

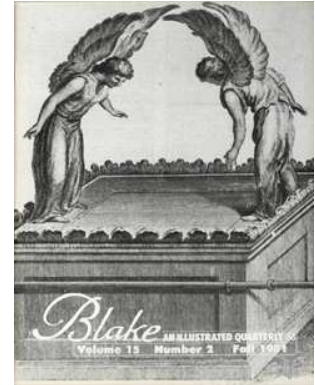
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

M I N U T E
P A R T I C U L A R

The Music of the Ancients

Peter Davidson

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 15, Issue 2, Fall 1981, pp. 98-100



Adrian Mitchell chose the texts, and his emphasis on *Experience* and the prophetic books reflects what is usually thought of as modern taste in Blake. The music was originally composed at Adrian Mitchell's request for his *Tyger* (1971), "a stage show in celebration of the life and works of William Blake," and Mitchell writes that what had impressed him about Mike Westbrook's music was its combination of "earthiness and fire." These qualities, with much bold and inventive musicianship, are strongly apparent in this valuable addition to Blake discography.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

THE MUSIC OF THE ANCIENTS

Peter Davidson

When one reads that the occupations of Samuel Palmer and his friends at Shoreham were "literature, and art, and ancient music,"¹ curiosity is aroused by the last of these activities, as it is the one about which the least is known.

From his youth, Palmer was both a singer and a violinist² and Francis Finch had considerable skill as a pianist and counter-tenor. Thus, it is not remarkable to discover that the Ancients passed their evenings with such contemporary songs as Moore's *Irish Melodies* (Finch's rendition of "The Minstrel Boy" was especially remembered)³, although the vision of Palmer and Calvert walking through Shoreham to Palmer's singing of "The British Grenadiers" places a heavier demand upon the imagination. (Presumably Palmer sang the older version of the tune, with a rising phrase and a turn for the words "none that can compare").⁴

Another musical enterprise of the Ancients has been recorded:

But the favourite haunt was a wild lane near Shoreham in Kent, flanked on either side with great old beech trees; it was hedged in by their spreading roots in the wildest contortions. Some years before it had been the scene of a murder, and while in its pristine wildness and grandeur it was most admirably adapted as the theatre for the enactment of some of the scenes of witchcraft so popular among the *Tableaux vivans*. They all knew the Macbeth music by heart, and many a night made the 'black lane' ring with it.⁵

A. H. Palmer confirms that the Macbeth music in question was that published first in 1770, claiming to be Boyce's revision of the score which Matthew Locke composed for D'Avenant's version of the play.⁶ This music, which held the stage until 1875, was in fact composed in 1702 by Richard Leveridge.⁷ The following melodramatic lines would seem to suit the occasion upon which Palmer and his friends performed them:

Crimes foll'wing crimes on horror wait
The worst of creatures faster propagate
Many more murders must this one ensure
As if in death were propagation too
He shall he will he must spill much more blood
And become worse to make his title good.

When we try to identify the "ancient music" which provided a more thoughtful contrast to "Locke" and Tom Moore, we might do well to remember that, in the early nineteenth Century, the phrase "ancient music" would have suggested the "Concerts of Ancient Music" given under Royal patronage. The definition of "Ancient" in this context was "no music less than twenty years old," but the repertory was primarily Handelian, although works by the older English composers were also performed. In the light of this it is interesting to find this reference in a letter of 5 June 1836 from Palmer to Richmond:

Then vow you'll not stand it; but get out your Handel;
and a kind friend will call in and give you some scandal.⁸

There is one firm clue concerning the musical repertory of "The Ancients." In his memorial essay on Francis Finch, Palmer writes,

The writer has felt more pleasure in sitting by his pianoforte, listening to fragements of of Tallis, Croft, or Purcell . . . than from many displays of concerted music.⁹

Given this, we may attempt to discover the extent to which music by these composers would have been available in the 1820s.

At this point, it should be noted that, apart from a few pieces printed in such collections as Stafford Smith's *Musica Antiqua*, Palmer and his friends would have had no access to Dowland, Campion and the earlier English composers whose printed works have a poor rate of survival and whose notation would have presented considerable difficulties.

A surprising quantity of Purcell's vocal music would have been obtainable; a "third edition" formed from unsold sheets of earlier editions of *Orpheus Britannicus* had appeared in 1721. *A Collection of Songs*, taken from *Orpheus Britannicus*, was published by John Johnson in the 1790s. Benjamin Goodison published at the same time several volumes of a proposed "complete" edition.¹⁰ Purcell could also be found in Clarke's 1809 collection or Corfe's 1805 *Beauties of Purcell*, which contains a generous selection from the operas, stage music and songs. In view of Palmer's admiration for Dryden, and of the Ancients' common vision of the pastoral landscape,

The Original New 1753

Songs, Airs & Choruses

which were introduced in the TRAGEDY of

MACBETH

in Score

Composed by

MATTHEW LOCKE

Chapel Organist to Queen Catharine Consort to King Charles II.

Revised & Corrected

by

D^r Boyce.

Dedicated to

DAVID GARRICK Esq.

LONDON Printed by J. Johnson & Co. Broad-st. N. & Chancery-lane.

Of whom may be had, COMMON for the Harp Price 10. 0.
Six Overtures in 3 Parts by P. Van Malden . . . 10. 0.
The same Single . . . each . . . 2. 0.
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1st Witch 2^d Witch

Speak Sister Speak is the Deed done, long a-go long a-go; a-hove Twelve Glaffes

Since has Run Ill deeds are Seldom Seldom Slow freedom Slow or Single but following Killing

Crimes following crimes On horror walks the Wast of Creatures the worst far - the Propagate

1st Witch

many more many more Murders many more many more will this One Kill us as if - in

Death as if - in Death as if - in Death were Propagation too as if - in Death as

if in Death were Propagation too He shall He will He must spill

methems Blood and become worse and become worse become worse to make his Title Good.

we might suppose that this song from *King Arthur* would have found favor:

For folded flocks and Fruitful Plains
The Shepherd's and the Farmer's gains
Fair Britain all the world outvies
And Pan as in Arcadia reigns
Where pleasure mixt with profit lyes.

Croft's *Musica Sacra* was published in 1724. It seems unlikely, judging from the complexity of the part writing, that the Ancients would have sung the choral anthems and, while the accomplished Finch would have been able to sing the vocal line of any of the solo anthems, there would have been no instrument available for the accompaniment. Especially in view of the fact that thirty *Select Anthems* by Croft, with convenient pianoforte/organ accompaniments, were published in 1847, it seems likely that Finch sang these pieces to Palmer after they had left Shoreham.

Chants and hymn tunes attributed to all three composers make frequent appearances in contemporary hymn and anthem books, and these are the form in which Tallis would have been easily available to Palmer's friends. (The vogue which Tallis enjoyed in the 1840s would not have started by then, although Tallis' full services were in print and in use in the early nineteenth century.)

Boyce's *Cathedral Music*, with Arnold's continuation, does, however, provide three comparatively easy pieces: "I call and cry," "Hear the voice and prayer" and "All people that on earth do dwell." There is one piece of which we may be sure, as it recurs in many collections, and that is Tallis' *Canon*, which was used throughout the period as an evening hymn.

The idea of the evening hymn is strong, in Palmer's world. There is the painting *Coming from Evening Church*; there is his statement that

The smaller glories of Heaven might be tried--hymns sung amongst the hills of Paradise at eventide¹¹

and there is also the poem,

With pipe and rural chaunt along,
The Shepherds wind their homeward way,
And with melodious even song,
Lull to soft rest the weary day . . .

Pages from (title page of) Leveridge's music for *Macbeth*.

EVENING HYMN. L.M.

Glo - ry to thee, my God, this night, For
all the blessings of the light; Keep me O keep me
King of Kings, un - der thy own Al - migh - ty wings.

² Forgive me Lord for thy dear son,
The ills which I this day have done;
That with the world, myself, and thee,
Here I sleep, at peace may be.

³ Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die, that so I may
With joy behold the Judgment Day.

G L O R I A.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above angelic host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The *Evening Hymn* in a contemporary hymnbook.

For I though base believe that Thou for me
Hast better things prepared than village gardens
be:

By streams of life, and th'ever blooming tree,
To walk, and sing with antique saints, and see
Bliss above all, dear Lord thy face eternally.¹²

Thus we might imagine the Ancients singing:
Finch leading the round with his alto voice, Palmer's
baritone,¹³ then Calvert and the others joining with
the words,

Glory to Thee my God this night
For all the blessings of the light
Keep me o keep me King of Kings
Beneath thy own almighty wings.

¹ A. H. Palmer, *The Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer*, 1892, p. 53.

² Raymond Lister, *Samuel Palmer, a Biography*, 1974, p. 28.

³ Eliza Finch, *Memorials of the Late Francis Oliver Finch*, 1865, pp. 331, 356.

⁴ A. H. Palmer, p. 28n.

⁵ Finch, p. 45.

⁶ A. H. Palmer, p. 42.

⁷ Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 26-27.

⁸ *The Letters of Samuel Palmer*, ed. Raymond Lister (Oxford, 1974) I, 77.

⁹ Finch, pp. 355-56.

¹⁰ For this and other information, I am indebted to Dr. Richard Luckett and Mr. Richard Andrewes, both of the University of Cambridge.

¹¹ A. H. Palmer, p. 13.

¹² Lister, pp. 70-71.

¹³ In the notes of A. H. Palmer, communicated by Mr. Raymond Lister.

BLAKE'S INSANITY: AN UNRECORDED EARLY REFERENCE

Jenijoy La Belle

Published references to William Blake prior to the appearance of Alexander Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* in 1863 are uncommon, generally brief, all too often inaccurate—but still worthy of notice as curious bits of Blakeana. G. E. Bentley, Jr., in his monumental *Blake Books*, attempts to list "all works published before 1863 which refer to Blake at all, except catalogues," as he states in his Introduction.¹ A previously unnoticed reference appears in Thomas John Gullick and John Timbs, *Painting Popularly Explained*, first published in London in 1859 by "Kent and Co. (late Bogue), Fleet Street." A two-page overview of "The Rise of Modern Water-Colour Painting" appears towards the end of this 318-page discussion of painting techniques. There (pp. 302-04), the authors note the early masters of the British school of watercolorists, including Paul Sandby, John Cozens, and Thomas Girtin. The section concludes with the following two sentences:

[Joseph Mallord William] Turner is even greater in water-colours than in oil; but several other eminent oil painters have distinguished themselves also in water-colour painting. The following are some of the principal deceased masters of this branch of art, viz., [William] Blake, and [Richard] Dadd (who both died insane), [Thomas] Rowlandson (the caricaturist), [George Fennel] Robson, [George] Barrett, [John] Varley, Samuel Prout, [Peter] Dewint, and Copley Fielding.²

It is surprising to find Blake included in an 1859 list of "principal deceased masters" in water-color; his appearance here suggests that Blake's