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Music at Royal Country Residences in England during the Reigns of George I and George II

During the eighteenth century a fascination developed in Britain for the countryside which was represented not only through the continued desire of the royal family and increasing wish of the aristocracy to spend part of the year in the country and part of the year in town, but also through the broadening interests of the upper and middle-classes in botany and landscape gardening.¹ The arts, including painting or musical works, such as Handel's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* with its vivid descriptions of the English countryside, also began to show an increased focus on English rural landscapes.² The majority of country estates were owned by the aristocracy or upper-class gentlemen, who either used them as a permanent home (with a temporary home in London) or as temporary country residences for hunting and/or to escape town, often, but not exclusively, in the summer or autumn. Pleasure Gardens, however, also became popular in London during the eighteenth century and for an admission charge provided parks for the general public to enjoy whilst offering musical and theatrical entertainments.³

This article concentrates on music at the summer residences used by the royal family during the reigns of George I (r. 1714–1727) and George II (r. 1727–1760). Throughout this period the main London residence of the royal family was St James's Palace, which had been built between 1531 and 1536 by Henry VIII. However, both George I and II also had a range of royal palaces and houses available to them in the country: Hampton Court Palace (built by Cardinal Woolsey in 1514 and later passed to Henry VIII), the palaces at Kew and Richmond (hunting lodges), Windsor Castle, and Kensington Palace, all of which are situated upstream of the Thames to the west of London, as well as Westminster and St James's Palace. George I and II each had different preferences at different times about which country residence they

1 For an overview of English cultural life during the eighteenth-century see John Brewer: *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, New York 1997; for landscape gardening in the Georgian Britain see David Jacques: *Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature*, London 1990.

2 See Matthew Gardner: "L'Allegro, Il Penseroso und Il Moderato: Text und musikalische Bildersprache in Händels Arien", in Thomas Seedorf (ed.): *Händels Arien. Form, Affekt, Kontext. Bericht über die Symposien 2008 bis 2010*, Laaber 2013, pp. 135–153.

3 The two main pleasure gardens in London were Vauxhall Gardens and Ranelagh Gardens. For the history of Vauxhall Gardens see David Coke / Alan Borg: *Vauxhall Gardens: A History*, New Haven 2011.

preferred, sometimes using them as summer residences (taking the entire court with them), sometimes visiting only briefly, and on occasion neglecting them completely, all of which had an effect on the musical life of the houses and palaces. Queen Caroline, the consort of George II, was also influential in court life, supporting the arts, and persuing interests in music, horticulture, architecture, philosophy and literature, as well following the work of artists and sculptors.⁴ Her eldest son, Frederick Prince of Wales, was additionally a keen musician and performances of music took place at his country residences.

The Residences of George I and George II

When Queen Anne died in 1714 and the English throne passed to Georg, Elector of Hanover, who then became George I of Great Britain, the main London residence of the royal family moved from Kensington Palace (which Queen Anne had favoured) back to St James's Palace.⁵ George I's preferred summer residence in England, like Queen Anne in the late part of her reign, was Hampton Court and he quickly completed further building work which Queen Anne had initiated, remodelling a number of rooms for his son, Prince George, who was later to become George II.⁶ A key difference in the use royal residences during the reign of George I to previous monarchs, was that he spent six out of thirteen summers away from England during his reign, visiting his electorate in Hanover, rather than making use of the royal country residences in England.⁷ George I's interest in Hampton Court only lasted until around 1718. In 1716, Prince George, later George II, had spent the summer at Hampton Court whilst George I was in Hanover, and in 1717 family issues between father and son came to a head when the Prince set up his own summer court at the hunting lodge, Richmond Lodge.⁸ In 1718, George I retaliated by making his summer court at Hampton court better than ever – he restored the Tudor tennis court and converted the Great Hall into

4 See Joanna Marschner: *Queen Caroline: Cultural Politics at the Early Eighteenth-Century Court*, New Haven 2014.

5 Edward Impey: *Kensington Palace: The Official Illustrated History*, London 2003, p. 54. Queen Anne also showed a preference for Windsor Castle, before George I and II turned their attention to Hampton Court; see James Anderson Winn: *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts*, Oxford 2014, p. 194 and John Martin Robinson: *Windsor Castle: The Official Illustrated History*, London 2001, p. 55.

6 Simon Thurley, *Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History*, London 2003, pp. 246–248 and 259–267.

7 Thurley, *Hampton Court*, p. 245.

8 See Ragnhild Hatton: *George I*, rev. Peter S. Hatton and Paul G. Hatton, New Haven 1978, rev. ed. 2001, pp. 201–206; Andrew C. Thompson: *George II: King and Elector*, London 2011, pp. 51–59, 64f.; and John Cloake: *Palaces and Parks of Richmond and Kew: Vol. II Richmond Lodge and the Kew Palaces*, West Sussex 1996, p. 31.

a theatre for the summer. Seven plays were performed, including works by Richard Steele and William Shakespeare, however operas or masques were not part of the programme.⁹ George I spent the summers of 1719 and 1720 in Hanover, after which Hampton Court was essentially abandoned.¹⁰

When George II came to the throne in 1727, Hampton Court had consequently been neglected for almost 10 years and the new King quickly showed renewed interest in the palace taking the full court there on 2 July 1728. It also became a favoured summer residence of Queen Caroline, who spent summers there when the King was in Hanover.¹¹ Yet after 1737 George II never returned to Hampton with the full court and rarely visited, suggesting that the driving force behind the King's visits before 1737 was Queen Caroline, who died in November that year. Soon after 1737 it was even possible for the public to visit the house by paying a small fee to the housekeeper and in 1742 the first guidebook appeared.¹² The Queen's death also required her household to be dissolved, meaning that Hampton Court was too large as a summer residence for George II alone; consequently from 1738 he used Kensington Palace as his main English summer residence, taking the court there from May to October.¹³ George II also spent some time at Richmond Lodge where he built a larger house shortly after 1727 and settled the estate on Queen Caroline.¹⁴ The house was comparably small, could not accommodate the full court and was therefore only used as a hunting lodge. As with Kensington Palace, Queen Caroline invested a considerable amount of energy and money in developing the gardens at Richmond, which were unfortunately not completed before her death.¹⁵ To summarise, during the reigns of George I and II, the royal family essentially spent about two thirds of the year at St James's Palace and the rest of the year (usually the summer months) at Kensington Palace, Windsor, Hampton Court or Hanover. Which of the residences were preferred differed under George I and II, as well as after Queen Caroline's death.

9 Lucy Worsley / David Souden: *Hampton Court Palace: The Official Illustrated History*, London et al. 2005, pp. 86–88 and Thurley, *Hampton Court*, pp. 259–266.

10 Thurley, *Hampton Court*, pp. 265–269.

11 Worsley / Souden, *Hampton Court Palace*, p. 89.

12 This was published as the second volume of George Bickham's *Deliciae Britannicae*, London 1742, *ibid.*, p. 93.

13 Impey, *Kensington Palace*, p. 75.

14 Cloake, *Palaces and Parks of Richmond and Kew II*, pp. 32 f.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 43 f. For Caroline's interest in gardening, see also Marschner, *Queen Caroline*, pp. 23–43.

Music under George I and II

The majority of musical activity at the summer courts of George I and George II appears to have either been church music performed by the Chapel Royal, music required for dancing at balls provided by the King's Band (also known as the Royal Musicians), or music made by members of the royal family themselves, especially Princess Anne (a pupil of Handel) and Frederick Prince of Wales (a keen cellist). There was no theatre building at any of royal family's summer residences and there is no evidence to suggest that any operas or masques were performed for the monarchs.¹⁶ As mentioned above, in 1718 George I converted the Great Hall at Hampton Court into a theatre, but this was for plays rather than opera. Both George I and George II appear to have had little private interest in music and the arts – they both supported opera in London offering financial backing and regularly attending performances (especially the work of Handel) and naturally they wanted the best possible music for state occasions, however they did not increase the provision for secular music making within their own royal households. It was instead Queen Caroline, both as Princess of Wales and as Queen Consort, who actively supported music, ensuring that balls were hosted, supporting singers and performers by inviting them to court to give private performances, as well as providing her children with a good musical education, by regularly attending the opera (often without the King, but with the Princesses), and purchasing music for her extensive library.¹⁷ In London secular music making at court was provided for by the King's Band and was generally reserved for state occasions when they joined with the Chapel Royal to perform odes for the New Year and King's Birthday, as well as for orchestrally accompanied service music. The band was usually required to give around 10–15 performances per year and the balls were the only occasions that they played alone (without the Chapel Royal) – although in Queen Anne's reign they were required to play when she dined in public.¹⁸ Further secular music making that took place at court was done in private and consequently little information is available. It was, however, common practice that new Italian opera singers visited the royal family to give a private recital, partly in the hope of gaining their attendance at as many public performances in the London theatres as possible, such as Francesca Cuzzoni (1727)

16 In eighteenth-century England there was no court opera, however commercial opera in the London theatres was supported by George I and II by means of a royal bounty, as well as attendance at performances.

17 Peggy Ellen Daub: *Music at the Court of George II (r. 1727–1760)*, Diss. Cornell University 1985, pp. 43–48; Matthew Gardner: "Queen Caroline, Music and Handel Revisited" (forthcoming).

18 Daub, *Music at the Court of George II*, pp. 172–213.

and Anna Maria Strada del Pò (1729).¹⁹ Most of the time this happened in London, but occasionally also at royal country residences. The children of George II and Queen Caroline also received a good musical education, with Handel serving as teacher to the royal princesses, and he was therefore a regular visitor at court.²⁰

The Chapel Royal in the Country

The main musical activity in the country was centred around the Chapel Royal, the institution which provides worship and music for the monarch as head of the Anglican church, and which also refers to a set of specific buildings. Chapels existed (and mostly continue to do so) at St James's Palace, Hampton Court, Kensington Palace and Windsor Castle. When George I or II went to Windsor or Hampton Court, they took the chapel Royal with them, often staying for 2–4 months, returning in time for the winter season which began around the end of October.²¹ In the reign of George II, the court always returned to London by 30 October to celebrate the King's Birthday.²² In general, the Chapel Royal saw a period of decline under George I and II, both of whom showed little interest in Anglican traditions. George II did not attend services regularly, although he was usually present on the first Sunday of the month to fulfil a requirement of the Act of Succession.²³ Queen Caroline, however, was more interested in religious matters, which is also evident in the fact that after her death, the weekly services and their music at the Chapel Royal slipped into further decline.²⁴

19 *The Daily Journal*, 24 January 1727, cited in Donald Burrows et al. (ed.): *George Frederic Handel Collected Documents*, Cambridge 2013–, vol. 2, p. 97 and *The Norwich Gazette*, 18 October 1729, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 314 f. See also Daub, *Music at the Court of George II*, pp. 85 f.

20 See for example Papers of the Countess of Portland, GB-Lbl Egerton MS 1717, f. 78; translated from French in Burrows et al. (ed.), *Handel Collected Documents*, vol. 1, p. 648 and vol. 2, pp. 247 f. Frederick Prince of Wales received his education as a cellist in Hanover, however two paintings commissioned by him in London from Philip Mercier suggest that he played with his sisters once in London. Both paintings known as "The Music Party", adopt the same pose, but with different backdrops – one at Hampton Court, one at Kew. See Philip Mercier, "The Music Party" [Kew], oil on canvas, 1733, National Portrait Gallery London, NPG 1556, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw00125/The-Music-Party> and Philip Mercier, "The Music Party" [Hampton Court], oil on canvas, 1733, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 402414 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/402414/the-music-party-frederick-prince-of-wales-with-his-three-eldest-sisters>.

21 Donald Burrows: *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, Oxford 2005, pp. 457–462.

22 H. Diack Johnstone: *The Life and Work of Maurice Greene (1696–1755)*, Diss. Oxford University 1967, p. 153.

23 Johnstone, *The Life and Work of Maurice Greene*, p. 148.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 148 f.

In the first half of the eighteenth century the Chapel Royal usually comprised of 26 gentlemen (ten of which were priests) and ten choristers in addition to organists, composers, a master of the children, a lutenist, violist and an organ-blower.²⁵ Which members of the Chapel Royal were on duty at which time was designated by a rota with roughly half the members on duty at any one time – most members held similar positions at the London cathedrals or St George’s Chapel Windsor and divided their time between both posts; for example, Maurice Greene by 1736 held the posts of Organist of St Paul’s Cathedral, Composer and Organist to the Chapel Royal and Master of the King’s Music simultaneously. Whilst George I and George II were visiting Hampton Court, members of the Chapel Royal were therefore required to be present in order to lead chapel services for the King, evidence of this can be found in the cheque books of the Chapel Royal, where expenses were paid for members of the Chapel Royal to travel between London and Hampton Court or Windsor – usually they were away for around two to four months in the summer and for shorter periods throughout the year as the need arose. For example, in 1731 the Chapel Royal were travelling for an average of 143 days and in 1737, the last year that George II took the court to Hampton Court, for an average of around 112 days based on two rotas of 62 days and 50 days, which can be most clearly seen in the organists’ rota – some members, however, were present on both shifts which amounted to 110 days of traveling.²⁶ Unfortunately there is no surviving evidence of what sort of repertoire was performed by the Chapel Royal at summer residences, probably anthems and service settings from their London repertoire with organ, viol and lute accompaniment, but not orchestral accompanied works as the King’s Musicians were not usually present for services. From 1738 to 1760 when George II used Kensington Palace as his summer residence only the priests of the Chapel Royal were required to attend, and services in the chapel were consequently without a choir.²⁷

The King’s Musicians

Not only the Chapel Royal but also the King’s musicians travelled to Hampton Court and Windsor in the reigns of George I and II, however their only activity there was usually to provide music for dancing at balls. No court odes were performed and there is no evidence to suggest that they performed with the Chapel Royal at Sunday services – although this

²⁵ Burrows, *Chapel Royal*, pp. 442–452.

²⁶ Johnstone, *The Life and Work of Maurice Greene*, pp. 153f.; Burrows, *Chapel Royal*, p. 459.

²⁷ Johnstone, *The Life and Work of Maurice Greene*, p. 154.

may have been possible, if the band happened to be there on a Sunday.²⁸ As with the Chapel Royal there were occasions when George I and II made brief visits to Hampton Court or Windsor at times of the year other than the summer, in the winter of 1718–19 for example, balls took place at Hampton Court where the King's Band was present.²⁹ A further example of musical occasions which involved the King's Band, were the royal water parties during the reign of George I. These took place on the Thames in the summer, with a second boat full of musicians following the King and playing music for him – the most well-known example, and the only one for which evidence of the music performed survives, was in July 1717, with music by Handel.³⁰ None of the royal summer residences were, however, directly involved in this event, with the King beginning his evening on the water at Whitehall.

Frederick, Prince of Wales

While it is evident that George I and George II showed little interest in the performance of masques, operas or odes at their courts while in London or the country, Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, son of George II, presents a different picture having set up a permanent country home at Cliveden in 1737 and where in 1740 two English masques were staged. That this was possible grew partly out of family problems between Frederick and his father, the King. Relations between Frederick and George II were never good and the Prince had been left behind in Hanover when his father came to England as Prince of Wales in 1714. Frederick therefore did not arrive in England for the first time until December 1728. George II disapproved of Frederick's lifestyle – he gambled, could at times be vulgar, showed little interest in wars and battles and offered too much support to the arts, taking after his mother. Frederick's growing popularity among Britons and his close association with the Tory party, instead of the Whigs, also displeased his father.³¹ The relationship between father and son went from bad to worse in February 1737 when Frederick (during a prolonged period of George II's illness) requested that his allowance be raised to 100,000 pounds per year, the amount his father had received as

28 Daub, *Music at the Court of George II*, pp. 196 f.

29 *Ibid.*, and pp. 196 f. Visits to Windsor were generally infrequent under George I and II, however from the 1760s George III used the residence on a more regular basis, see John Martin Robinson: *Windsor Castle: The Official Illustrated History*, London 2001, pp. 55–83.

30 Christopher Hogwood: *Handel: Water Music & Music for the Royal Fireworks*, Cambridge 2005, p. 9.

31 See Kimerly Rorsach: *Frederick Prince of Wales (1707–1751) as Patron of the Visual Arts: Princely Patriotism and Political Propaganda*, Diss. Yale University 1985, pp. 27 f.; see also John van der Kiste: *King George II and Queen Caroline*, Stroud 1997, p. 154 and Thompson, *George II*, pp. 111–122.

Prince of Wales, to be drawn from the civil list in order to help cover his debts and expenses. After a long process, 50,000 per year was settled on Frederick for the rest of his life.³²

On 27 April 1736 Frederick had married Augusta of Saxe-Gotha in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace.³³ In 1737 the relationship with his parents came to a head in the events surrounding the birth of the Prince's first child. Whilst staying at Hampton Court with his parents in July 1737, it was clear that the baby was coming, the Prince forced the Princess to endure a 24 km carriage journey back to St James's Palace without telling his parents so that they would not be present at the birth, going against their express wishes and royal protocol. As a result of his actions, he was ordered out of St James's Palace, taking his family first to Kew – a house he had bought in 1730 to be further away from his parents whilst visiting Richmond.³⁴ Eventually he settled with his family at Cliveden, a country house which the Prince had begun renting a few months earlier in order to be even further away from his parents (Kew was by 1737 too close to Richmond).³⁵ Cliveden therefore became not a summer residence, but the permanent home of Frederick Prince of Wales from 1737 and he lived there with his family more as a county gentleman than as the heir to the throne, making the house a royal country residence that came into existence as a result of strained family relations. At Cliveden there was no Chapel Royal and there did not need to be as it was not a royal residence of the King; however, the Prince, being a keen musician as well as follower and supporter of opera, ensured there was regular musical entertainment. From his arrival in England in 1728 Frederick had supported the Italian composer and oboist Giuseppe Sammartini, who from 1736, after Frederick's wedding, was appointed music master to his wife Princess Augusta and later their children – a post he retained until his death in 1750. In 1740 Frederick commissioned two masques to be performed at Cliveden as part of the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the ascension of the house Hanover and the third birthday of Frederick's daughter Princess Augusta – one by Sammartini on *The Judgment of Paris* and one by Thomas Arne on the story of *Alfred*. Both works reflect opposition politics and the political inclinations of Frederick, presenting an allegorical representation of the Prince – Alfred is depicted as a benevolent, kind king who supports civil liberty and was elected by his subjects (in contrast to George II) and *The Judgment of Paris* presents the choice made by Paris between three women who offer him either political power (by making him King), skill and wisdom in battle (which is what

32 Thompson, *George II*, p. 117 and pp. 119f.

33 At the service a new anthem, *Sing unto God, ye Kingdoms of the Earth* by Handel was performed, as was also the case for the wedding of Princess Anne to William of Orange in 1734.

34 Susanne Groom/Lee Prosser: *Kew Palace: The Official Illustrated History*, London 2006, pp. 45 f.

35 James Crathorne: *Cliveden: The Palace and the People*, London 1995, pp. 52–55.

George II wanted for Frederick), or the love of the most beautiful woman in the world – Paris chooses love, which is what Frederick had done by doing what was best for his family, rather than following the wishes of his father. Both stories are an allegory both to Frederick and to the British public who were facing similar political choices in the 1730s and 1740s.³⁶ The pastoral setting in which the *Judgment of Paris* plays out was perhaps also an ideal subject for the country estate of Frederick. Both works require a lavish orchestra and Frederick must have obtained some of the best musicians and singers from London, probably through Arne and Sammartini, to perform the works. Sammartini's masque was not performed in London, Arne, however, took his masque to the theatres performing it in revised versions in 1741, 1745 and several times in the 1750s, 60s and 70s.³⁷

The Duke of Chandos

Outside the royal family, music making at country estates also happened on a regular basis, although few could afford to form an establishment of professionals to rival the royal court. One example is the estate of James Brydges, who from 1719 became the first Duke of Chandos, and between 1718 and 1720 was one of the richest men in England, and owned Canons House and Park, to the North of London – today the park and estate church are all that remain, the house having been demolished in the eighteenth century. The Duke was a lover of music and Canons Park was the scene of much musical and artistic activity, especially in the years 1717–1719 when Handel, along with the poet Alexander Pope, were frequent guests of the Duke who had offered them his patronage. For the Duke Handel wrote ten anthems, and a setting of the Te Deum and Jubilate, all of which were performed in the church on the estate. Additionally, he also produced two theatrical works – the pastoral masque *Acis and Galatea* in 1718 and the masque-like oratorio *Esther* in c. 1719, both using musicians from London for the private performances. From around 1720 the Duke lost most of his fortune through bad investments and went into obscurity, consequently his patronage and lavish support of music ceased.

36 For details of the allegorical and political associations of both works see Michael John Burden: *Garrick, Arne and the Masque of Alfred: A Case Study in National, Theatrical, and Musical Politics*, Lewiston 1994; and Kenneth A. McLeod: *Judgment and Choice: Politics and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century Masques*, Diss. McGill University 1996.

37 For details of these versions see Burden, *Garrick, Arne and the Masque of Alfred*, pp. 37–79.

Conclusion

Evidence of music at the country residences of George I and George II is relatively scarce, being largely a private affair in comparison to some other European courts and summer residences, where, for example, theatres were built to provide entertainment for the court. Both monarchs seem to have shown little personal interest in opera, music and the arts at their own summer courts, but were nevertheless prepared to support such activities through patronage and attendance at opera performances in London as a political gesture. Princess and later Queen Caroline encouraged music in London and whilst visiting country residences between 1714 and 1737. Those who were interested in music making at court, such as Frederick Prince of Wales or the Duke of Chandos, were forced to initiate musical activities themselves outside the confines of the royal court. Music making at Canons House, at the court of Frederick, Prince of Wales, as well as at other country houses belonging to the gentry would merit further investigation. Archival research into the activities of singers and instrumentalists, and their movements would also be worthwhile and may help to establish more about what might have been performed and by who in country houses both in and outside the British royal family during the early eighteenth century.

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