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Artistic practices of historical sound: memory, imagination, and mimesis in contemporary composition and historical performance

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6_Singing in the Aviary

Conclusion

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At the beginning of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Jane takes a book from her cousin's library and hides in a window well to read.¹ The book is Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds* [first published 1797], a seminal work in the history of ornithology, and one influenced not insignificantly by a mutually declared friend of Bewick's who wrote his own book about birds, John Freeman Milward Dovaston.² But the latter's book, introduced as "My Aviary" [ca. 1808], is quite different. It isn't an illustrated book of natural history but rather what one might call a poetic book of music. In it, Dovaston compiles hundreds of what he calls "national melodies" and invites his reader to analogise the breadth of their character and beauty to the diversity of birdsong.³

I came across Dovaston's aviary while conducting a broad search through the special collections of the British Library for any music notation committed to paper during the long 18th century in Britain that appeared to be anonymous and/or fragmentary. The book indeed contains quite a lot of notation that fits one or both of these categories, and for this reason any of these excerpts on their own would have deserved attention from me. But as a whole it can also be understood as emblematic of a much broader question for historical musicology and historical performance today. As I look at the melodies contained within, I want to play them, I want to hear them. But what *exactly* do I want?

It's apparent that a large amount, if not all, of this notation was not composed by Dovaston but rather transcribed. For these excerpts, do I want what their composer wanted or do I want Dovaston's fleeting moment of wandering through his aviary? Or are these the same thing? And can I even trust Dovaston's pen as confirmation of whether 'an Irish air' was composed in Ireland or only composed to sound like his or someone else's idea of Ireland? Other examples include a string quartet by Joseph Haydn, but arranged to a grand staff. What do I imagine when I look at that page? Four string players at

¹ Charlotte Brontë, ed. Richard Nemesvari, *Jane Eyre* [first published 1847], chapter 1 (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999), 64.

² See, for example, Gordon Williams (ed.), *Bewick to Dovaston: Letters, 1824-1828* (London: Nattali & Maurice, 1968).

³ Add. MS 63512, British Library, London.

Eszterháza or Dovaston rendering something he considered analogous to this at the keyboard? And is there any moral dimension to this choice? Dovaston's project of collecting melodies from around the world can easily be likened to the practice of contemporaries such as the architect John Soane pillaging sculptures and monuments from Egypt and elsewhere,⁴ but does the same logic of theft apply when what's taken is not physical matter? A musical phrase transcribed and transported can leave its original culture intact, whereas an architectural feature removed from a building can only be in one place at a time. Though maybe the more relevant questions are whose many practices sit behind Dovaston's scribal hand, and what are the natures of their voices in this document? How much of each of them speaks through their voyeur or how much does his will erase of their reality? Or does this even matter?

Affirmation that the practice of compilation can be quite easily understood as an act of *creation* comes from both our own recent past and from Dovaston's. By my own understanding of the term, Dovaston's aviary is itself a *composition*, made as all compositions are out of others' work. And what of my own act of compilation—or again, composition, or perhaps history—in pursuing something like this document and stopping and thinking upon finding it. To write the words on this page, drawing out into present action what has until now been only a latent hypothetical, is to perform a new expression of art to others. What about *me* has determined that *this* should be what I choose to dwell on instead of something else?

In this sense, this aviary is a book I can only understand in any meaningful way through what one might call an intertemporal or interscalar lens; an understanding of each moment, each action, each individual, each artifact as embedded with a great many overlapping temporalities, cultures, and geographies, whether spanning a fleeting few minutes or reaching centuries to either chronological side of both our present and their maker's, and whether contained to the few occupants of a single room or the whole human population of the Earth. If I want—as I do—to approach this aviary from such an intertemporal and interscalar lens—not only as a writer but also as a musician—what might I do?

It's important to repeat here that my core aim in this dissertation is *not* to merely replicate or attempt to replicate a specific historical practice wholesale but rather more generally to practice history—understood in as capacious a sense as possible—in and through the practice of music. As I have detailed

⁴ For a basic introduction to this practice, see Tim Knox and Derry Moore, *Sir John Soane's Museum, London* (London: Merrell Publishers, 2016).

throughout this text, I don't understand the practice of history to be exclusively constituted by the objective description or replication of historical events, but rather to encompass a much more temporally and perspectively rich undertaking as already consciously practiced by critical theorists, art theorists, sociologists, philosophers, and even many historians who work outside the field of classical music.

So to return to my statement above, but now with a key emphasis added, 'the aviary is a book *I* can only understand in any meaningful way through what one might call an intertemporal or interscalar lens.' My own subjectivity contributes just as much to how I want to hear this book as either Dovaston's curatorial intent or each individual melody's author. Whatever music I make with its contents will be an *illusion*—in Bernard Harcourt's terminology—of its pastness. And as was made clear by Richard Taruskin, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and many others during the debates around historical authenticity beginning in the 1980s, this statement would be true for *every* musicologist or performer who ever has used or ever will use this book in any way. By acknowledging this, one can become free of the flimsy naivety of pretending to know for certain what can never be known for certain. But it is only by also acknowledging that history is argumentation as much as description, construction as much as replication, a drawing *across* distant temporalities and places as much as a drawing *of* them, that I believe a truly meaningful musical use of them can be made in our present moment. No single instance of musical practice can convey the full potentiality or essence of a given example of notation or of any broader idea of a musical culture, historical or otherwise, but by drawing and reflecting upon more and more Harcourtian illusions of these objects cutting across each other as diversely as possible; touching upon and folding in even the remotest of possibilities or analogies imaginable around them, one can learn more, and learn more, and learn more.

Dovaston's aviary begins with an embossed outside cover that reads "National Melodies &c.," an inside cover with a pasted-in label containing an image and a quote from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and a first page with an introduction including author acknowledgments and quotations from canonic works of literature.

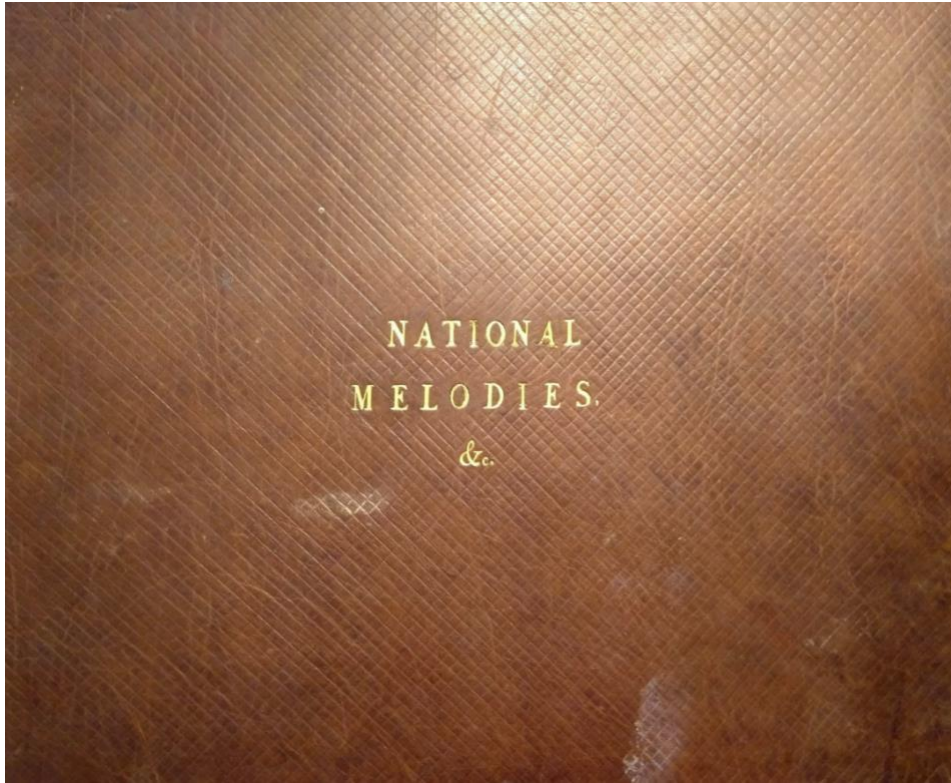


Figure 6.1: The outside front cover of John Dovaston's aviary.

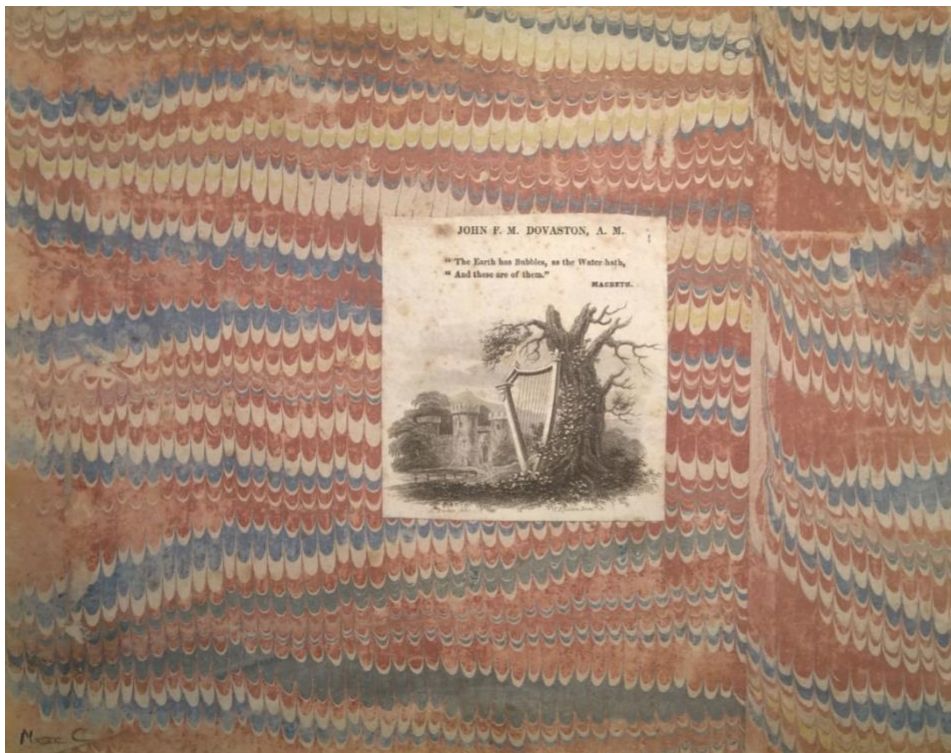


Figure 6.2: The inside front cover of John Dovaston's aviary.

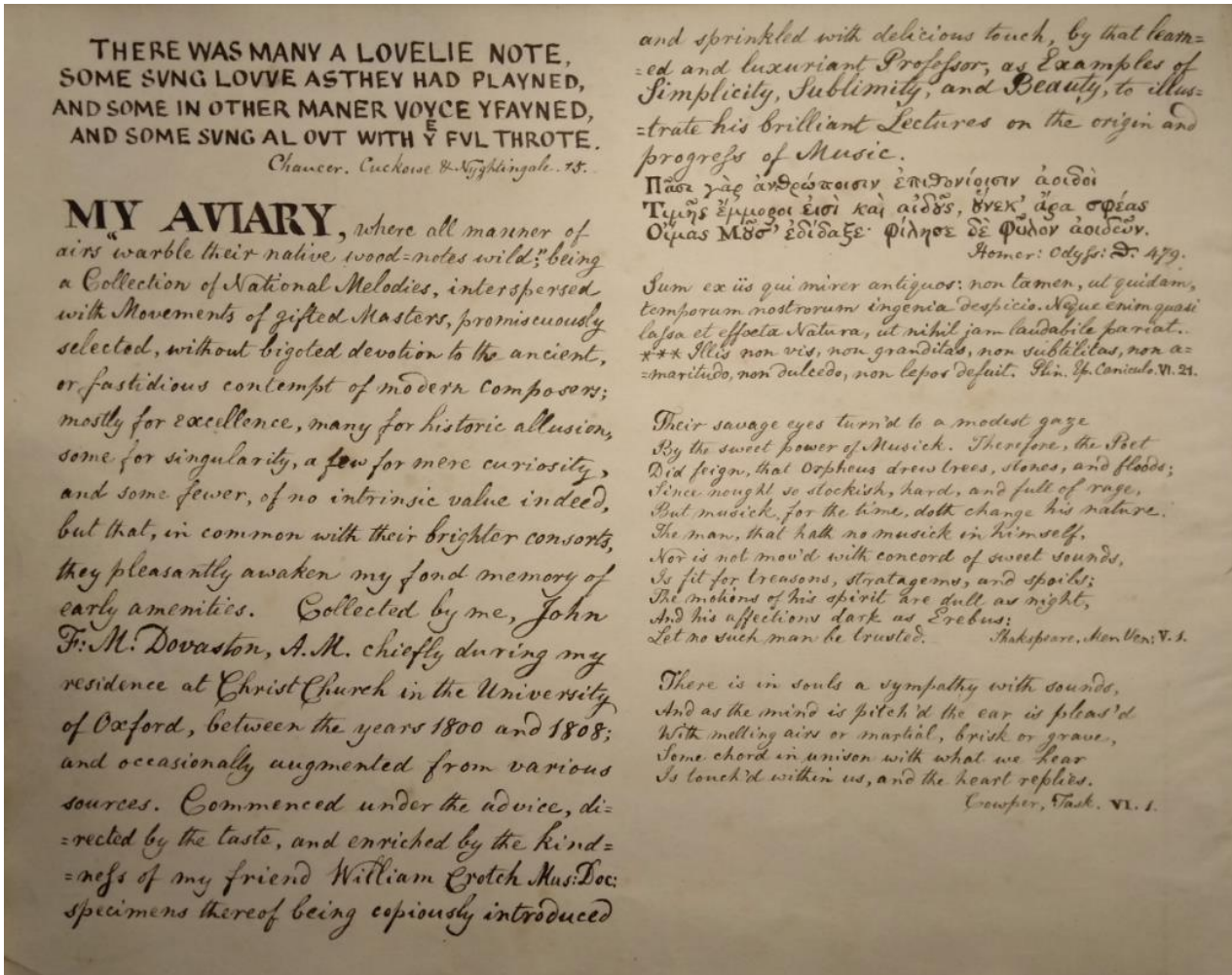


Figure 6.3: The first inside page of Dovaston’s aviary.

Bookending an introduction by Dovaston himself are quotations from Chaucer, Homer, Pliny the Younger, Shakespeare, and Cowper. I won’t transcribe the passages in English here, but the Greek and Latin texts can be translated, respectively, as:

For among all men that are upon the earth minstrels win honour and reverence, for the Muse has taught them the paths of song, and loves the tribe of minstrels [Pliny the Younger, *Letters*].⁵

⁵ Homer, trans. A. T. Murray, rev. George E. Dimock, *Odyssey, Volume 1, Books 1-12* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 306-307.

I am an admirer of the ancients, but, not like some people, so as to despise the talent of our own times. It is not true that the world is too tired and exhausted to be able to produce anything worth praising. [...] He lacked neither vigour, grandeur, nor subtlety of style, pungency, charm, nor humour [Homer, *Odyssey*].⁶

After this introductory page follows a table of contents, spread across 14 pages, which gives a title and/or origin for 1,266 included pieces.

153	Grim King of the ghosts (Can lach be contred)	W. W. Holland	180	Saw ye my father	Scotch	207		Russian
154	White Snowdon	Welsh	181	Auld lang syne	Scotch	208	A'w' Lybil	Welsh
155	Neapolitan Minuet	English	182	There is nae luck about the house	Scotch	209	Song of the old man of the Wood	Welsh
156	O dear Peggy,	Scotch	183	Mary of Castle Cary	Scotch	210	The Silver Crown	Scotch
157	Pittatoughty	Irish	184		French	211	The Belles of New York	
158	Go to the Devil, & shake yourself	Irish	185	Good humour'd and cheery	Welsh	212	The Copenhagen Waltz	
159	The Blossom of the Heath	Welsh	186	Stone Minka. Danish.	Russian	213	Carron Side	Scotch
160	Roged	Welsh	187	Air play'd by a blind fiddler at Oxford		214	Giordani's Minuet	
161	The rising of the Lark (1 st)	Welsh	188	Albina	French	215	The Harmony of the Strings	Welsh
162	Polonoise		189	Casina	French	216		East Indian
163	March	W. W. Holland	190	Roast Beef of old England	English	217	Romance. (Per voci et viola)	W. W. Holland
164	Penkey house	Scotch	191	Marshall Saxe's Minuet		218	Slow Movement	Phygel
165	Lapland tune, from Aerbi,	Lapland	192	Theodore opera Dance.		219	Minuet	Krumpholtz
166	I yield, dear lassie -	Scotch	193	New German Spa		220	Roy's Wife of Aldivallock	Scotch
167	Fandango	Spanish	194	The Irish Washerwoman.		221	Lady Eliza Calendar	Irish
168	Waltz	Modern German	195	Captain Mackintosh		222	Meillionen. White flower	Welsh
169	The Highland laddie	Scotch	196	Marionells	French	223	Dinwendrydd Colomen	Welsh
170	Savourna ve. Enn go brach -	Irish	197	Logie o' Buchan	Scotch	224	Pigaur Dur	Welsh
171	Corn Riggs. (D. Grotch)	Irish	198	Dweed Side	Scotch	225		Welsh
172	Black eyed Susan	Handel	199	Thro' the Wood Laddie (modern)	Scotch	226	The Anethusa	Modern English
173	Nod Galan, New-Year's Eve	Welsh	200	Thro' the Wood Laddie (ancient)	Scotch	227	Ye Days & Faries have ye seen	English
174	A' h'yd y nos: the live long Night	Welsh	201	Gramachree & Molly	?	228	Colin and Phoebe	English
175	Tis Roger de Coverley (744)	English	202	Margiana in Ireland		229	What ails this heart o' mine	Scotch
176	M ^{rs} Casey	Irish	203	Lord Macdonald's Reel	Scotch	230	Air with variations	John Grotch
177	The Broom of Cowdenknewes	Scotch	204	See him, father, see him	Scotch	231	Savoy and Tune	John Grotch
178	The rose, & let me in	Scotch	205	Musette		232	The gay Deceiver	W. W. Holland
179	Sweet Anny	Scotch	206	Slavonian.				

Figure 6.4: A page from the table of contents of Dovaston's aviary.

The majority of these origins are nationalities of the British Isles—"English," "Welsh," "Scotch," and "Irish"—but there are also other European nationalities represented such as "French" and "German."

⁶ Pliny the Younger, trans. Betty Radice, *Letters, Volume I, Books 1-7* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 446-449.

Other indications are broader geographic ones such as “Scandinavian” or “Asiatic” while yet others are names of composers including “Handel,” “Pleyel,” “Corelli,” and “Dr. Arne.” Each of the origins is more or less evenly dispersed across the volume except that there are distinctly more designations of British or Irish national origin than any other type of designation.

Notable about the presentation of the notational pages is that individual pieces are not spaced out on the given page. Instead, each one immediately follows its predecessor such that an inattentive musician might very reasonably play through from one to the next without pause. Of course, such an approach would be interrupted by the occasional transition from single staff to grand staff.

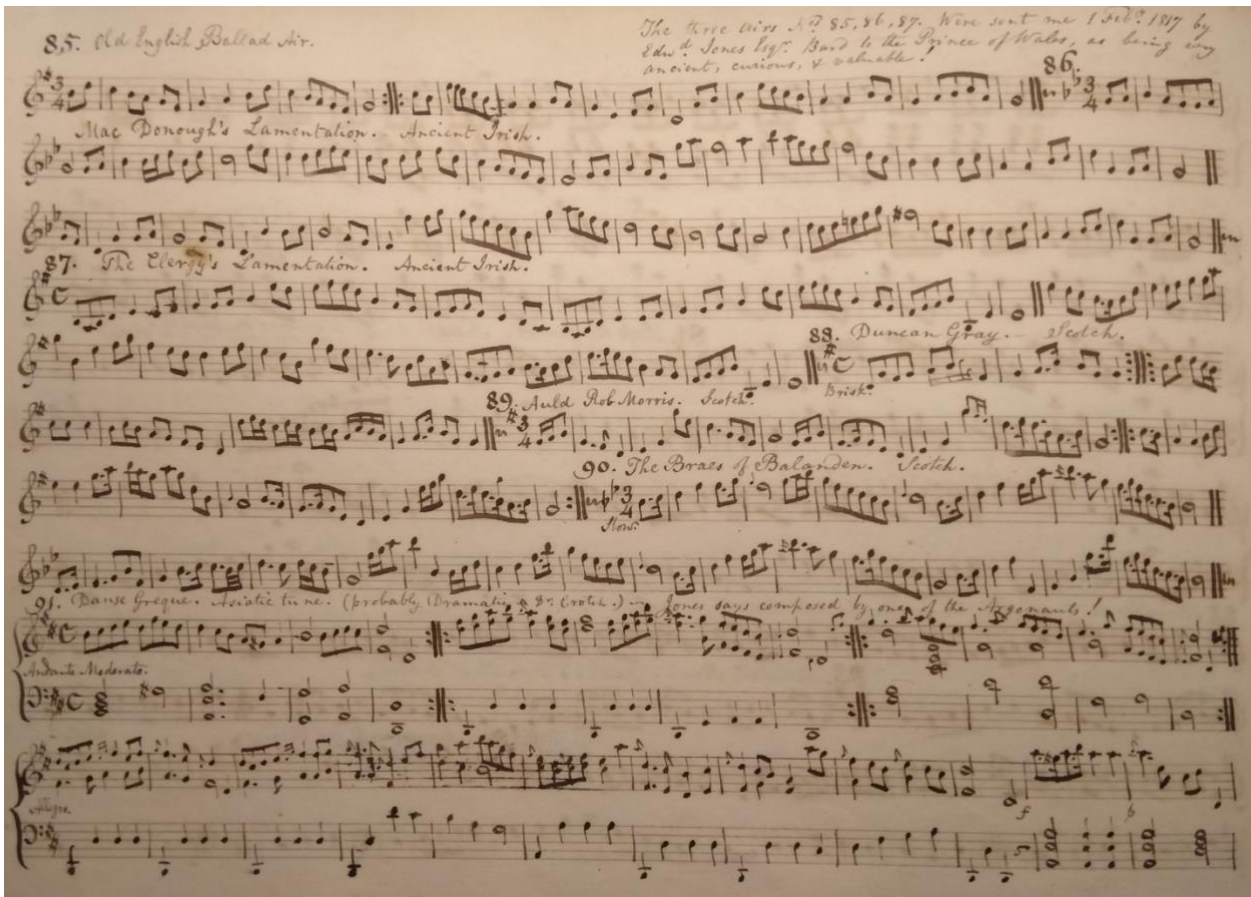


Figure 6.5: An interior page of Dovaston’s aviary, showing pieces numbered 85–90.

There are also frequent marginalia providing contextual information about some of the pieces, and it's worth pointing out that these comments are never allowed to interrupt the continuity of notation from one piece to the next, even in cases where they are extremely long.

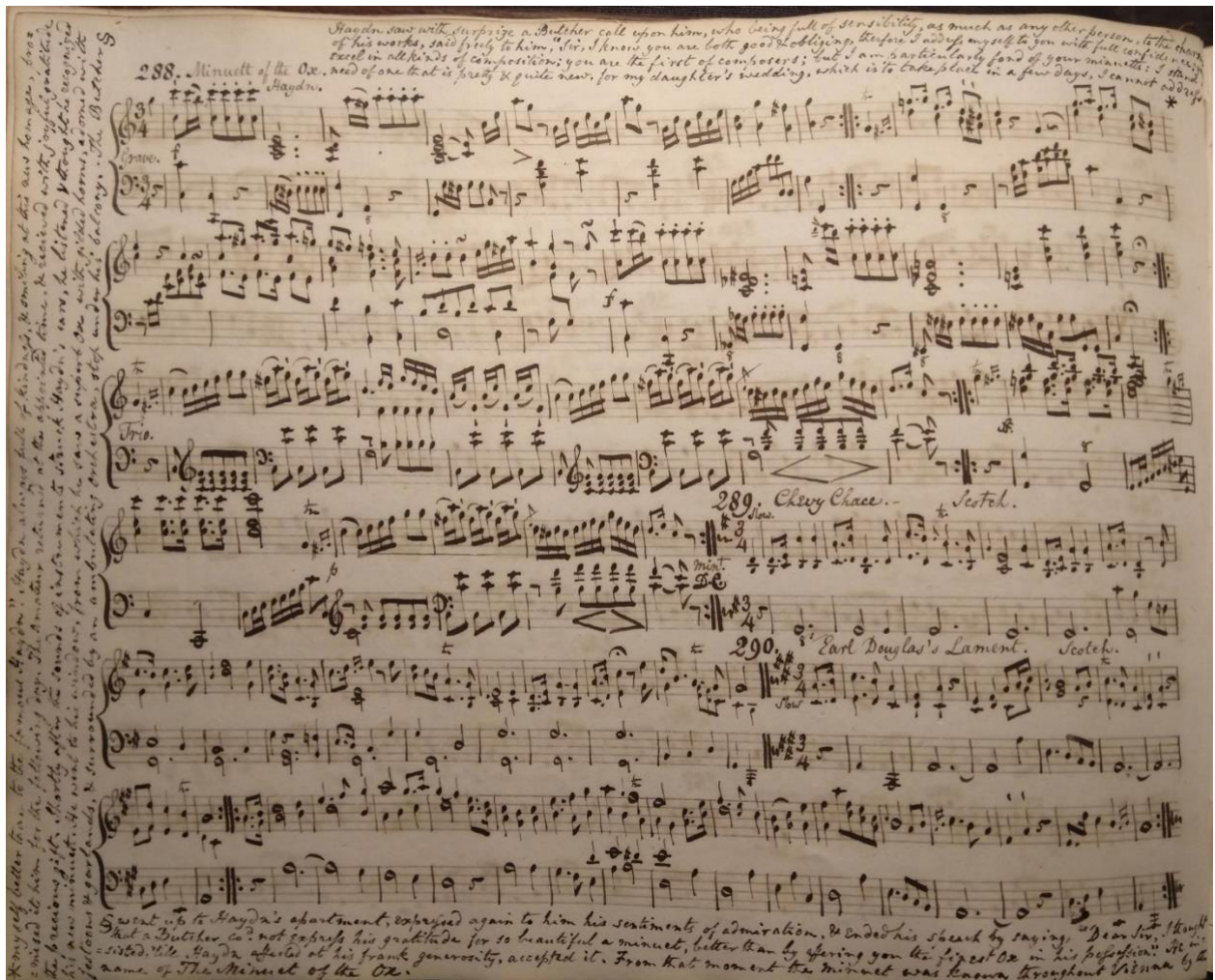


Figure 6.6: A copy of the “Minuett of the Ox,” attributed by Dovaston to Joseph Haydn, with extensive marginalia; this is piece number 288 from Dovaston’s aviary.

My overall first impression of this volume was of its sheer enormity. Following the introductory pages and table of contents there are 210 pages *completely* filled with notation. And this is no operatic or symphonic score where one page contains only a handful of measures for a large ensemble—the largest instrumentation is a grand staff. On very rough calculation, to play through the entire volume in one sitting would take well over 24 hours.⁷ Furthermore, the continuation from each piece to the next without any addition of line breaks contributes a somewhat chaotic quality to the experience of flipping through the book. Aside from the numbers and titles sprinkled across each page, there's no other form of visual hierarchy, and no indication is given as to whether these 1,266 entries are even presented in a particular order. No subheadings of smaller groups of entries are provided and no bracketing techniques are used in the marginalia to explicitly indicate similarity or classification. Furthermore, the book doesn't really *end* in a particular way. There are several blank pages of staff paper after the final piece, and there is no indication afterwards that it is intentionally the *final* one. The overall visual impression all this produces for me is that of a completely undifferentiated colossus of melody.

Per Dovaston's introduction, this is, "My Aviary, where all manner of airs 'warble their native woodnotes wild.'"⁸ This perhaps gives a first clue of a logic behind this undifferentiated mass of notation. Perhaps the chaos I perceived *is* the intent. Just as a walk through an actual aviary—an enclosure for birds—might yield an endless overlapping chorus of seemingly innumerable birdsongs, so too might a read-through of the pages of this collection yield a formless opera of melodic diversity. There is no apparent attempt on the part of their compiler to imprint an aggregate form upon these melodies, yet each is as delightful as the next, just as each *transition* from one to the next is equally intriguing. Upon exploration of this shapeless anthology, the sounds of distant nations begin to reveal their consonance and imitation as members of the same world and its one, long history. Dovaston makes explicit overture in his introduction to the equality in value of ancient and modern musics. He quotes Pliny the Younger: "I am an admirer of the ancients, but, not like some people, so as to despise the talent of our own times." And

⁷ In the first few pages the average staff contains approximately 30 beats. Assuming an average tempo of 60 beats per minute, each staff would take 30 seconds to play. Each page contains 12 staves, which, multiplied by 210 pages, equals 21 hours. About a third of the notation is presented in grand staff while the other two thirds are single staff, which reduces this time considerably, but a majority of pieces call for repeats, which double the duration of those sections. This is a very rough calculation, but it more than suggests that a read-through of the full volume would take at least 24 hours.

⁸ "Warble their woodnotes wild" is in quotation marks in the original but no attribution is provided.

he writes that he selected the melodies “without bigoted devotion to the ancient, or fastidious contempt of modern composers.” Via Shakespeare, Dovaston also alludes to the capacity of music to produce compassion in the unrestful human soul more generally:

Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of Musick. Therefore, the Poet
Did feign, that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But musick, for the time, doth change his nature.⁹

Dovaston’s introduction as a whole speaks to both to the power of nature to calm human cruelty and to a desire for a more just future. Such rhetoric makes the inclusion of number 454, “The Marseilles [sic.] March,” unsurprising. There is an implication that the study of natural philosophy can yield a better understanding of human society—this is not an uncommon theme in the writings of Diderot, Rousseau, or Voltaire—yet there is also a more moderating message that the traditional facets of human culture ought not be abandoned entirely. This makes it equally unsurprising that Orpheus—musician and lawmaker, founder of human societal harmony, as we saw earlier through Vico—is mentioned on two separate occasions on this one page. As both a bridge between nature and society and an emblem of the ancient world, Orpheus can perhaps provide a counterpoint to the argument that progress toward a more just and egalitarian world order requires the abandonment of history.

This idea of ornithology—and scientific inquiry more broadly—as a *moral* pursuit also appears in Dovaston’s extensive correspondence with Bewick. In February 1825, Bewick writes to Dovaston:

I wonder whether my attempts will have any effect so as to make the youths of the present generation, pursue the lessons in the great book of nature so amply spread out before them, and to set them thinking & reflecting upon it—it stands in no need of dogmas & creeds to make them *clearly understand* & believe it—it is the only visible, & living, word of god & which may be perused with never ending wonder, generation after generation for unnumberable [sic.] centuries to come—I conceive that the present generation, of at least, the majority of

⁹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, act 5, scene 1.

mankind, are so blinded, & loaded, & cramped with prejudices, instilled in youth, & grown up with their years, that they cannot (I doubt) be removed—for they are become as inveterate almost as antipathies—and it would require a great effort of the reasoning power to get quit of the trammells imposed upon them—most of men do not reason—they only ruminatē.¹⁰

A few letters later, in the summer of the same year, Dovaston sends his “hints for Mr. Bewick’s improvement upon” the introduction to *History of British Birds*. A passage from this revised version of Bewick’s book reads as follows:

When I first undertook the *History of British Birds* my sole motive was to lead the minds of youth to the study of Natural History, the only and surest foundation on which true Religion can efficiently be implanted in the heart, as being the unquestioned & unalterable, as well as unerrour’d Book of the Diety [sic.]—My Writings were intended chiefly for children, & the more readily to allure their pliable, tho’ discursive [sic.], attention to the Great Truths of Creation, I illustrated them with figures delineated with all the Fidelity and animation I was able to impart to mere wood-cuts without colour: And as Instruction is of little avail without constant cheerfulness & occasional amusement, I interspersed the more serious studies with pieces of gaiety and humour, yet even in these seldom without an endeavour to illustrate some truth, or point some moral; so uniting with my ardent wish to improve the rising generation, the exercise of my art & profession by which I lived.¹¹

Through directing the attention of an open mind to the behaviours and general diversity of birds, one studies God, except in *living* rather than biblical form. This is both a practical instruction as to the inner mechanisms of the world, and an ethical instruction as to a *good* way to behave among both fellow humans and among the non-human members of one’s environment.

A shade of this sentiment can be read in Bewick’s appearance in *Jane Eyre*, though with the further nuance that such inquiry of nature can provide respite from the human world as an environment of corruption and cruelty—a *divorce* from nature:

¹⁰ Williams, 40–41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 54–55.

Having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement. Folds of scarlet drapery shut in my view to the right hand; to the left were clear panes of glass, protecting, but not separating me from the drear November day. At intervals, while turning over the leaves of my book, I studied the aspect of that winter afternoon. Afar, it offered a pale blank of mist and cloud; near, a scene of wet lawn and storm-beat shrub, with ceaseless rain sweeping away wildly before a long and lamentable blast.¹²

On a grey day, Jane escapes the disrespect of her cousins and then-guardians by hiding between a thick curtain and a window. On both sides, she is separated from her surroundings, holed up in safety. But her barrier to the human side is opaque while to the natural it is transparent. She retains the physical comfort of the constructed human space, but otherwise loses awareness of its existence, fascinated instead by the outside. One can see a metaphor here to her choice of Bewick's book. To read can be to distance oneself from the petty concerns of fleeting moments, and to instead lose oneself in the far away, the grand, or the otherwise more permanent and meaningful, yet this escapism is not to truly be elsewhere or to see elsewhere but rather to imagine it. It is a retreat into the self *as* a retreat outside to the distant other. In this case, that far away, that grand, and that more permanent and meaningful, is *this* natural history of Bewick's and, perhaps, by extension, Dovaston's as well:

I returned to my book—Bewick's *History of British Birds*: the letter-press thereof I cared little for, generally speaking; and yet there were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank. They were those which treat of the haunts of sea-fowl; of 'the solitary rocks and promontories' by them only inhabited; of the coast of Norway, studded with isles from its southern extremity, the Lindesness, or Naze, to the North Cape—

'Where the Northern Ocean, in vast whirls
Boils round the naked, melancholy isles
Of farthest Thule; and the Atlantic surge
Pours in among the stormy Hebrides.'

¹² Brontë, 64.

Nor could I pass unnoticed the suggestion of the bleak shores of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with ‘the vast sweep of the Arctic Zone, and those forlorn regions of dreary space,—that reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulation of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and concentrate the multiplied rigours of extreme cold.’ Of these death-white realms I formed an idea of my own; shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children’s brains, but strangely impressive.¹³

Brontë writes several times how little importance the youthful Jane assigned to Bewick’s text—purportedly much favouring his imagery—yet reveals just as much in the quoted passage above about the former as the latter. Though unconcerned with the text, Jane can’t help but be drawn into the descriptions of other cold and barren places as parallels to what she sees just outside the window of her house. Again, as with *Dovaston*, a remarkably global and diverse picture is drawn, wherein individuals appear only as unique shades of a whole.

For Jane, even such inhospitable landscapes as these seemed preferable to her presently intolerable human environment.

With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way. I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon. The breakfast-room door opened.¹⁴

And we’re sucked back into the fear and anxiety of Jane’s manufactured non-belonging, back into the oppression created by a deficiency of care, a lack of self-knowledge, and a refusal to look beyond oneself for any amount of truth or value.

This tension between cruelty and kindness, between devised cultures and organic environments, permeates Brontë’s novel. And this theme of escapism, or at least these cycles of incorporation within or separation from society and nature, is not dissimilar to those sentiments expressed by Bewick in *Dovaston*, either in their correspondence to each other, or in their respective works. Such sentiments permeate discourse in Early Music and New Music as well. In Early Music, one can see a turning away from a noisy, exhausting, manufactured reality of modernism, toward a richer, more organic and

¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

differentiated soundworld of the past. In New Music, too, one can find many attempts to detach from received culture and to produce a more perfect future through imitation of nature or of abstract physical or mathematical principles.

And yet the music in Dovaston's aviary doesn't only belong to him; it also belongs to those countless other musicians who made its compilation *possible*. And it is entangled with many more philosophical, historical, and artistic traditions besides even these more composerly contributors. All of these voices sit within the book, yet Dovaston's own looms quite a bit larger. His project shares many of those same underlying attachments, conscious desires, and dualisms I named in my own research question earlier in this dissertation, and as such perhaps warrants a similar approach of dismantling and rebuilding that I have followed over the past many pages. His impositions upon his sources are as deserving of a critical historical gaze as those sources as objects in their own right. All of this about Dovaston, Bewick, and Brontë, and about the former's aviary, as a book, is only to see this music through that one lens.

But how many of these melodies might be written down *only* here and in no other document? Given the extreme difficulty of identifying fragmented, anonymous, and/or otherwise sparsely labelled notation, it's pretty much impossible to know whether this is the case, but given the large number of anonymous pieces it also seems very likely. Do these melodies deserve a broader historical representation than merely what might be achieved via Dovaston's curation? Or should we really believe that Dovaston was a neutral medium of their own unique vitality? Surely he was subject to the same vagaries of historical subjectivity as we are now? Do we reproduce Dovaston's narrative or the many other narratives it compiles from a layer deeper than his present?

One can see a constellation of diverse subjectivities bound together in these 210 pages that will never be meaningfully represented in sounding music by a single way of playing or a single playing through. As in the music of Brian Ferneyhough, there is simply too much meaning in this notation for a performer to be a neutral conveyor of score to audience. And as in *One*, the nature of the source material precludes the possibility of a traditional methodology for making music in a historical way, as if it belongs only to one historical time and place. Yet what we *can* do is trace paths through this rich network of potentiality. And besides, it was only by designing my archival research along the lines of Ann Stoler's reflection upon the methodology and epistemology of postcolonial historiography that I was able to find and come to value

Dovaston's aviary as a significant object of music history. How could I then, in moving to use this document in sounding music, suddenly abandon the unique and powerful form of political judgment that so explicitly drives Stoler's work, which was exactly what drove me to her writing in the first place?

My album *The Aviary*, then, recorded with Stile Nu, is not only a recitation of Dovaston's aviary, or a specific critical historical treatment of it as a primary object of inquiry, but it also encompasses a much broader sedimentary construction of music notation, historiography, and composition. And as it is tied up in Dovaston's musical, scientific, and social ideology and critiques thereof, it is also tied up in historically-informed performance and contemporary composition as conceptual and methodological frameworks. Upon looking through Dovaston's aviary, these phenomena became indistinguishable for me, impossible to disentangle from each other. As such, all these rhetorical manoeuvres are woven into a simultaneous fabric of musical practice that is furthermore an idiosyncratic expression of my own personal history, knowledge, and judgment as a musician and a scholar as well. The fabric of my own aviary, then, is woven from a multitude of sources, some with ties to Dovaston's aviary, some with other ties to Dovaston, and some with no explicitly related provenance at all.

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A recording of my album, *The Aviary*, can be found at <https://carlodiaz.com/music/the-aviary>, and a full listen-through may be informative at this point.

Its track listing runs in numerical sequence from "Two" to "Ten," with the exception of "Two Again," which appears between "Eight" and "Nine." Some of these pieces appear for their first time in this context while others are adapted from earlier projects.

"Two" was originally a movement from a 2017 composition of mine called *Reuse Music*, which took examples of architectural salvage as inspiration for the contemporary musical use of fragmentary historical notation. In contrast to my later uses of fragments, as can be heard elsewhere in *The Aviary*, "Two" doesn't take a phenomenological approach but rather analogises music notation to physical building materials. The piece is based on a manuscript by the Neapolitan composer Pietro Marchitelli

from around the year 1700,¹⁵ and imagines a musical equivalent to dismantling an old building brick for brick and the reuse of those bricks to construct an entirely different building. In its simplest forms, this architectural practice is nothing more than an economical conservation or recycling of existing materials, but what becomes aesthetically notable from such practices is the frequent disjuncture between earlier and later architectural styles. The physical inconsistencies—imperfections, perhaps—of these older, weathered building materials can produce a type of conflict or contrast with modern design aesthetics, which often value a carefully manufactured sameness or consistency. When arranged in regular geometry and left unornamented—in a perfectly rectangular wall, for instance—the result ends up looking not like a single, uniform structure but rather a focused contemplation of innumerable textural variations within that overriding shape. This type of mild disjuncture—conflictual in some ways, complementary in others—is precisely what interests me in “Two.”

So like a builder dismantling a wall, I pull apart this manuscript by Marchitelli measure for measure. Once I have each measure isolated, I perform a very simple operation. I rearrange them according to the starting pitch of the basso continuo part, from lowest to highest. In the many cases where there are multiple measures with the same starting pitch, I determine an average pitch for the whole measure to use as a secondary data point. What this produces is a very basic overall form characterized by constant upward motion—an interesting effect in itself. There’s a frenetic kind of motion and energy to the piece, which I attempt to further accentuate by adding a gradual *accelerando ad infinitum*. It becomes one long, sweeping, upward motion—constructed of obviously historical materials yet in an obviously ahistorical style—to begin *The Aviary*.

In the lingering resonance of the fast, chaotic ending of “Two,” “Three” begins suddenly. Having described it in some detail in the introduction to this dissertation, I won’t dwell long upon it here. What I will do is share its full list of source materials, as it is the most diverse track on the album in this respect. In the score for “Three,” *every single note* can be traced back to one or more of the following sources:

- “Sei Barcarole Veneziane” [ca. 1785], anonymous;
#66623, Travis & Emery Music Bookshop, London.

¹⁵ MS 489 A-B, The Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library, Berkeley, CA.

— “...a very choice and excellent bundle of many beautiful & genuine compositions”

[ca. 1805], compiled by John F. M. Dovaston;

Add. MS 63818, British Library, London.

— “collection of tunes for German Flute” [ca. 1752], compiled by Robert Tubbs;

Add. MS 56487, British Library, London.

— Misc. volume labelled “Violino Principalo” [18th century], anonymous;

R.M.21.d.9 b1, British Library, London

Each excerpt from these manuscripts that appears in “Three” is anonymous and/or fragmentary in some way: a melody here, six bars of counterpoint there, an unlabelled four-bar bass line, and so forth. As described in the introduction, my interest in this piece lay in the phenomenology of notational fragments—in what potentialities, imaginings, or questions they instinctively stir in those who read them, and how they do or do not conform to typical ideas of music ontology, and do or do not allow for typical methodologies of historical performance. As in “Two,” these sources provide raw materials for the music that can be heard on *The Aviary*, but in this case the approach is much more situated in the moment-to-moment potentiality of each fragment rather than the result of an abstract linear process.

“Four” offers yet another approach, in this case by using just one archival document instead of many. It strives to present that source notation blankly—as closely as possible to what might be called ‘without interpretation.’ The original manuscript contains what appears to be an unfinished sketch of a composition for one or two instruments alongside basso continuo.¹⁶ It may perhaps be the start of an exercise rather than a whole composition, as the writing is extremely simple, generally only containing basic melodic sequences over whole-note bass movement in 4/4 time. There’s really no indication in the document that provides further information as to its intended completed form, so all I can say with clarity is that what I see on these pages is only a small subset of a more filled-in *something*.

¹⁶ Add. MS 14225, British Library, London, 99.

Yet it's long enough in duration that a performance of it can fill the same amount of time as a short movement. So, in "Four," this fragment is performed as plainly as possible. The idea here is to present music as if merely an audible form of notation; to convey as clearly as possible no more and no less than exactly what is on the page. In a way, this makes it a kind of behind-the-scenes moment for *The Aviary*. It exhibits for the listener the basic nature of the entire album's source materials. Yet in music there's a strange phenomenon in which incompleteness is actually extremely difficult to convey. A silence between two notes doesn't necessarily sound like a moment in which something else should happen. It simply becomes a longer breath or pause or separation between two things that might otherwise have been shorter. Whatever is played, however sparse, becomes the totality of the music. So perhaps "Four" sounds like a barren, incomplete fragment or perhaps it just sounds like simple, pretty music. Or maybe one can hear this tension at play.

Moving onward, "Five" represents a significant departure from the rest of *The Aviary* thus far in that it's not based on a fragment or an anonymous composition. Simply put, it's an arrangement of the "Kyrie" from Antoine Brumel's *Missa 'et ecce terrae motus,'* composed around 1570.¹⁷ Aside from adapting it to a six-part baroque orchestra from its original version for 12-part choir, "Five" significantly increases its usual tempo, though not to the same point of chaos as "Nine" does for Vivaldi. In this case, the new speed more gently transforms—perhaps—its solemn reverence into a vigorous dance.

To situate this further, it's worth stepping back at this moment to suggest that one of my overall formal concepts for *The Aviary* was to provide a succession of movements that can each be seen as presenting a component concept of a larger rhetorical gesture that only reveals itself across their composite. Each movement can be understood to say, perhaps, a single sentence within a paragraph, or a single paragraph within an essay. Here, in "Five," is a reminder that the decisions one makes about *how* to play a piece can have much more of an effect upon what it sounds like than anything on the page. By merely speeding up, the entire piece changes form and style. This principle holds true for all of the music in *The Aviary*, just as it does for all notated music, but my hope is that isolating and centring it in "Five" makes this come across more clearly.

¹⁷ Antoine Brumel, *Missa 'et ecce terrae motus'* [ca. 1570].

In “Six,” we return to fragments and anonymi in what is another relatively simple and more procedural piece. Procedural composition is a practice in which a basic process or formula is applied to a given set of notational source materials in order to produce the final musical result. In this case, I simply place two separate excerpts in simultaneity, one on a violin, the other on a cello.¹⁸ There’s no other operation than that, yet the two line up remarkably well in terms of phrase length and harmonic patterning simply because of general consistencies of formal and stylistic conventions at their respective times of composition. There is the occasional dissonance or other oddity, but for the most part “Six” just sounds, as does “Four,” like nice music.

“Seven” is a simple keyboard piece, marked ‘Largo’ in its source but not labelled with any other title or with any composer’s name, played in a beautiful yet otherwise unremarkable historically-informed style. It is also, in fact, the only moment in *The Aviary* in which a section of John Dovaston’s aviary, number 443, is played.

¹⁸ The first excerpt is from Add. MS 34074-34076, British Library, London; on the 6th to last page of the basso book, there is a mirror-image impression of notation from a previous page that is no longer in the document. The second excerpt is from Add. MS 56487, British Library, London, 20; it is much more easily legible than the first excerpt, and is labeled “#37, ‘Sonata.’”

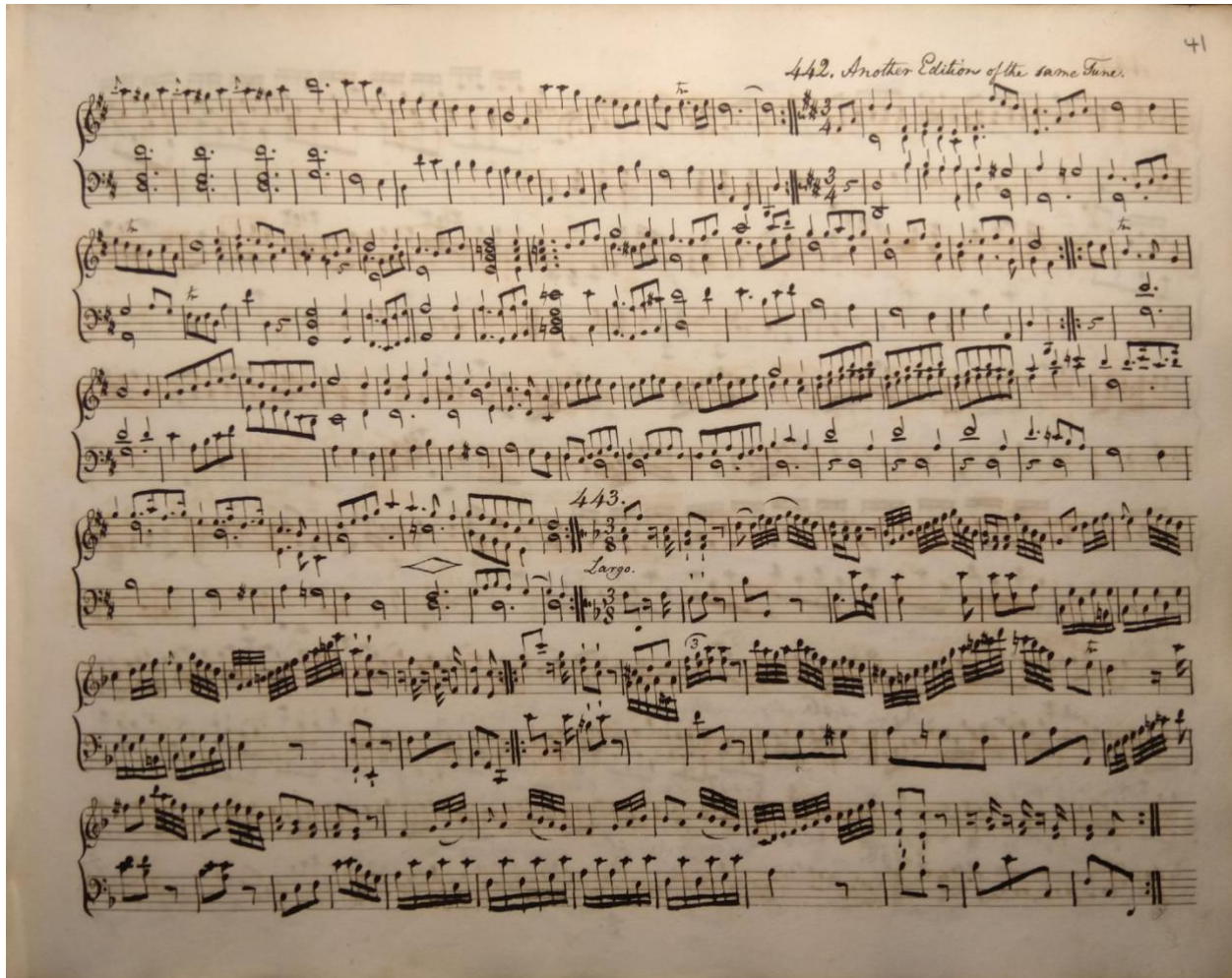


Figure 6.7: A performance of piece number 443 of Dovaston's aviary, shown here, is the track called "Seven" in my album, *The Aviary*.

It would be difficult to overstate just how much vastly more potential remains untapped within this document than I've realized in my own aviary, regardless of the historical or artistic framework applied. Of this enormous 240-page mass of notation, I've used only half of a page in 20 minutes of music. And these 20 minutes hardly even represent a significant fraction of all that might be done with this half page. Aside from the innumerable *interpretive* variations that might be discovered from one performance to the next, I could have carried out any number of other curatorial treatments. I might have recorded the entire book on one instrument in one take, or on several instruments in several takes. I might have excerpted a brief passage from somewhere in the middle, compiled a group of numbers all from the same indicated national origin, or compiled a grouping meant to capture a diversity or cross-section of these origins, or

excerpted all of the arrangements of well-known operatic or larger ensemble music. Or, in a more compositional approach, I might have tried somehow to compress this huge volume into a shorter timespan through some creative form of collage, or I might have sought to showcase various forms of melodic, harmonic, or formal affinity across the book's full contents.

But again, each of these approaches would leave Dovaston's compilation intact as a discrete object, separated from its context, from my context, and from the many overlapping temporalities and geographies that come together within it. Other approaches might bring in other musical materials that in various other ways draw out these sedimentary qualities of Dovaston's book. They might cause his own historical character to confront other moments in time, other individuals, other cultures and places, which can be done, again, for innumerable reasons and to innumerable ends, whether scholarly, artistic, both, or somewhere in between. By choosing only one small excerpt of notation, yet naming my own project after Dovaston's compilation in its entirety, I mean to press very directly on this impossibility of comprehensive presentation and to defy the norm of treating it alone, cut off from its own environment, history, and legacy. So while "Seven" is perhaps somewhat blank in interpretation, perhaps this blankness enables this project as a whole to soak up even more rhetorical complexity. By denying number 443 its own capacity to hold and convey meaning for Dovaston's aviary, attention is all the more directed to its adjacents, outsides, unknowns, and unknowables.

After "Seven" we retrace old paths to the end of the album. "Eight" is more or less a repeat of "Three," only with a few of the elongated arpeggios slightly shortened this time and a handful of other cosmetic adjustments, including a key change near the end as well as a brief coda to finish the piece. After this comes "Two again," which is exactly that. The exact same audio file of "Two" is replayed. These repeats serve some of the usual purposes of musical repeats: to offer another opportunity to listen to the same thing again and experience how the intervening music has changed one's impression of it. Furthermore, this particular order to the repeats, with the reappearance of "Three" preceding that of "Two," creates a symmetrical form within *The Aviary* as a whole. This symmetry has the effect of producing a self-contained form in "Two" through "Two again," as if these eight tracks are their own independent multi-movement composition sitting in front of "Nine" and "Ten," the final two pieces of

The Aviary, which in turn come across as a coda, or perhaps like a bit of something extra tacked onto the outside of the contemplation of Dovaston—an afterlife to *The Aviary*, perhaps.

“Nine” and “Ten” are my treatments of Vivaldi’s *Quattro Stagioni*, as addressed earlier in this dissertation. In the abstract, as mentioned above, each is an experiment in the interpretive agility of classical performance, the ontological malleability of musical works, and the epistemological uncertainty of historical sound. Here, at the end of, or perhaps after, *The Aviary*, they take on additional functions, both aesthetic and rhetorical.

Aesthetically, they offer a kind of cathartic moment. Though a symmetrical, recursive form separates “Nine” from its predecessors, it comes in the moment-to-moment progression of the album as very much an extension of the frenetic end of “Two again.” The chaotic energy of this reuse of my earlier *Reuse Music* is transferred directly into, and perhaps begins slowly to be released across, the noise of Vivaldi’s summer thunderstorm, which then gradually dissipates into the still extremely fast but now quiet and gentle “Ten.” “Ten” itself may then feel something like an undying resonance of these final moments of voracity from “Two again” and “Nine”—the storm rolling away into the distant horizon, perhaps. And this vast echo hangs in the air for full *minutes* longer than these two pieces even lasted themselves. There’s not much of an end to “Ten,” either, even after more than five whole minutes, a full quarter of the entire length of *The Aviary*. The harmony does fully resolve, allowing “Ten” to claim adherence to Vivaldi’s original score—as I maintain it does—but the crazed arpeggiation of the harpsichord doesn’t stop until the entire sound of the ensemble just evaporates in an instant.

This aesthetic trajectory from the symmetrical end of the unit formed by “Three” through “Two again,” to the final vanishing moment of “Ten,” shapes the concluding rhetoric of *The Aviary*. Nothing is really concluded at all. What might become clear is that the overall style—performative and compositional—up until the end of “Two again” has hardly even scratched the surface of the artistic potential in its raw materials. If Vivaldi can sound so unfamiliar, how much further similar capacity for aural diversity might Dovaston’s and other notational contributors to *The Aviary* contain? Drawn into phenomenological questions about anonymous notational fragments, I ceded previously held ground on the interpretive questions from before. There is simply *too much* that can be done here.

This music has not perfectly conveyed its nominal object of inquiry, that huge compilation of Dovaston's, but it has conjured a peculiar *illusion*—if not several—around, about, from, and of it. It has done so by carefully weaving around received hermeneutical, ontological, and epistemological concepts and procedures in order to avoid *capture* by the traditional disciplinaries of historical performance or contemporary composition, of Early Music or New Music. In confronting the *aphasia* produced by historical artifacts that are impossible to wedge into pre-existing taxonomies, it has had to conjure a new methodology for their use as objects simultaneously of a fossilised pastness and of a still-potent anticipation.

These qualities of historicity and imagination that I detail throughout this description of *The Aviary* are, to return to the language from my research question, among what I believe to be the key “attachments” and “desires” that fuel interest in “Early Music” and “New Music,” respectively.¹⁹ But the methodology through which I've carried these “impulses” into *The Aviary* is one that has also sought to divorce them from what I previously implied to be their *essential* dualisms: “mind and body, subject and object, thinking and doing, fact and opinion, theory and practice.” Through my work on this project, I have found that these dualisms are, happily, not essential to musical sound, nor to the idea that musical sound can either represent the real past or conjure a different future. Early Music and New Music are instead *disciplines*, which—to allude to Michel Foucault's sense of the word—*enclose* and *enforce* particular modes of musical sound production according to some type of *moral judgment*. Or to use Bernard Harcourt's framework, they are instead *illusions* of musical practice, just as my use of Dovaston's compilations and my broader epistemological and ontological frameworks for understanding them are *illusions* themselves. What the illusions of Early Music and New Music do is separate the past from the present, or the practice of reproducing past sound from the practice of inventing new sound. At least for the present moment, this separation doesn't seem *right*—to use the moral sense of that word, with both

¹⁹ In full, my full research question is: “How can the underlying attachments and conscious desires of musicians in the impulse of collective memory, taste for the past, will to make it new, and eagerness for novelty, be extended still forwards beyond the dualism of mind and body, subject and object, thinking and doing, fact and opinion, theory and practice, that at once constitute and render into paradox the disciplines of Early Music and New Music?” See Chapter Two.

Foucault and Harcourt in mind. As we have seen via the writing of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, John Locke, Ann Laura Stoler, Stephen Wright, and Giambattista Vico, the historical and the invented, the real and the imagined, are often phenomenologically inseparable. And these authors have each offered valuable reasons and strategies for both their own disciplines and ours as musicians to take this inseparability on board as an advantage, instead of attempting to avoid it, hinder it, or hide it as a disadvantage. It may well be that the far future will warrant a different approach, but for now the illusion I present in this dissertation seems appropriate.

This methodology has been one of finding a way to drop the segregation of self and other—of me from what I study, of what I invent from how the cultures around me invent me, of my present from the past of the artifacts I study—without losing my ability to make music as a practice of producing and communicating knowledge. I've sought to allow instinct back into historical methodology, yet without falling back onto a naïve idea of personal tastes and habits as either self-created or self-contained. I don't know if I can proclaim that I've fully achieved something akin to Vico's *poetic wisdom* in musical practice—whether historical, contemporary, or somewhere across or between these hopefully now bygone poles. But I do know that I've opened up a new field for myself, and I hope that others might join me here sometime soon and help explore further around its unfamiliar edges.