelagh Gardens. They aren't the same but at least there's a garden there and the famous Chelsea Garden Show.²⁴

Bath has retained its many semi-circular buildings and paths. In another sense, a trip to Madame Toussaud's Niagara Falls, Atlantic City, or Las Vegas might have the same impact. These days, many U.S. zoos have special lights at the festive season- I recently saw Bronx Zoo... It takes a lot to wow people today.

For those who haven't been to Las Vegas, imagine a city with all the monuments you can think of in one park: the Arc de Triomphe, the Empire State building, the Taj Mahal, all in 1/4 size, with a night sky above. Now imagine that it's indoors and someone else is controlling the lights. Imagine that at 9pm every night a pirate ship is sunk and you might get a glimpse of a lion tamer. People loved spectacle then and they do now.

What about the Promenade concerts, or as we call them, the 'Proms?' They originated with the pleasure gardens where people would promenade around the grounds and listen to the music from the bandstand above. In 1842, the English Opera House had the orchestra in tiers on the stage, with the stage level being where promenaders walked. It seems people had the same problem sitting still then as now!²⁵ At the Queens Hall, there was a large fountain for young ladies to fall into and require rescuing, there were animated pictures at the interval, and people could smoke in there until 1971.²⁶ As times changed, the promenade aspect remained but gradually was removed. However, to give people an excuse to move about, the noise makers, a welcome addition, gave the popular aspect which the Proms today enjoy. They appealed to the masses and gave them what they wanted.

I have to reveal now why I've given my lecture recital this title- 'taking your music with fireworks'. I was at a trade stall once touting my musical wares and someone approached with great interest. Did this person want to hear a sample of our music with authentic instruments? No, she was attracted to the picture of fireworks on the cover of the Worcester Festival brochure. I felt then, a distinct 'down' feeling as I tried to explain that musical fireworks were ever so much better, and why did one need fireworks to enjoy music? Why do they need shiny, cleavage enhancing dresses? Why is there a sudden upsurge in interest in the social dance 'Mr. Beveridges Maggot', now that we've seen the scenes in the Jane Austen films?

²⁴ [Online, 20 October 2008], website, The Royal Hospital Chelsea: The Home of the Chelsea Pensioner. <http://www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk/about/origins-and-history>

²⁵ Ates Orga, *The Proms*. (Cavid & Charles, London, 1974), 22

²⁶ Ates Orga, *The Proms*. (Cavid & Charles, London, 1974), 43, and ff 51.

So as we say goodbye the pleasure gardens of yore, we know they are alive in some form today, and probably always will be. We should therefore end on a note that celebrates the openness of the Pleasure Garden cum Prom to people of all walks of life.

A late advert, certainly not the last was published announcing a low price of admission to Vauxhall. Yes there was inflation, and yes the price had gone down. These were the final days.

READING Vauxhall for one shilling in 1833.²⁷

And now to our final song- it's about the sales. It's a multi-movement cantata with an Allegro, recitative, Andante and a reprise of the first Allegro.

Who'll Buy a Heart? by Mr Stanley; a cantata from *The Muses Delight*, 1754

²⁷CENTENARY JUBILEE

VAUXHALL FOR ONE SHILLING

SAYS I to Doll, the other day,
We've lately not much fun done,
And so suppose we take the coach
And journey up to London.
Why, yes, says Doll, I do not care,
I'll go if you are willing,
And we'll see all the Vauxhall sights,
For they only charge a SHILLING.
Tol de rol, &c.

More verses... CENTENARY JUBILEE

THE GARDENS ARE OPEN
MONDAY 26th of August
WEDNESDAY 28th of August
FRIDAY 30th of August
When they close for the season.

ADMITTANCE EACH NIGHT - ONLY 1s. (1833) Obviously an advert!

From <http://www.victorianlondon.org/publications/pleasuregardens-2-vauxhall.htm>