

# Dr Cooke's Protest: Benjamin Cooke, Samuel Arnold, and the Directorship of the Academy of Ancient Music

BRYAN WHITE 

**Abstract** In 1789, the Academy of Ancient Music replaced Benjamin Cooke with Samuel Arnold as its musical director. This article offers a detailed analysis of an autograph copy of the address Cooke delivered to the Academy responding to their action, and of a letter to Cooke from Arnold countering accusations made regarding his conduct in the affair. Both documents are annotated by Henry Cooke, who used them in writing a biography of his father. These documents enable a new understanding of the significant changes made within the Academy in the 1780s and of the reasons Academy subscribers replaced Cooke with Arnold.

At a general meeting of the venerable Academy of Ancient Music in November 1789 the subscribers voted to place its musical management in the hands of Dr Samuel Arnold (1740–1802). In so doing they displaced Dr Benjamin Cooke (1734–93), who had been associated with the organization for some four decades, since first training under Dr Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), the driving force of the Academy from its inception in 1726 until his death. Cooke had been Academy librarian, had composed for and dedicated music to the Academy, had trained the boys who provided the treble voices for its performances, and had served at its conductor from soon after the death of Pepusch until the vote.

Though Cooke was a significant figure in the musical world of his day, and his close association with the Academy was well known and long established, his removal as musical director attracted little public comment. A review in the *London Chronicle* of the first Academy performance under Arnold in December 1789 noted only that Arnold conducted in place of Dr Cooke; a glowing review of the same concert in the *Public Advertiser* made no mention of Cooke whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> Cooke's deep unhappiness with his removal was expressed in musical circles through his initial refusal to join the

---

Email: [B.White@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:B.White@leeds.ac.uk)

Preliminary versions of the article were offered as papers at the Thirty-First Annual Conference of Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain at the Foundling Museum in 2015 and the Eleventh Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain Conference at the University of Birmingham in 2017. I am grateful to Tim Eggington, Peter Holman, H. Diack Johnstone, and Roya Stuart-Rees for reading and commenting on the article in draft. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the article who offered valuable advice.

<sup>1</sup> *London Chronicle*, 19 December 1789; *Public Advertiser*, 18 December.

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Royal Musical Association

Graduates' Meeting instituted in 1790, which brought together those musicians in and around London holding either a bachelor or doctorate of music degree, and of which Arnold was a leading member.<sup>2</sup> In 'A History of the Academy of Ancient Music', written the year after Cooke's death, Joseph Doane offered a brief account of the change in musical leadership, reporting that three persons had been put forward to the subscribers as potential conductors – Cooke, Arnold, and Thomas Dupuis (1733–96) – and that Arnold had been chosen by a 'very large majority'.<sup>3</sup> Cooke's single known comment on the affair was reported many years later in his son Henry's (1766–1840) biography of his father, *Some Account of Doctor Cooke, Organist of Westminster Abbey, &c.*: 'almost the only observation that [my father] made on the subject was, "that the subscribers had done that for him which he should never have had the courage to do himself, and had saved him a great deal of trouble".'<sup>4</sup>

In the epilogue to his book on Benjamin Cooke and the Academy of Ancient Music, Tim Eggington commented that the retort recorded in *Some Account* could hardly reflect the depth of Cooke's feelings at being ejected from an organization he had served faithfully the whole of his adult life.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to a set of documents that have come to light in the Library of the University of Leeds, Cooke's reaction to the affair can be told in his own words. In the process of cataloguing and researching material collected by W. T. Freemantle, and now part of the Brotherton Collection, several items relating to Benjamin Cooke and his sons were identified, notably 'Dr. Benjamin Cooke's Protest' and a 'Memoir of Dr. Benjamin Cooke'.<sup>6</sup> The latter is an autograph fair copy of Henry Cooke's *Some Account of Doctor Cooke*, but the 'Protest', an autograph script Cooke prepared to be delivered at a general meeting of the Academy of Ancient Music, had not been known previously. This document offers a vivid picture of Cooke's reaction to the action taken by the Academy in 1789. In the process of confronting the general meeting, Cooke gave particulars of his work for the organization over many years, information that adds insight into his relationship with the Academy. But the document is perhaps most striking for its personal nature. It reveals the depth of Cooke's attachment to the Academy, to the principles that underpinned it and which he felt had been lost, and especially individual members with whom he had close personal relationships. The 'Protest' is bound with a letter from Samuel Arnold to Cooke responding to charges regarding Arnold's conduct in relation to the change of musical direction at the Academy. Both documents bear annotations by Cooke's son Henry, who drew upon them in writing

<sup>2</sup> John Wall Callcott chronicled its activities in 'Account of the Graduates Meetings, a Society of Musical Professors Established in London', British Library, Add. MS 27693, fols. 6–30.

<sup>3</sup> In *A Musical Directory for the Year 1794* (author, 1794), 76–83.

<sup>4</sup> [Henry Cooke], *Some Account of Doctor Cooke, Organist of Westminster Abbey, &c.* (author, 1837), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Eggington, *The Advancement of Music in Enlightenment England: Benjamin Cooke and the Academy of Ancient Music* (Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 253.

<sup>6</sup> University of Leeds Library Special Collections, MS 1700/2/9 and MS 1700/2/11, respectively. The cataloguing was undertaken by Joe Whelan as part of his Laidlaw Undergraduate Research Leadership Scholarship.

*Some Account*. The documents also include noteworthy comments added by their subsequent owner, the collector Joseph Warren. These documents were used by H. Diack Johnstone in his recent history of the Academy of Ancient Music, but this is the first study devoted to them as the primary subject of inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

This article will trace the provenance of the Cooke documents and explore what they have to tell us about Cooke's work with the Academy of Ancient Music. It will also seek to understand them in the wider context of London's concert life, thereby offering new insight into why the Academy voted to change its musical leadership, and why Arnold seemed so attractive to its subscribers. It will also examine Henry Cooke's interpretation of the 'Protest' and of Arnold's letter as evinced in his annotations, and the use he put them to in writing the account of his father's life, and will suggest that *Some Account* sought to redress a perceived devaluation of his father's career and his work at the Academy.<sup>8</sup>

## Provenance

William Thomas Freemantle (1849–1931) was an organist, music teacher, and collector working in Sheffield where, over several decades beginning early in the 1870s, he amassed an extensive private collection of material relating to Felix Mendelssohn, including autograph manuscripts, letters, prints, and ephemera.<sup>9</sup> Freemantle also developed extensive collections focused on Charles Dibdin (1745–1814) and on the Sheffield-born composer William Sterndale Bennett (1816–75).<sup>10</sup> He also collected miscellaneous manuscripts, letters, and prints by other composers, notable among which is the autograph copy of William Croft's (1678–1727) anthem with strings 'O give thanks unto the Lord for he is gracious'.<sup>11</sup> Beyond music, Freemantle collected books, pamphlets, paintings, prints, coins, and tokens related to Sheffield, and Rockingham pottery.<sup>12</sup> Sometime in 1926 or 1927 he sold his music collection (including all the Mendelssohn material) and Sheffield book collection to Edward Allen, Lord Brotherton (1856–1930), who was then in the midst of creating a vast personal library. Brotherton donated £100,000 to the University of Leeds in 1927 to build the Brotherton Library; at its completion in 1936, his books and manuscripts

<sup>7</sup> H. Diack Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802): Its History, Repertoire and Surviving Programmes', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 51 (2020), 1–136.

<sup>8</sup> Transcriptions of the 'Protest' and of Arnold's letter are provided as an appendix to this article.

<sup>9</sup> Ralf Wehner, "'There is Probably no Better Living Authority on Mendelssohn's Autograph': W. T. Freemantle und seine Mendelssohn-Sammlung", *Mendelssohn Studien*, 16 (2009), 333–69. I am grateful to Dr Fiona Smith for providing me with an English translation of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Bennett was the subject of Freemantle's book *Sterndale Bennett and Sheffield. Comprising an Account of the Bennett Family (Derbyshire, Cambridge and Sheffield) part I: Also part II, Sir William Sterndale Bennett and Associations with his Native City* (Pawson and Brailsford, 1919).

<sup>11</sup> MS 1700/2/16. See William Croft, *Canticles and Anthems with Orchestra*, ed. Donald Burrows, *Musica Britannica*, 91 (Stainer & Bell, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Freemantle's collection formed the basis of his book *A Bibliography of Sheffield and Vicinity* (Pawson and Brailsford, 1911).

were housed there as the Brotherton Collection, into which Freemantle's collection had been subsumed.<sup>13</sup>

In the period between his death and the completion of the Brotherton Library, Lord Brotherton's collection was overseen by his personal librarian, J. Alexander Symington (1887–1961).<sup>14</sup> Symington had worked for Brotherton since 1923 helping to guide the development of his collection, and he is likely to have taken a leading role in the purchase of Freemantle's collection. Symington inventoried Freemantle's music collection in 1929, creating several catalogues in the process.<sup>15</sup> They indicate that he had divided up the Mendelssohn collection, with one set of material earmarked for Brotherton's collection, and the other set aside for Symington to dispose of for his own benefit. Items from Freemantle's Mendelssohn collection can now be found in at least seven different research libraries around the world. The autograph manuscript of the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which Freemantle owned, is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. In autumn 1937, it was offered for sale to the Folger in a letter from Beatrice Thornton Lambert, Symington's wife and managing director of The English Book Company, of which Symington was company director. Freemantle's collection of around 300 Mendelssohn letters and numerous other autograph manuscripts are now in the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. These items are accompanied by a catalogue created by Symington that excludes the material remaining in Leeds.<sup>16</sup>

Over many years Symington sold other material from Freemantle's collection, although it is only the dispersal of the Mendelssohn material that has so far received scholarly attention. For that portion of Freemantle's music collection that remained in Leeds, a pall seems to have been cast over it by Symington's questionable activities, which led to his dismissal from the post of Keeper of the Brotherton Library in 1937. Although Symington's three-volume catalogue of what was essentially the Freemantle music collection was available to consult in the Brotherton Library, it was not subsequently understood to have been a discrete collection. The Mendelssohn material was little known; manuscripts of composers such as Dibdin and Croft were even less so. The material that is the subject of this article did not enter the University Library's online catalogue. It had, therefore, virtually disappeared from view until its emergence in a research project in summer 2015.

Freemantle purchased the 'Protest' as lot 135 in a Puttick and Simpson sale of 30 July 1873:

Cooke (Dr. Benjamin) Protest sent to the Directors of the Academy of Ancient Musick;  
Mr. Warren's Remarks on this shameful transaction, 12 folios, 1789—Arnold

<sup>13</sup> James Donnelly, 'Brotherton, Edward Allen, Baron Brotherton (1857–1930)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> (accessed 12 May 2021).

<sup>14</sup> John Smurthwaite, *The Life of John Alexander Symington, Bibliographer and Librarian, 1887–1961: A Bookman's Rise and Fall* (E. Mellen Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Wehner, 'W. T. Freemantle und seine Mendelssohn-Sammlung', 351–55.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

(Dr. Samuel) His Letter, to Dr. B. Cooke, *dated May 20, 1790*—Cooke (Dr. B.) Memoir of, written by his son Mr. Henry Cooke, *in the autograph of the writer*, VERY CURIOUS MSS.<sup>17</sup>

Freemantle bid on two other items related to Cooke and his sons in this sale. He purchased Lot 134, a collection of madrigals and glees, mostly autograph, by several composers including Benjamin's son, Robert (1768–1814), for 11s. Two copies of glees by Robert Cooke in the Brotherton Collection are likely to have been part of this lot.<sup>18</sup> Freemantle also bid on Lot 104:

Cooke (Dr. Benj.) Diary of, written while under the tuition of Dr. Pepusch, dated from July 5, 1746 to April 9, 1747, Every day's entry begins with a scriptural quotation, as: "*Thine eye shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall write perverse things. Sunday, Aug. 10, 1746; "I was at the (Surrey) Chapel in the morning, but in the afternoon went to Vauxhall with the Doctor, 'Mrs. Pepusch being dead'!"*" VERY CURIOUS—Catalogue of (Music) Books "in the little Wainscot case"—Cooke (Robert) A List of Services and Anthems performed at Westminster Abbey from Jan. 31st to May 1808.<sup>19</sup>

Freemantle was outbid for this item and its subsequent whereabouts are unknown.<sup>20</sup> Sometime after 1929 Cooke's 'Protest' and Arnold's letter were bound with Joseph Warren's notes, and the 'Memoir' was bound separately.<sup>21</sup> Although the sale catalogue is not specific on this point, it is clear that these items came from the collections of the composer, editor, and collector Joseph Warren (1804–81).<sup>22</sup> His notes now bound in with the 'Protest' and Arnold's letter show that he owned the material in Lot 104 as well. Warren writes that 'I found this protest (which is the original draft) among a mass of papers entitled 'Musical Conjectures by B[enjamin] C[ooke]. 1769'.<sup>23</sup> He later notes, 'I have also a list of Dr Cooke's writing of what his library contained (among which I find two letters in the handwriting of his Master Dr Pepusch), a Diary of his written when he was a boy from July 5 1746 to April 9th 1746/7 ... also a list in pencil

<sup>17</sup> *A Catalogue of a Collection of Miscellaneous Music, Comprising Many Scarce and Valuable Treatises on the History and Theory of Music [...] On Wednesday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1873*. British Library, S.C.P. 157(7).

<sup>18</sup> MS 1700/2/12. One, 'Rapt'rous youth', is an autograph dated 9 November 1799. The other, 'How wretched is the faithful youth', in a different hand, appears to have been revised by Cooke; he signed and dated it 'Jan 1807'. An autograph score of 'St Michael's Chair' by Dr John Clarke[-Whitfield] (1770–1836), whose name is also mentioned in this lot, is in the Brotherton Collection: MS 1700/2/7.

<sup>19</sup> See discussion of this item in A. Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1963), 59, 138. King identified the diary in the sale catalogue of James Shoubridge (S.C.P. 156 (12), 30 June 1873). He also notes the anonymous sale of the item (giving the date as 20 [recte 30] July 1873, lot 104 (S.C.P. 157 (7)). In fact, the 'Protest' and the collection of glees had also appeared in the sale catalogue of 30 June.

<sup>20</sup> It appears that Freemantle sent in maximum bids ahead of the sale; he offered to pay 10s but was outbid by a shilling.

<sup>21</sup> MSS 1700/2/9 and 1700/2/11, respectively.

<sup>22</sup> Henry Davey, 'Warren, Joseph (1804–1881)', rev. David Golby, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> (accessed 12 May 2021); King, *Some British Collectors of Music*, 56–57, 59, 138.

<sup>23</sup> *Musical Conjectures* is now in the Bodleian Library, Tenbury MS 1344. See also Egginton, *The Advancement of Music*, ch. 5.

what services & anthems were performed at the Abbey, but I believe this to be in Robert Cookes hand[.] “The 12 Modes of Composition dictated by Dr Pepusch, 1751” in his handwriting, also a short account of Thro Bass as taught by Dr P.’. Warren probably bought this material at the sale of Benjamin Cooke’s library following the death of his last surviving child, Amelia, in 1845. Lot 208 of that sale is described as “Musical Conjectures by B. C. 1769,”—a volume of curious and interesting remarks on various topics connected with the Theory of Music, Tuning, &c’.<sup>24</sup> At the end of his comments Warren stated that the Pepusch letters were in his possession, though a subsequent annotation reads ‘but since sold’. Warren fell into poverty in later life and began selling his extensive collection of musical material in a piecemeal fashion, of which the sale of the Cooke items is symptomatic.

### Benjamin Cooke and the Academy of Ancient Music

‘Dr. Benjamin Cooke’s Protest’ to the Academy of Ancient Music was written to be delivered by Cooke himself at a general meeting of the Academy, probably sometime in April 1790. It reveals, as one might suspect, that he was deeply hurt by the Academy’s decision to replace him after years of diligent work on its behalf. The ‘Protest’ offered a thorough critique of the Academy’s actions, focusing on four main issues: 1) the mode through which Cooke had been displaced; 2) the Academy’s retention of musical manuscripts that were Cooke’s own property; 3) the fact that the Academy’s musical library was no longer properly supervised; and 4) that Cooke receive reassurances with regard to Academy instruments in his possession. Throughout the ‘Protest’ Cooke contrasts the ‘Old’ Academy with its current state with which he was clearly out of sympathy. In order to better understand his unhappiness with the Academy, it is instructive to explore briefly its history and his role within it, particularly since the ‘Protest’ includes details regarding his relationship with the organization.

The Academy was instituted in 1726 under the name the ‘Academy of Vocal Musick’ as a membership club of skilled musicians dedicated to the performance and study of ‘Grave ancient vocell musick’ meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand.<sup>25</sup> From a founding group of thirteen, it developed rapidly: by 1730 the membership numbered approximately eighty. Membership, male-only until 1788, was initially restricted to Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and cathedral musicians, and other skilled musicians or non-singing composers approved by the members. As part of its rapid expansion, the Academy began admitting non-performing auditors – well-to-do amateurs – whose numbers steadily grew, and who would in later years

<sup>24</sup> *Catalogue of the Extensive, Rare, and Valuable Musical Library of the late Benjamin Cook, Mus. Doc [...] sold by Auction, by Mr. Fletcher [...] August 5th [...] 6th, 1845* (London, 1845). A copy is preserved in the New York City Public Library, Drexel 855. I am grateful to Tim Eggington for sharing a copy of the catalogue with me.

<sup>25</sup> Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 4, 9. The most recent and thorough histories of the organization, on which I have relied heavily, are found in Eggington, *The Advancement of Music* and Johnstone, ‘The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)’.



come to dominate the administration of the organization. In 1731, the society became the Academy of Ancient Music, where ‘Ancient music’ was defined as compositions by composers living before the end of the sixteenth century. Though its name might suggest otherwise, the organization was not devoted solely to old music; it also performed modern Italian concerted music, and music by its members. Indeed, performance of Cooke’s own music figured prominently in later years. The minutes of the Academy indicate that by 1731 its meetings had fallen into a fortnightly pattern of a members-only rehearsal night followed a week later by a semi-public performance. The Academy also held annual ‘Publick nights’ for which programmes were printed and to which members could invite two friends. This pattern apparently continued until 1784. If there was a tension between the initial aim of creating a society ‘calculated for the improvement of one of the noblest of the sciences, and the communication of rational and social delight’, and a membership increasingly composed of auditors rather than practical musicians, Pepusch, as the leader of both the intellectual and the performing impulses of the Academy, held it in check.<sup>26</sup> In Cooke’s tenure, this tension would eventually prove impossible to balance, and would result in a fundamental change in the Academy’s founding principles.

The Academy was governed by a group of six or seven managers responsible in turn for selecting the music for meetings, and for making ‘such Laws for the Government of the Academy as they shall think fitt’.<sup>27</sup> Though none of its extant governing policies made provision for the role, there was in addition a formally recognized president. Initially it was an honorary title; though living in Hanover and never attending a meeting, Agostino Steffani (1654–1728) was voted president in 1727.<sup>28</sup> According to John Percival, in 1730 the Academy resolved not to elect a president in his stead following his death.<sup>29</sup> However, at some subsequent point Pepusch was made president; in a poem of 1733, he is referred to as the Academy’s ‘venerable President’, and on the Academy Medal, struck in 1750, he is named as ‘praeses’ (i.e. president; Figure 1).<sup>30</sup> Uniting as he did the roles of artistic and musical direction, he may have converted the post of president into a practical position. In later years the president would appear to have been the leading member of the group of managers who eventually became known as sub-directors.

<sup>26</sup> [John Hawkins], *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music* (author, 1770), 11.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Orders Agreed to by the Members of the Academy of Vocal Musick’, British Library, Add. MS 11732, fol. 1v, quoted in Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 7 and Johnstone, ‘The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)’, 4.

<sup>28</sup> He did, however, provide the Academy with his music, some of which he composed expressly for it. See Colin Timms, ‘La canzona and Stabat Mater: Steffani’s First and Last Gifts to the Academy of Ancient Music?’, *Early Music*, 47 (2019), 65–82.

<sup>29</sup> *Diary of Viscount Percival, afterwards First Earl of Egmont*, ed. R. A. Roberts, 3 vols., Historical Manuscripts Commission, 63 (H. M. Stationary Office, 1920–23), I, 202.

<sup>30</sup> *Harmony in an Uproar: A Letter to F-D-K H-D-L, Esq* (London, 1733), quoted in Johnstone, ‘The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)’, 9.



Figure 1. The Academy of Ancient Music Medal. British Museum 1882, 1004.1/© British Museum.

Central to the Academy's work was the creation of a music library 'of the most celebrated compositions' donated by members.<sup>31</sup> In 1731, the violinist Henry Needler (?1685–1760) and the composer Johann Ernst Galliard (d. 1747) ordered and catalogued the growing collection. Maurice Greene (1696–1755) was probably its first librarian. When he left the Academy in 1732 in the wake of the infamous scandal over the authorship of Antonio Lotti's madrigal 'In una siepe ombrosa', which Greene had introduced to the Academy as the work of his friend and fellow member Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), Samuel Howard (c. 1710–82) took his place.<sup>32</sup> The library continued to grow over the years. In 1794, Doane described it as 'a very large Collection, complete for the Orchestra, of the best Music of almost every kind which the Countries of Italy, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands and England have produced in ancient or modern Times'.<sup>33</sup>

Another significant aspect of the Academy's activities was its 'seminary', dedicated to 'the instruction of youth in the principles of music and the laws of harmony'.<sup>34</sup> In the Academy's early years, treble voices for its music making came first from the boys of St Paul's Cathedral, and subsequently from the boys of the Chapel Royal, whose master, Bernard Gates (1686–1773), was a founding

<sup>31</sup> John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* [1776], 2 vols. (Novello, 1853), II, 806.

<sup>32</sup> Lowell Lindgren, 'The Three Great Noises "Fatal to the Interests of Bononcini"', *Musical Quarterly*, 61 (1975), 560–83; Stephen Rose, 'Plagiarism at the Academy of Ancient Music: A Case Study in Authorship, Style and Judgement', *Concepts of Creativity in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Rebecca Herissone and Alan Howard (Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 181–98.

<sup>33</sup> Doane, *Musical Directory*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Hawkins, *A General History*, II, 886.



member. When Gates left the Academy in 1734, taking the services of the Chapel boys with him, a ‘seminary’ was initiated to fill the gap. Pepusch took responsibility for the education of four boys, who served seven-year apprenticeships during which they were ‘instructed in English Grammar, Writing and Arithmetic, and to be taught to sing, accompany on the harpsichord, and to compose’.<sup>35</sup> Doane indicated that Pepusch received 50 guineas per annum for this work: £20 for an assistant, £8 for the boys’ schooling and £24.10.00 for contingent expenses. Academy members agreed to increase their annual subscription of half a guinea by a guinea, and a greater number of auditor members were admitted in order to provide financial support for the endeavour.

Cooke’s affiliation with the Academy of Ancient Music began as a boy in the seminary, as he explained in the ‘Protest’: ‘My Entrance was in the year 43. under the sanction of D<sup>r</sup>. P[epusch] and for the first 7. years Instruction was the most valuable[,] indeed the whole of my reward ... this Instruction was counterbalanc’d by my Services in singing.’<sup>36</sup> Cooke’s father, also Benjamin, died in 1743, but according to *Some Account*, Benjamin junior had already been placed ‘under the instruction of Dr. Pepusch’.<sup>37</sup> Cooke senior was a music publisher and a close associate of Pepusch’s whose editions (in score) of Corelli’s Opp. 1–4 and Op. 6 he published in 1732;<sup>38</sup> it would have been an obvious choice to make arrangements for his son to enter the Academy seminary.

Cooke was an apt pupil, and his musical skills clearly impressed Pepusch and other members of the Academy. On the retirement of Samuel Howard as Academy librarian in 1749, Cooke was appointed in his place and, according to the ‘Protest’, at the same time became assistant to Pepusch with a salary of £10.<sup>39</sup> When Pepusch died in 1752, Cooke ‘was appointed to succeed him with an additional Stipend of 30. Guineas per Ann. on condition of my providing House Room with Fire and Candle when necessary’.<sup>40</sup> In the ‘Protest’, Cooke does not specify the work covered by the 30 guineas – though he refers to himself as ‘Chapel Master’ – but he clearly distinguishes it from that of librarian, and from his ‘allowance for the boys distinct from the salary paid me, which amounted to about 12 pound per ann. more, on average’.<sup>41</sup> This latter sum was presumably to be used for the upkeep of the boys. Minutes from the ‘Committee for the Education of the Children & Management of the Academy of Antient Music’ give a more precise account of Cooke’s role. A meeting of six Academy managers on 12 October 1752 confirmed his appointment

---

<sup>35</sup> Doane, *Musical Directory*, 78.

<sup>36</sup> MS 1700/2/9, ‘Dr. Benjamin Cooke’s Protest’, 10. Quotations from this document suppress crossings out and indications of insertions that are preserved in the transcription in the Appendix.

<sup>37</sup> H. Cooke, *Some Account*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> For Cooke senior’s association with Pepusch see Rosalind Halton and Michael Talbot, “‘Choice Things of Value’: The Mysterious Genesis and Character of the *VI Concertos in Seven Parts* Attributed to Alessandro Scarlatti”, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 12 (2015), 9–32.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Protest’, 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

‘to educate the Children in Musick for the Use of the Academy’ for which he would be paid 30 guineas per annum, ‘he providing a proper Room for the Purpose’.<sup>42</sup> In *Some Account*, Henry suggested that his father ‘succeeded the Doctor at the harpsichord at the Academy, and in teaching many of his scholars’.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, it is apparent that, at least initially, Cooke’s formally agreed roles in the Academy were as librarian and master of the boys of the seminary. Though he acted regularly as musical director of Academy performances, his role was *de facto* rather than *de jure*.<sup>44</sup> It may be that at some point after 1757 when Cooke succeeded Bernard Gates as master of the choristers at Westminster Abbey that its boys sang in Academy performances, changing the nature of, or ending the need for, the seminary.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless some sort of payment for the boys who sang for the Academy continued until the end of Cooke’s tenure, as demonstrated in the list of payments to musicians for the 1787/8 season where he was paid under the heading ‘Conductor & Boys’, an arrangement that may have begun with the reorganization of the society in 1783 (see later).<sup>46</sup> If at some later point the formal agreement regarding Cooke’s salaried positions changed, no documents are extant to clarify the matter.

Cooke’s salary fluctuated with the fortunes of the Academy. ‘Some years after’ he succeeded Pepusch he received ‘Sixty Pounds annually but I willingly relinqu[i]shd the additional 20. when the Finances of the Society requir’d it’.<sup>47</sup> A low point was reached in ‘Mr. Madden’s time’ when Cooke consented to accept 40 guineas for all of his Academy work, ‘and out of that sum I still paid the Boys the same as before’.<sup>48</sup> This, according to Cooke, was ‘during the time that Bartleman sung, before any other Treble singers were engaged’. James Bartleman (1769–1821), the greatest English bass soloist of his era, had trained under Cooke as a treble at Westminster Abbey. A reference to Bartleman’s time as a boy at the Academy noted the organization’s increasingly fragile state in later years: ‘The Academy of Ancient Music, though verging towards extinction, was still supported by a respectable list of subscribers, and young Bartleman was allowed to take his place among the principal trebles, for which voice, education and taste eminently qualified him.’<sup>49</sup> James Madden (1727–1812) was a senior clerk to the

<sup>42</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Rés. F. 1507, fol. 4r, quoted in Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 50 and Johnstone, ‘The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)’, 14–15.

<sup>43</sup> H. Cooke, *Some Account*, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Other members of the Academy may occasionally have directed performances. Alan Howard suggests that Samuel Howard probably directed performances of his anthem ‘This is the day which the Lord hath made’ at the Academy; see ‘Samuel Howard and the Music for the Installation of the Duke of Grafton as Chancellor of Cambridge University, 1769’, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, 14 (2017), 232–33.

<sup>45</sup> See Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 80–81. In 1762, Cooke succeeded John Robinson as organist of the Abbey.

<sup>46</sup> Yale University, Lewis Walpole Library Folio LWL MSS Vol. 121.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Protest’, 11.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> ‘Memoir of James Bartleman’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 48 (1853), 165.

Admiralty and Deputy Paymaster of the Marines.<sup>50</sup> Cooke's comment suggests that he had administrative oversight of the Academy, and may, therefore, have been president, perhaps succeeding James Mathias (1710–82) at about the same time at which Bartleman joined the Academy's trebles.<sup>51</sup> After the Academy's move to Freemasons' Hall in 1784, its finances rebounded and Cooke's salary was increased: 'about 3. years ago Ten Pounds more annually was voted me' a sum consistent with the £52.10 paid him in 'Account of Money paid to the Band and Singers employed for the Season 1787 & 8'.<sup>52</sup> It nevertheless nettled him that 'it was suppos'd to be a new addition' though in fact 'it only restor'd to me in part an annual Sum that I had previously for some years reqlinquish'd'.<sup>53</sup>

### 'A Moderniz'd Race of Members'

Cooke took his removal as musical director of the Academy personally, though from a distance it can be seen as symptomatic of a fundamental alteration in the orientation of the organization driven by a combination of its changing membership and the transformation taking place in London's musical culture.<sup>54</sup> From the 1750s, led by the innovations of violinist Felice Giardini, subscription concerts steadily increased in importance. By the 1770s they were crucial both to professional musicians and to fashionable society.<sup>55</sup> Writing in 1770, John Hawkins lamented pressure within the Academy to convert it into a subscription concert. The expense of paying 'eminent performers' was, however, prohibitive, and its members found themselves 'reduced to the necessity of recurring to the principles of its first institution'.<sup>56</sup> When in 1776 the Concert of Ancient Music began its successful annual subscription concerts, pressure to become a subscription series intensified. Though both organizations shared an interest in old music, the Concert differed from the Academy in significant

<sup>50</sup> Charles James Feret, *Fulham Old and New: Being an Exhaustive History of the Ancient Parish of Fulham*, 3 vols. (Leadenhall Press, 1900), III, 44–47. Madden's name appears third, under those of Peter Stapel and Robert Smith in the list of subscribers for the 1785/86 Academy season dated 28 April 1785 (Folio LWL MSS Vol. 121). In an article of 10 December 1785 in the *General Evening Post* covering the first concert of the 85/86 season, the 'particular attention' of the Earl of Effingham, the Marquis of Carmarthen, Peter Stapel, and James Madden are credited with the 'astonishing progress' of the Academy (cited in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 54). Madden was, like several members of the Academy, a collector. The sale catalogue of his library lists fifty-seven lots of printed and manuscript music and 'The Words of such pieces as are most usually performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, 1768 &c. 3 vol.'. *A Catalogue of the Scarce and Valuable Library of the Late James Madden, Esq [...] Sold by Mr. Stewart [...] March 31st, 1813, and 3 Following Days* (London, 1813). I am grateful to Meghan Constantinou and Scott Ellwood of the Grolier Club, New York City for providing me with a copy of the catalogue.

<sup>51</sup> Mathias signed himself as president of the Academy in a letter dated 1774 (see note 99).

<sup>52</sup> Yale University, Lewis Walpole Library Folio LWL MSS Vol. 121. I am grateful to Tim Eggington for sharing a copy of this document with me.

<sup>53</sup> 'Protest', 12.

<sup>54</sup> See Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially the Prologue and ch. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–8, 54.

<sup>56</sup> J. Hawkins, *An Account of the [...] Academy of Ancient Music*, 10–12.

ways.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the Academy, it was instituted as a concert series rather than as a society aimed at the advancement of music, and it was led by directors – mostly members of the nobility – rather than professional musicians. The Concert's subscription was set at a very high level (five guineas rising to eight guineas) ensuring its social exclusivity and enabling it to engage prominent soloists.

The Concert's programming, guided by its musical director, Joah Bates (1741–99), drew heavily on the precedent of the Academy but deviated from it in important ways.<sup>58</sup> No music less than twenty years old was performed at the Concert. While it did perform vocal polyphony from the sixteenth century, it drew strictly upon secular madrigals, whereas the Academy included sacred works from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. In both organizations the music of Handel predominated, but the Concert performed selections from larger works, including opera arias, while the Academy tended to perform complete works, including anthems and oratorios, but excluding opera excerpts apart from overtures. The emphasis on sacred works at the Academy reflected the value it placed on *stile antico* and other contrapuntal styles, including those pursued by Cooke in his own compositions. At the Concert, in contrast, Bates aimed at older music that had a wide public appeal. Many auditor members of the Academy must have looked enviously at the Concert's social prestige, its focus on high performing standards and its more accessible repertory.

Pressure within the Academy came to a head in February 1783, when, according to Doane, a committee was appointed to 'prepare a new Code as agreeable to the original intention of its Founders as the present temper of the Times would admit'.<sup>59</sup> This code, which effectively changed the organization into a subscription concert, was agreed at a general meeting in March. Its effect on the 1783/4 season is unclear since only two records of performances from that year survive. Both suggest that any immediate change was limited. *The Public Advertiser* of 13 April 1784 reported that 'the last Meeting of the Academy of Ancient Music was as dull as an endless Stabat Mater – and [the] indifferent Singing of Hindle and Co. could make it'.<sup>60</sup> According to the programme for the concert held on 20 May, the Academy performed Part 1 of Handel's *Alexander's Feast*, the coronation anthems *The King Shall Rejoice* and *Zadok the Priest*, and Cooke's glee 'In the merry month of May'.<sup>61</sup> However, if Cooke or other members of the Academy attempted to blunt the changes implied by the new code in the first year of its operation, that resistance was washed away in the wake of the Handel Commemoration held between 26 May and 5 June 1784. The influence of the Concert of Ancient Music permeated the Commemoration. It was organized by a

<sup>57</sup> William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Clarendon Press, 1992); Egginton, *The Advancement of Music*, 71–73.

<sup>58</sup> A detailed assessment of the Concert's repertory is found in Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, 168–97.

<sup>59</sup> Doane, *Musical Directory*, 80.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 53. John Hindle (1761–96) was a former student of Cooke's and a regular tenor soloist at the Academy.

<sup>61</sup> Indiana University, The Lilly Library (ML 52.2.A37 H13); quoted in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 53.

committee of aristocrats led by John Montagu, Earl of Sandwich, who was also prominent in the organization of the Concert, and Joah Bates conducted the first and third concerts – a selection of Handel's sacred works and *Messiah* respectively – from the organ.<sup>62</sup> The second concert was a selection of Handel's opera arias. Cooke was an assistant director in the Commemoration, but his role was confined to overseeing 'the business at the doors of admission, and conducting the company to their seats'.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Samuel Arnold took an active role in the Westminster Abbey concerts, conveying the beat to one side of the massed vocal forces.<sup>64</sup> The Commemoration concerts were attended by George III, who subsequently became a subscriber to the Concert of Ancient Music. The Commemoration greatly burnished the reputation of the Concert, strengthening its subscription and enabling it to move to a larger venue in 1785.

Pronounced change followed immediately at the Academy of Ancient Music. In September 1784, it moved from the Crown and Anchor Tavern to Freemasons' Hall, a much larger venue that allowed the membership to expand in order to pay for the professional performers required to compete with London's other subscription series, and in particular, the Concert of Ancient Music. For the first time named soloists appear in the Academy's printed programmes, which show a marked change in repertoire with the introduction of opera arias and an increase in excerpts rather than complete works.<sup>65</sup> The details of the new code ratified in 1783 have not survived, but it was probably the case that for the first time all the performers were paid professionals, 'contractors' in Cooke's terminology, rather than subscribing members. A list dated 28 April 1785 of those intending to subscribe to the Academy for the following season includes 119 names; Cooke's does not appear, nor do names of any other performers.<sup>66</sup>

The new code also entailed a substantial reduction in the number of Academy meetings. In the 'Protest', Cooke claimed that 'till within the last 7. years there have never been less than 28. Nights each Season'.<sup>67</sup> The first season at Freemasons' Hall for which a full set of programmes is extant is that of 1786/7 in which there were twelve concerts, a pattern probably established by September 1784 if not in the previous season. The approach to rehearsals under the new code is unclear; over time it became a significant point of contention. Newspaper notices show that the first concerts of the 84/5, 85/6, and 87/8 seasons were preceded two weeks earlier by a rehearsal,<sup>68</sup> but this does not seem to have been a consistent practice throughout the season; a review of an

<sup>62</sup> Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, 223–42; Peter Holman, *Beyond the Baton: Musical Direction and Conducting in Stuart and Georgian Britain* (Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 154–63.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon [...] in Commemoration of Handel* (T. Payne & Son; G. Robinson: 1785), part ii, 11, 17; quoted in Holman, *Beyond the Baton*, 156.

<sup>64</sup> Holman, *Beyond the Baton*, 156, 162.

<sup>65</sup> See details of the programmes and performers provided in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)'.

<sup>66</sup> Yale University, Lewis Walpole Library Folio LWL MSS Vol. 121.

<sup>67</sup> 'Protest', 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Morning Post*, 16 November 1784 and 21 November 1785; *Public Advertiser*, 14 November 1787. I have not found any notices for the 86/87 series.

Academy concert on 8 March 1788 including Handel's *L'Allegro* noted: 'when we consider that this Society have no rehearsals, we must say it was greatly performed.'<sup>69</sup> Over this period the subscription increased substantially; by autumn 1786 it had reached four guineas.<sup>70</sup>

The conversion into a subscription concert series did not resolve tensions within the Academy. At the end of the 1786/7 season, the sub-directors resigned, 'as some Circumstances in the Course of their Management, make it impossible for them to continue any longer with Pleasure to themselves'.<sup>71</sup> A meeting of the 'Committee of the Academy of Ancient Music' was called for 24 May, at which the management of 'the Business of the Academy' was put in the hands of Albert Innes.<sup>72</sup> The 1787/8 season went ahead with a series of twelve concerts, but disagreements spilled over again in the spring. Minutes of a meeting held on 7 April 1788 indicate that ahead of the season the committee had agreed to increase the number of subscribers 'in consequence of the expense incurred by several new performers being engaged'.<sup>73</sup> By April, however, it had become apparent that they could not 'in future accommodate with convenience so numerous a company', and furthermore, that rehearsals, or a lack of them, was a continuing problem. The committee resolved 'that there should be rehearsals, if the subscriptions are sufficient to defray the expenses', that the subscription be raised to five guineas, that ladies be allowed to subscribe and that the number of subscribers be increased to 280. The difficulty in accommodating numbers was addressed by limiting subscribers to introducing 'two Ladies every other night, or one Lady each night'. Three of the minutes addressed Cooke directly and suggest that he had been discontented. The committee resolved that, alone amongst the performers, Cooke be given the privilege of a subscriber, be allowed to 'introduce two ladies', and, if rehearsals took place, receive a salary of 50 guineas instead of 40 for the extra trouble. Cooke 'did, in the most handsome and liberal manner, accept of the addition only upon these terms', for which he was thanked by the committee 'for this fresh and immediate mark of his disinterestedness and good-will to the Academy'.

The adjustments made in April, however, failed to steady the ship. Following a meeting on 30 October advertisements announced vacancies for subscribers.<sup>74</sup> These met with insufficient response, and a meeting was called on 11 December 'to investigate the affairs of the concert'.<sup>75</sup> It was not until 8 January that a rehearsal for the first concert was held. *The Times* reviewed it favourably, commenting that 'some new regulations have taken place in the band, which will put the concert on an equal

<sup>69</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 10 March 1788.

<sup>70</sup> In an advertisement for the subscription for the next season in the wordbook of 11 May 1786. See Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 55.

<sup>71</sup> Wordbook of 17 May 1787; quoted in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 61.

<sup>72</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 19 June 1787.

<sup>73</sup> The minutes were published in the wordbook of 1 May 1788; quoted in Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 66–67.

<sup>74</sup> *The Morning Post*, *The Times*, and *The World*, 5 November 1788.

<sup>75</sup> *The Morning Herald*, 8 December 1788.



footing with that at Hanover Square'.<sup>76</sup> However, several days later the *Morning Post* reported that the season had been reduced to ten concerts on account of expenses exceeding the subscription. It was doubted whether the concert would resume: 'the *old* and *new* directors having been constantly at war with each other. The old *Corps of Conductors*, however, seceding, left the management to the younger generals, who had more spirit, but not so much policy as their predecessors, in consequence of which, confusion and embarrassment prevailed'.<sup>77</sup> Rehearsals continued to be an issue, and there were concerns for the quality of performances 'if the Directors continue to plead the *poverty of the fund*' as an excuse for not having them. Nevertheless, 'The performers and conductors assembled together on Thursday, and the *shadow* of a *rehearsal* took place.'

Responses to the first concert on 15 January reinforce the sense that two different camps had opened up in the Academy. The *Morning Post* of 22 January compared the Academy's current state unfavourably with its former one at the Crown and Anchor, when its performances 'stood in high estimation'.<sup>78</sup> Now, the report continues, 'it is not without extreme solicitations on the part of the Conductors that any persons of fashion condescend to grace it with their presence'. The report again laments that 'the *poverty of the Fund* [...] is often used as a plea for the omission of what is absolutely necessary [...] namely, GENERAL REHEARSALS'. Furthermore, there were rumours that 'the Conductors have actually applied to the *performers* for a contribution towards its support, out of the pitiful stipend they derive from it by their ineffectual exertions'. This depiction was countered in the same paper four days later: 'The spleen which so visibly flows from the pen of disappointment [...] and that wish to destroy what they could not govern, is a principle happily adopted from Richard the Third, by those who publicly desired and expressed a wish that this most excellent Concert should be quashed because they were no longer supreme.' The concert, the reporter continued, 'was delightful [...] what pity it is that detraction should endeavour to rob others of that pleasure, which pride and malignant dissatisfaction deny to itself'. The report ends with notice of a rehearsal preceding the next concert. The remainder of the season was completed without further sparring in the papers, and most, if not all of the concerts were preceded by a rehearsal.

The fallout from the internal dissension of the season was a decision by subscribers to complete the break with the past initiated in 1783. Arnold, writing to Cooke in 1790 to defend his decision to accept the musical direction of the Academy, reported what had happened:

Previous to their last concerts, the morning after there was a general meeting of the Subscribers, Mess. Primatt & Street called on me [...] & informed me, "that in consequence of the late bad management of that Society, being left much in debt &c

<sup>76</sup> 10 January 1789. For the Professional Concert meeting at Hanover Square Rooms, see Simon McVeigh, 'The Professional Concert and Rival Subscription Series in London, 1783–1793', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 22 (1989), 1–135.

<sup>77</sup> 13 January 1789. 'Conductors' refers to the sub-directors that had resigned the previous April.

<sup>78</sup> The full report is transcribed in Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 252.

the Subscribers had thought fit to dissolve the Academy and that in order to begin di novo, they were determined to put the conduct of it into a professional persons hands[“].

Cooke, Arnold, and Thomas Dupuis were nominated for the role of musical director. According to Doane, Arnold was chosen by a very large majority and entrusted with the ‘direction and management of the Orchestra, the hiring of Instruments, engaging of Performers, and every other matter relative to the Performance’.<sup>79</sup> It has been suggested that Cooke was replaced because he could not bring the Academy to the requisite performing standard. It is not clear that this was, in fact, the case. It is probably more accurate to see the change as a desire on the part of newer subscribers – Cooke describes them as ‘a modernized race of members’ – to rid the organization of the vestiges of the old Academy, of which Cooke was the prime representative, in order to run the concert series in the manner of its primary competitors. Arnold was then at the height of his reputation and influence. In addition to his prominence as theatrical and oratorio composer, he had extensive experience in theatrical and subscription concert management, and since 1786 had, with Thomas Linley senior, managed the Drury Lane Lenten oratorio series. Following on from his participation in the 1784 Handel commemoration, he had in 1786 announced a project to produce a complete edition of Handel’s works, parts of which had commenced publication in 1787.<sup>80</sup> Also of significance to Academy subscribers was his lack of previous association with the Academy. Such a conclusion is supported by the fact that Cooke’s ejection was accompanied by a similar house clearing among the sub-directors. Table 1 lists the sub-directors for the ten seasons from 1785/6 to 1795. Apart from the Duke of Leeds (previously Marquis of Carmarthen), there is a clearly discernable change beginning with the 1790 season. From that point a remarkably consistent group emerges, led by the chemist Lacey Primatt (1724–1817).<sup>81</sup> It was Primatt and James Wallis Street (1750–1817)<sup>82</sup> who negotiated with Arnold following the vote in which he was selected a musical director. Henry Cooke named Primatt, Street, and ‘Mr Grub’ as the men who informed his father of the change in musical leadership.<sup>83</sup> Along with the City Vintner Robert Smith and John Livie, they are likely to have been responsible for the votes that led to the dissolving of the old Academy and Cooke’s removal.<sup>84</sup> In this

<sup>79</sup> Doane, *Musical Directory*, 80.

<sup>80</sup> Robert Hoskins, ‘Arnold, Samuel’, *Grove Music Online* <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/>> (accessed 10 March 2022).

<sup>81</sup> Primatt is referred to as Treasurer of the Academy in April 1790. He was a wealthy man (his marriage to Elizabeth Knapp brought £8000), whose business was based at 66 Aldersgate Street.

<sup>82</sup> Street was a stationer and bookseller with a business at 2, Bucklersbury, London. In 1814 he was Master of the Stationers’ Company.

<sup>83</sup> H. Cooke, *Some Account*, 12. ‘Mr Grub’ was probably Edward Grubb, Esq. (1758–1817), a solicitor and a subscriber to the New Musical Fund of 1794.

<sup>84</sup> For Robert Smith, founder member of the Glee club and collector of music, see Lucy Roe, ‘Robert Smith, Music Collector’, *Handel Institute Newsletter*, 14/2 (2005), 5–8. The ‘Mr. John Livie’, subscriber to Cooke’s *Collins’s Ode*, is probably the same ‘Mr. Livie’ who subscribed to *A Selection of the Most Favourite Scots-Songs Chiefly Pastoral* (London, 1791) and *A Selection of Original Scots Songs in Three Parts the Harmony by Haydn*, vol. 2 (London, 1792) and that Samuel Wesley invited to meet a few musical friends in a letter of September 1796. See Michael Kassler, *Samuel Wesley (1766–1837): A Source Book* (Ashgate, 2001), 174.

TABLE 1  
ACADEMY OF ANCIENT MUSIC SUB-DIRECTORS 1785–95

85/6	86/7	87/8	89	89/90
Earl of Effingham	Edmund Warren–Horne, Esq.	Albert Innes, Esq.	Mr [Robert] Smith	Duke of Leeds (formerly Marquis of Carmarthen)
Marquis of Carmarthen	Peter Stapel, Esq.	Marquis of Carmarthen	Albert Innes, Esq.	Lacey Primatt, Esq.
James Madden	John Read, Esq.	Peter Stapel, Esq.	Marquis of Carmarthen	Mr [Robert] Smith
Peter Stapel	Thomas Ingram, Esq.	James Madden, Esq.		Mr [?]John Livie
	James Madden, Esq.			
	Marquis of Carmarthen			
90/1	92	93	94	95
Duke of Leeds	Lac[e]y Primatt, Esq.	Lacey Primatt, Esq.	Mr [John] Livie	Mr [John] Livie
Lacey Primatt, Esq.	Mr [John] Livie	Mr [John] Livie	Duke of Leeds	Mr [Lacey] Primatt
Mr [Robert] Smith	Mr [Robert] Smith	Mr [Robert] Smith	Mr [Lacey] Primatt	Primatt
Mr [John] Livie	Mr [Edward] Hill	Mr [Edward] Hill	Mr [Robert] Smith	Mr [Robert] Smith
Mr [Edward] Hill	Mr [James Wallis]	Mr [James Wallis]	Mr [Edward] Hill <sup>a</sup>	Smith
Mr [?]James Wallis	Street	Street	Mr [James Wallis]	Duke of Leeds
Street	Street	Duke of Leeds	Street	
	Duke of Leeds			

Names for the 1785/6 season are taken from *The General Evening Post*, 10 December 1785, where the individuals are not specifically named as sub-directors. For the other seasons, individuals named as having selected the music in extant Academy programmes are taken to be sub-directors.

<sup>a</sup> In *The World*, 14 January 1794, Hill is described a Secretary to the Academy.

context it is worth noting that three of the seven sub-directors who dominated the Academy in the years after Cooke's removal had been subscribers to his large-scale concerted work *Collins's Ode on the Passions*, published in 1785: the Marquis of Carmarthen, John Livie, and Robert Smith.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, most of the sub-directors in the preceding years – James Madden, Peter Stapel, Edmund Warren-Horne, and Albert Innes – as well as Samuel Arnold and Edward Grubb had also subscribed.

In the 'Protest', Cooke vigorously questioned the reason for his removal and the method by which Arnold was appointed. Cooke claimed that no complaint regarding his musical leadership had been put to him, and he was sceptical as to why 'on the sudden motion of some junior Member, who perhaps may scarcely have contributed two or three annual Subscriptions' he had been 'ignominiously blackball[e]d as if ... guilty of some crime Charitably conceal'd but which made it necessary immediately to remove and degrade me from that Post I had so long maintained with Credit'.<sup>86</sup> He had not been informed of the vote, taken when he was ill, and the vacancy had not been

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Cooke, *Collins's Ode on the Passions* (Robert Birchall, 1785). I am grateful to Tim Eggington for sharing the subscription list with me.

<sup>86</sup> 'Protest', 3.

announced publicly. Cooke also questioned in what respects his successor excelled him and speculated that ‘many petty and humiliating circumstances’ to which he was subjected in relation to additional rehearsals in his last season were intended ‘to provoke a hasty Resignation’. Finally, however, Cooke acknowledged that the Academy was no longer the same organization he had led for more than three decades: “that the Old Academy was absolutely dissolved and brought to a final conclusion the present Establishment (say they) is in fact quite a new Institution”, perhaps I am ready enough to confess that I think this true.<sup>87</sup>

### Manuscripts, Library, and Instruments

In the ‘Protest’, Cooke acknowledged that his removal as musical director of the Academy was a *fait accompli*, but he was less sanguine with regard to points on which he felt a remedy was still possible. Foremost amongst these was a desire to reclaim manuscripts of his own music. Indeed, Cooke offered this as the primary reason for his appearance before the meeting, claiming that it represented his third time of asking for the return of certain manuscripts, and that he had already waited six months for a response. Cooke does not specify which of his works were still in the Academy’s possession, but the letter Samuel Arnold sent him in May 1790 refers to ‘some Anthems’. Three of Cooke’s instrumentally accompanied anthems were performed at the Academy in the years immediately preceding his departure: ‘I heard a great voice’ in 1787 and ‘Behold how good and joyful’ and ‘All the earth calleth upon truth’ in 1789.<sup>88</sup> ‘I heard a great voice’ is the only anthem by Cooke known to have been programmed in Arnold’s tenure. In addition, five of Cooke’s glees and movements from *The Morning Hymn*, Cooke’s arrangement of Galliard’s setting of the Hymn of Adam and Eve from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* were performed at the Academy after 1789. Performing material for the works programmed in Arnold’s time clearly remained in the Academy’s possession after Cooke’s departure. The large collection of Cooke’s music now in the Royal College of Music includes scores of all the preceding works.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, notes in manuscripts in this collection indicate that Cooke had made copies of a number of works specifically for the Academy, presumably relating to performances there, and there was probably a lack of clarity with regard to whether or not this material belonged to the Academy or to Cooke. As will be seen later, Arnold claimed to have instructed the assistant librarian to return Cooke’s music, but no other evidence remains to indicate what, if anything, was restored to him. In 1837, Henry Cooke claimed that works composed by his father for the Academy were lost ‘as the family never obtained them after its dissolution’.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>88</sup> Information on performances is drawn from programmes transcribed in Johnstone, ‘The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)’.

<sup>89</sup> See the list of Cooke’s works in Egginton, *The Advancement of Music*, 269–80.

<sup>90</sup> H. Cooke, *Some Account*, 10.

In addition to concerns about music in the Academy's possession that he considered to be his own, Cooke also questioned the oversight of the Academy's library. He asserted that his appointment at the Academy was annual – unlike that of other 'contractors' – and that it 'was durable so long as any Society or effects in the Library remained'.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, he maintained that he was still the 'legal, tho not your actual' librarian, and that William Thomson had been his assistant, even if the acting librarian. Cooke claimed that the library had been 'under my care [... since 17]49, as will appear by the signature and dates on many of the old covers but in the present case half the property may have been or will be lost, mislaid or convey'd away without any one being responsible for no body but myself knows what the Library did or ought to have contain'd'.<sup>92</sup> The latter comment related to his admission that, in expectation of continuation in his post, he had 'entered into some lasting arrangements', presumably loaning items from the library, and that he was the only person who could answer to such arrangements. In short, with regard to the Academy's books, he could not 'approve of their present Custody'.

Cooke also raised concerns regarding the Academy's instrument collection. It seems over many years he had taken in a considerable number of instruments to save them from neglect. He noted two especially – apparently keyboard instruments – that had been given to him expressly by their owners for the Academy's use, and which he and his son, presumably Robert, had gone to considerable trouble and expense over. Cooke's comments indicate that, much like music in the library, Academy members had gifted instruments to the Society without any formal acknowledgement, and that their use had been left to his discretion. Reference to the instruments offered Cooke the opportunity to reflect disdainfully on the musical accomplishments of the current subscribers. Were he to return instruments to the Academy's custody he questioned who among the subscribers might be 'able and willing to employ them for the general Benefit'. He asked the same with regard to the music books: 'let some, Gentleman, capable of singing his part at sight or at least by notes, stand up as champion for the whole body, and maintain their right.' 'This', he noted caustically, 'wou'd accord with the original institution.'

Cooke requested to keep one of the keyboard instruments that he been at some expense to repair, and which he had come to use in weekly meetings at his house. These meetings were replacements for the greatly reduced frequency of meetings of the Academy and served for 'the improvement of young students' and to entertain 'sev'ral of the elder [Academy] members with their old stile of musick'. John Marsh gave an account of one such meeting, which he attended on 2 May 1790, describing it as 'a kind of Concerto Spirituale with his sons, daughters & other musical people'.<sup>93</sup> With

---

<sup>91</sup> 'Protest', 4.

<sup>92</sup> Annotations in Cooke's hand, dated 19 or 26 September 1749, are found in London, Royal Academy of Music, MS 27D; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mus.c.103; London, British Library Add. MSS 34267 and 34279B. See H. Diack Johnstone, 'Westminster Abbey and the Academy of Ancient Music: A Library once Lost and now Partially Recovered', *Music & Letters*, 95 (2014), 329–73 (pp. 370–71).

<sup>93</sup> *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752–1828)*, ed. Brian Robins (Pendragon Press, 1998), 472.

regard to the rest of the instruments, Cooke wished to return them, requesting from the Academy ‘payment for repairs, and indemnity from future claims’. As with the return of his manuscripts, the result of the request is unknown. When Cooke’s musical remains were auctioned after the death of his daughter Amelia in 1845, the sale catalogue listed seventeen instruments ‘the property of the late Dr. B. Cooke’, including two five-octave double-manual Kirkman harpsichords, a six-octave Broadwood ‘Cabinet Pianoforte’, a chamber organ, two violoncellos (one formerly the property of Bartleman), one Guarneri and two Amati violins, two ‘foreign’ violins, a tenor violin, a viola d’amore, a guitar, an ‘antique’ lute, an ‘ancient’ theorbo-lute, and a cittern.

### ‘Tokens of My Authority’

Cooke’s document gives a strong sense of premeditated theatricality, since it shows that he planned to present to the general meeting a number of items as ‘tokens of my authority’, and that he thought carefully about where each would be presented within his address. Heading the document is a list of items: ‘S.<sup>r</sup> J. H.<sup>s</sup> cane. // D.<sup>r</sup> P. Picture // Ac. Medal. // Rings. N.M.M.S. Watch.’ The first item was the cane of Cooke’s close friend, Sir John Hawkins (1719–89). Hawkins became a member of the Academy in the mid-1740s and was its most important chronicler. In 1770, he published anonymously an *Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music* and in his *General History of Music* (1776) he devoted several passages to the Academy. We owe to Hawkins’s daughter, Letitia-Matilda Hawkins (1759–1835), additional anecdotes about the Academy as well as the most detailed account of Cooke’s personality, drawn from encounters between her father and Cooke.<sup>94</sup> Cooke later bequeathed the cane, described in his will as ‘my Goldheaded walking Cane late Sir John Hawkins’s’, to his relative John Wayet of Boston in Lincolnshire.<sup>95</sup> ‘D.<sup>r</sup> P. Picture’ is the watercolour miniature of Pepusch by Benjamin Arlaud, painted sometime in the first half of the 1710s, now held by the Royal Collection Trust (Figure 2).<sup>96</sup> The painting had formerly belonged to George Shelvocke (d. 1760), a member of the Academy to whom Pepusch had bequeathed it.<sup>97</sup> Shelvocke was the second husband of Mary (d. 1761), Cooke’s mother-in-law. The rim of the locket that frames the portrait is engraved ‘Bequeathed by his last will & testament to Geo. Shelvocke Esqr of ye General Post Office’. The portrait must have passed from Shelvocke to Cooke, who in turn left it to his son Robert. From him it passed to Henry, who quoted the inscription in *Some Account*. The Academy Medal was one of those dated 1750 and designed by Richard Yeo

<sup>94</sup> *Anecdotes, Biographical Sketches and Memoirs* (Rivington, 1822).

<sup>95</sup> London, National Archives, PROB 11/1237, fols. 218v–220v.

<sup>96</sup> Held by the Royal Collection Trust <<https://www.rct.uk/collection/420160/john-christopher-pepusch-1667-1752>> (accessed 12 May 2021). I am grateful to Roya Stuart-Rees for alerting me to this portrait.

<sup>97</sup> Pepusch’s will (National Archives, PROB 10/2134. ERD/1048) is transcribed in Frederick Donald Cook, ‘The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), with Special Reference to his Dramatic Works and Cantatas’, 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, King’s College, University of London, 1982), I, 342.





Figure 2. Portrait of J. C. Pepusch by Benjamin Arlaud. Royal Collection Trust/© His Majesty King Charles III 2023.

(c. 1720–79) after Andrea Sacchi's painting *Pasqualini Crowned by Apollo* (Figure 1).<sup>98</sup> The metal used for the medals reflected a hierarchy of the Academy's esteem. Extant copies are in silver or bronze, but Pepusch's will indicates that he was awarded one in gold, and in Cooke's will, his is described as 'the Academy Medal of Gold'.<sup>99</sup>

For the rings, presumably mourning rings, Cooke wrote initials only, but later passages in the 'Protest' suggest that three of them were left to him by Henry Needler, James Mathias, and George Shelvocke. Needler was a career civil servant and a skilled violinist. He joined the Academy in 1728 and served as leader of the orchestra from the 1730s to the 1750s.<sup>100</sup> After Needler's death, his widow Hester gave his large collection of music manuscripts to his close friend, the wealthy City merchant James

<sup>98</sup> I am grateful to Roya Stuart-Rees for information on the Academy Medal. Copies in silver and bronze are held in the British Museum (1882, 1004.1 and M.8598, respectively), and one in bronze is held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (1995.414). Sacchi's painting is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art <[www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437593](http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437593)> (accessed 12 May 2021).

<sup>99</sup> Pepusch bequeathed 'my gold Medal, presented me by the Musick Academy' to another Academy member, John Travers (c. 1703–58). See Cook, 'The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch', i, 342. In 1774, James Mathias wrote to the composer David Perez (1711–78) to offer him a gold medal and invite him to become a member of the Academy. See Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 101–03 (where the letter is reproduced) and Johnstone, 'Westminster Abbey and the Academy of Ancient Music', 336–37.

<sup>100</sup> Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 7.

Mathias, a bass singer who joined the Academy around 1730 and who later served it as treasurer and president.<sup>101</sup> Manuscripts from the Cooke Collection now in the Royal Academy of Music bear annotations showing that Cooke sent a copy of his nine-part canon, 'War begets poverty', to Mathias, and that Cooke's music was performed at Mathias's house.<sup>102</sup> If one of the two initials 'M' heading the 'Protest' was James Mathias, the other may indicate his brother Vincent (c. 1711–82). Vincent, sub-treasurer to the queen, and treasurer of Queen Anne's Bounty, was father of Thomas James Vincent (1754–1835), satirist and Italian scholar, whose name appears in the list of prospective subscribers for the 1785/6 Academy season. Thomas provided Cooke with texts for two glees and wrote the epitaph for the plaque marking Cooke's grave in Westminster Abbey.<sup>103</sup> That the Mathias family was very closely associated with Cooke and his sons is also attested by several musical manuscripts that passed between them. The 'Messaus-Bull Codex', British Library, Add. MS 23623, passed from Pepusch to the painter Gabriel Mathias (1719–1804), perhaps through his brother James. A note on the flyleaf reads 'The gift of Gabriel Mathias', presumably to his nephew Thomas, in whose hand the note probably is. From Thomas it passed to Henry Cooke, who annotated the flyleaf 'ex dono Tho: James Mathias'.<sup>104</sup> The manuscript subsequently appeared in the sale catalogue of Benjamin Cooke's library. British Library Add. MS 31585, duets by Benedetto Marcello, passed from James to Gabriel and thence to Robert Cooke. It was probably one of the items in lot 249 of Benjamin Cooke's sale catalogue: 'Duets by Handel, Torri, Marcello, &c. MSS.' The copy of the incidental music of Geminiani's *La Selva Incantata de Tasso*, which the composer presented to James Mathias in 1761, eventually became part of the Cooke Collection (MS 822).<sup>105</sup> Four different members of the Mathias family also subscribed to Cooke's *Collins's Ode*: Thomas James (two books), his brother George and sister Albinia one each, and 'Mrs Mary Ann Mathias' (their mother Marianne Mathias?).

The last of the items in the list heading the 'Protest', a watch, must be the item Cooke referred to in his will as 'my Gold Watch', which he left to his son Henry. The context of the 'Protest' indicates that it too had a particular relationship to a deceased member of the Academy, and it may have once belonged to Pepusch, who in his will left 'My watch' to a 'John Helot'.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Mathias later donated them to the British Library, where they are now Add. MSS 5036–62. Burney described his voice as 'admirably full, mellow, and extensive' in *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey*, part ii, 133. See also Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 82–83 and Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 7. In her will, Hester bequeathed £20 to Cooke's son Henry, who she described as her godson (National Archives, PROB 11/1105).

<sup>102</sup> MSS 814 and 808, respectively; see Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 83.

<sup>103</sup> Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 66, 87.

<sup>104</sup> The provenance of this manuscript, with an image of the flyleaf, is discussed in Rudolf Rasch, 'The Messaus-Bull Codex London, British Library, Additional Manuscript 23.623', *Revue belge de Musicologie*, 50 (1996), 93–127. Rasch mistook the identifications of Thomas James Mathias's and Henry Cooke's hands, reversing them.

<sup>105</sup> Eggington, *The Advancement of Music*, 83.

<sup>106</sup> Cook, 'The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch', i, 342.

Cooke's purposeful use of personal mementos in the address shows attention to theatrical effect, but it also provides moving witness to his attachment to the Academy, which was clearly bound up with memories of former members who had been his close friends and mentors. One of his annotations shows that he planned to wear the mourning rings on his fingers, which he doubtless held up as he spoke of them. Having initially planned to refer to them towards the end of the address, he changed his mind, interlineating five little circles at the point in the document's second sentence, which rearranged read: 'my real and true Old friends of this Society are most of them dead, as these memento's testify, and their bodies are buried in peace but their Names and their Persons too live yet in my memory.' His decision to show these items at the beginning of his address strengthened the evocation of deceased academicians who he pointedly contrasted with 'their mere representatives', the current subscribers. This contrast is a primary theme underpinning the 'Protest', that the old Academy, of which Cooke was the last representative, had been replaced by a new counterfeit society.

Cooke returned to the items in the discussion of his role as librarian. He displayed the portrait of Pepusch as he explained that many of the books in the library 'have been deriv'd from my honour'd Old Master'. To confirm that he was 'a kind of Trustee in Duty bound' to see the collection 'properly employ'd and safely dispos'd of', he produced the watch, the portrait of Pepusch, a key to the library, and Hawkins's cane – drawn as little figures in the text – 'as tokens of my authority', adding as an afterthought 'and I possess many more that are not portable' (Figure 3). His portrait of Needler, from whom he had inherited several instruments, was one such 'token of credit' too large to produce in person. This was probably the portrait by Gabriel Mathias after which the engraving by Charles Grignion was made and subsequently reproduced in Hawkins's *General History*.<sup>107</sup> Cooke also refers to 'things similar from M<sup>r</sup>. Shelvocke, M<sup>r</sup>. Mathias and others my former respectable Friends all members of the Old Academy, not of the Present'. It was here Cooke first planned to show the mourning rings before he decided to produce them at the beginning of the 'Protest'. But he also seems to be referring to additional portraits too. Although his will does not specify the portrait of Needler, it does include 'the large picture of the late George Shelvocke's Esq<sup>r</sup>'.

The many crossings out and insertions in the 'Protest' attest to the care Cooke took over its wording. Many of the emendations are improvements in style, but a number speak potently of his sense that the Academy of Ancient Music as he had known it had ceased to be. The most striking of these occurs in the first sentence, where he referred to: 'my much Respected and Regretted Friends the deceas'd or dispers'd Members of the Old Academy'. Cooke struck through the word 'Old' with two vertical strokes as if to affirm the precedence of the society as he had known it over that to which he would deliver his address. Later, as we have seen, he did use the formation 'Old Academy' to

<sup>107</sup> See vol. 2, between pp. 806 and 807 (p. 124 of vol. V of the 1776 edition). A copy of the Grignion engraving is held by the British Museum (1943,0410.1856) <[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1943-0410-1856](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1943-0410-1856)> (accessed 12 May 2021).



without  
 previous Examination of what was <sup>surrendered</sup> given up  
 and what rec<sup>d</sup> otherways who is to be accountable  
 for this safe Custody this was <sup>continually</sup> done carefully (and  
 it was, a work of time) when they were put <sup>under</sup>  
 my Care in the Year 79. as will appear by the  
 signature <sup>and Date</sup> on many of the old covers, <sup>but</sup> ~~it is~~  
 in the present case half ~~of the~~ <sup>the</sup> Property may <sup>have been</sup>  
<sup>will be</sup> lost, mislaid or conveyd away <sup>and</sup> without any  
 ones knowledge, or any one <sup>being</sup> responsible, for no  
 body <sup>but myself</sup> knows what the Library is or ought to have  
 containd. In one of the preceding Committees (the  
 last at which I was present) a Resolution was  
 made and a Minute ~~was~~ taken relative to <sup>the</sup> its  
<sup>then present</sup> state of the Library, was this <sup>ever</sup> brought forward  
 at the General Meeting or has it been <sup>conceal'd</sup> ~~rescind'd~~?  
 for I have not heard that it was rescind'd; &  
 the late Mr. Thompson has for some years past  
 been the acting Librarian, for the Business encreas'd  
 to such a degree that it became impossible for me  
 to execute it, he was therefore appointed Assistant,  
 but I am at this Moment your only legal, tho  
 not your actual Librarian, and I still carry the  
 Key in my Pocket for it has never been recall'd,  
 and so many of the Books have been deriv'd from  
 my honour'd Old Master Dr. Pepusch (:) and from  
 other <sup>friendly</sup> whose Designs in giving them I am well  
 known to me that I cannot but consider myself  
 as a kind of Trustee in Duty bound to see them pro-  
 perly employ'd and <sup>safely</sup> dispos'd and I produce these things  
 as tokens of my Authority. ~~and~~ ~~these~~ ~~things~~

Figure 3. Benjamin Cooke's 'Protest', p. 5, MS 1700/2/9. Reproduced with the permission of Special Collections, Leeds University Library.

distinguish it from the present one, and to accept that it had been dissolved in the vote taken in 1789. The occasion on which Cooke delivered the address must have been a humiliating one, forced as he was to resort to personal mementos as a means of asserting his former status within an organization he had served for the greater part of his life. He

nevertheless maintained a great sense of dignity in the address; it never descends into harangue, though he himself used the word in his closing words:

Gentlemen, I am oblig'd to you for your favourable attention to my harangue, I wish you all severally health and happiness, & remain, tho not in the strict sense as heretofore, yet still in a more liberal construction, I continue to be your very humble servant, Benjamin Cooke.

### **'A True Statement of Facts'**

One striking point in the 'Protest' is Cooke's allegation that Samuel Arnold had acted in complicity with the sub-directors of the Academy prior to the vote through which he was elected as musical director. Cooke felt it 'improbable' that Arnold had not agreed to his nomination: 'for is a Contractor ever nominated and elected before the Conditions of such a contract have been agreed and settled on?'. This opinion reached Arnold by way of a letter Cooke sent to Lacey Primatt (no doubt similar in character to the 'Protest') and through Thomas Dupuis, to whom Cooke apparently expressed his judgement regarding Arnold's culpability in the affair. This hearsay prompted Arnold to write directly to Cooke in a letter of 20 May 1790 claiming that he held 'an unjust and unwarrantable opinion of me, & of my character'.

The first half of the letter addressed claims regarding Cooke's property, which Arnold interpreted as an accusation that he was himself responsible for withholding 'some Anthems' from him. In response Arnold ordered Fierman Joseph Dorion, who had taken over as assistant Academy librarian, to return the anthems to Cooke, or to invite him to retrieve them himself.<sup>108</sup> Arnold proceeded to offer his version of the events that led to his appointment as musical director at the Academy. He reported that the nominations had resulted in two votes for Cooke, while the rest went to him, and that he had insisted that the sub-directors first approach Cooke, 'acquitting me of any unhandsome behaviour towards you', before he would accept. On finding Cooke ill with the gout, Primatt and Street 'communicated their business' to Cooke's son Robert, and Arnold, satisfied, accepted the post. Arnold subsequently called on Cooke and, finding him still indisposed, left a message with Robert 'requesting the attendance of the Abbey Boys at the Academy, offering the same terms' Cooke had received previously though without the future requirement of his attendance; Cooke rejected the offer. 'This is a true statement of facts', Arnold concluded, accusing Cooke of holding a grudge against him 'merely because you think the late Subscribers to the Academy of Ancient Musick have treated you ill'.

Cooke in turn annotated Arnold's letter contradicting several of its assertions. To Arnold's claim that he had ordered the return of music to Cooke he wrote: 'No books return'd at this time when the Letter was written.' To the claim that 'the Subscribers had thought fit to dissolve the Academy in order to begin di novo', Cooke responded

---

<sup>108</sup> Dorion was assistant to Arnold and Robert Smith. See Johnstone, 'The Academy of Ancient Music (1726–1802)', 13.

‘this is denied by the Body’. This response, which conflicts with Cooke’s acceptance in the ‘Protest’ that the Academy had voted to dissolve itself and reform, may suggest that at the general meeting at which he delivered the ‘Protest’ he was informed that no such vote had taken place. To Arnold’s insistence that the sub-directors see Cooke before he would accept the post, Cooke wrote, ‘Dr. Ar: was sent for to the Meeting and it was instantly settled.’ Finally, to the suggestion that terms were offered him for the attendance of the Abbey boys at the Academy, Cooke responded ‘no terms off’r’d at all’.

Cooke harboured ill will towards Arnold for an extended period, pointedly refusing to join the Graduates’ Meeting, which met for the first time at Arnold’s house in November 1790. In his chronicle of the society, J. W. Callcott (1766–1821) touched diplomatically on the dispute between Cooke and Arnold:

all the Graduates were present D<sup>f</sup>. Cooke excepted, who having lately lost the situation he had held so many years at the Academy of antient Music by the appointment of D<sup>f</sup>. Arnold, felt himself so much dissatisfied that he declined being considered as a Member. But the high respectability of his character & the great opinion generally entertained of his abilities made his absence no small cause of regret to several Members who thought it a most desirable object that “Brethren should dwell together in unity” & to the acute observations of Sir W[illiam]. P[arsons]. & his extensive knowledge of the world we owe the subsequent attendance of D<sup>f</sup>. Cooke to whom invitations were regularly sent & whose irritated passions were cooled by the respect continually shewn[.] The limits of this short account will not permit the Author to trace the history of the change at the Academy, but in justice to D<sup>f</sup>. Arnold it is proper to add that the voice of the subscribers call him unsoliciting to the place & that he felt as a man the extremely delicate situation in which a person stands who succeeds to a situation during the life of one who had been originally a child protected by that very Society.<sup>109</sup>

Cooke eventually joined the group at its fifth meeting on 22 June 1791.

Arnold’s tenure at the Academy continued until his death on 22 October 1802. His early seasons were apparently successful both musically and financially. Ahead of the 1795 season, however, subscriptions slumped and the concert series was reduced from eight to seven performances. Further attrition prompted the society to abandon Freemasons’ Hall and to return to the Crown and Anchor Tavern. The Academy’s last concert took place on 22 April 1802.

### **Henry Cooke’s Annotations and *Some Account of Doctor Cooke***

Details of the change of leadership at the Academy and Cooke’s discontent did not find their way into the newspapers despite the fact that they must have been common knowledge in musical circles. Doane’s ‘History’, the only extant published report on the matter before Henry Cooke’s *Some Account*, suppressed what Benjamin Cooke considered to be the secrecy of the process, and his disgruntled feelings over the affair. This is perhaps unsurprising given the fact that Doane dedicated *A Musical Directory for the Year 1794* to Samuel Arnold. In his biographies of Arnold and of Cooke in *The*

<sup>109</sup> British Library, Add. MS 27693, fols. 9–11.



*Harmonicon*, William Ayrton (1777–1858), who was married to Arnold's daughter, Marianne, made no mention of the business.<sup>110</sup>

It may, in fact, have been Ayrton's biography of Cooke, a rather muted affair in relation to the effusive biography of his father-in-law, that prompted Henry to publish an account of his father's life. Several correspondences between *Some Account* and Ayrton's 'Memoir of Benjamin Cooke' suggest that Ayrton had contacted Henry directly for information about his father and that Henry had provided material that he later incorporated into his own biography. Amongst the passages that show the greatest resemblance are those regarding the family of Benjamin Cooke's mother, the details of Cooke's summer excursions to recover from fits of the gout, and comments that several musical works written for the Academy were lost, Cooke's family having 'failed in all its endeavours to recover or obtain any account of them'. Henry Cooke was not the sole source of Ayrton's biography, which draws upon John Hawkins's account of Pepusch's role in the formation of the Academy, and on Letitia Hawkins's *Anecdotes*.<sup>111</sup> However, its brevity and its silence regarding Cooke's removal as director of the Academy may have in part encouraged Henry to redress its shortcomings with his own biographical sketch.

In composing *Some Account*, Henry drew upon the 'Protest' and on Arnold's letter. Details regarding the sums paid Cooke for his work at the Academy and claims that it retained some of his music depend on information from the 'Protest', while the details of the vote of the subscribers, the dissolution of the Academy, the distinctive wording that the subscribers intended to begin '*di novo*', and the role played by Primatt and Street demonstrate that Arnold's letter was a primary source.<sup>112</sup> Henry Cooke examined both the 'Protest' and the letter in detail and in tandem, annotating both with comments that show he felt strongly the injury to his father over the Academy affair. Henry's hand is bold and distinctive; the forcefulness of his many underlinings and exclamation marks attest to the emotive partisanship of his reading. His annotations to the 'Protest' were limited to two comments made on the verso sides of pages 3 and 4, both of which he signed, and possibly a few underlinings of his father's text. The most significant refers to the 'safe custody' (p. 5) of the books in the Academy library, which he annotated 'they were all stolen !!! at last. H. Cooke & sold many of them by auction. (at Mr Williams &c sale)'. Henry's accusation must refer to the auction of 8–10 June 1820 of 'the Property of the Late Mr. G. E. Williams, Organist of Westminster Abbey, and Several other Eminent Professors (Deceased)'. Johnstone has demonstrated that this sale included 'scores and parts of nearly all those Handel anthems that had been listed as being among the works "most usually performed" by the Academy in its 1761 wordbook'.<sup>113</sup> George Ebenezer Williams (1783–1819) had been deputy organist to Samuel Arnold;<sup>114</sup> he may well have

<sup>110</sup> 'Memoir of Samuel Arnold', 7 (1830), 137–39; 'Memoir of Benjamin Cooke', 9 (1831) 207–08.

<sup>111</sup> J. Hawkins, *A General History*, II, 832; L. Hawkins, *Anecdotes*, 228–29.

<sup>112</sup> He must also have drawn on another source for he lists 'Messrs. Primat, Street, and Grub' as the men who informed his father of the Academy vote. Grub is not mentioned in the 'Protest' or in Arnold's letter, but it may be a personal reminiscence, since it was apparently Henry who received the delegation from the Academy when his father was indisposed (see below).

<sup>113</sup> Johnstone, 'Westminster Abbey and the Academy of Ancient Music', 333.

<sup>114</sup> John Bumpus, *A History of Cathedral Music 1549–1889* (London, [1900–09]), II, 333.

performed the same duty for Robert Cooke who was Abbey organist from 1802 until his death in 1814 when Williams succeeded him. It seems likely that when the Academy was wound up following Arnold's death in 1802, some part of its library was transferred to the Abbey, if, in fact, it had not already been transferred there under Arnold's auspices when the Academy vacated Freemasons' Hall in 1795. Such a circumstance would explain why a significant residue of the Academy's library has remained at the Abbey to the present day. The library would subsequently have been known to Robert Cooke, and through him, to his brother Henry. In such a circumstance, Henry's accusation that 'they were all stolen !!!' could, in addition to the Williams sale, refer to the Academy books being transferred by Arnold, or at his death, to the Abbey. He certainly knew that material in the Williams sale derived from the Academy collection, knowledge that may ultimately have been gained through his brother of Academy material held at the Abbey.

Perhaps unsurprisingly Henry Cooke's annotations of Arnold's letter are more aggressive. He underlined many passages in ways that communicate sarcasm or outright disagreement, and he also corrected words and spellings. In a number of places he added angry exclamation points, twice resorting to nine: following the sentence in which Arnold reported ordering Dorion to return Benjamin Cooke's manuscripts and at Arnold's statement that Cooke refused the offer regarding the use of the Abbey boys at the Academy. He also corrected Arnold's account of the delegation sent to inform his father of the Academy vote, indicating that he met them rather than his brother Robert. His memory of receiving the news on his father's behalf, and subsequently passing it to him, may help to account for the strength of his response to Arnold's letter, revealed most starkly in the annotation under Arnold's sign-off: 'You are an ass' (Figure 4).

Reference to the G. E. Williams sale suggests that Cooke did not annotate the documents before 1820. By the time he came to publish *Some Account* in 1837 his feelings seem to have mellowed. He devoted one page to the Academy affair and did not mention Arnold at all. He also suppressed the existence of the 'Protest', recording only his father's comment that 'the subscribers had done that for him which he should never have had the courage to do himself'. Though reported as a direct quote, Henry pithily edited his father's more florid formation of this thought, found on the penultimate page of the 'Protest'. Henry's concluding remarks regarding the demise of the Academy were dispassionate and perceptive: 'The foundation of the Academy must have been extremely solid and good to have lasted so many years; and until it was utterly extinguished by modern improvements.'<sup>115</sup>

In respect of the competing accounts of the Academy affair, which come either from Cooke and his son, or from Arnold and his supporters, it is interesting to note Joseph Warren's comments, who we may imagine to be largely disinterested. In remarks prefacing the 'Protest', Warren attributed the omission of an account of Cooke's displacement as musical director at the Academy in *The Harmonicon* biographies of Cooke and Arnold to the fact that Ayrton 'had a family reason for suppressing it all

---

<sup>115</sup> *Some Account*, 13.

After which I took the first opportunity  
of calling on you, willing to shew you every  
attention in my power, requesting the  
attendance of the Abbey Boys at the  
Academy, offering the same terms <sup>not terms offered at all</sup> that  
you had for many years received for  
them (altho your personal attendance was  
not required) as you was still confined,  
I left the message with your son, who  
calling on me the next day, left word  
with some of my people that the answer  
was NO! —!!!!!!

This is a true statement of facts, which I  
defy any person upon earth to contradict.  
It then remains for you <sup>it want not</sup> coolly to reflect  
whether you can be justified in harboring  
such unjust ideas of me, respecting <sup>certainly</sup> my  
conduct towards you, or whether it will be  
proper in future to traduce my character  
<sup>especially</sup> because you think the late sub-  
scribers <sup>with me</sup> to the Academy of Ancient Music  
have treated you ill. I am Sir,  
Your Obedient Servant  
S. Arnold

MS 1700/2/9

Figure 4. Letter from Samuel Arnold to Benjamin Cooke, [p. 4], MS 1700/2/9. Reproduced with the permission of Special Collections, Leeds University Library.

together'. For his own part, Warren felt that Cooke was very ill-used by the Academy, calling the affair 'A shameful piece of business' and concluding that 'Dr Arnold's conduct was highly blameable'.

Two autograph copies of *Some Account* are extant. The earlier draft, from the library of Christopher Hogwood, is now in the Gerald Coke Handel Collection at the Foundling Museum.<sup>116</sup> It is in most respects like the copy at the University of Leeds,

<sup>116</sup> 12/E/Cooke.

but it retains interest for some additional information that Cooke cut, and for its footnotes, found in the print, but which the later manuscript does not contain. Two subsequently deleted notes gloss his father's appointment as Academy librarian. The first states the period in which Benjamin Cooke was librarian – 'about 3. Year. 1749. 1752' – and lists his successors:

In 1759 Bellamy became Librarian Academy

1770 Thompson Do.

1789 Dorien Do.

(it is believed)

H. Cooke.

The second note touches on an association between Benjamin Cooke and the Concert of Ancient Music: '2d therefore renders it perfectly impossible that Dr Cook cd. have had any part in obtaining surreptitious copies for the concert of Antient Music instituted 1772.' Cooke may have removed the first note in light of his father's claim in the 'Protest' to have remained the 'legal' Academy librarian until 1789. The second note may be an otherwise unknown rumour perhaps generated because Benjamin Cooke dedicated the print of *Collins's Ode* to the directors of the Handel Commemoration, the Earls of Exeter, Sandwich and Uxbridge, Sir Watkins Williams Wynn and Sir Richard Jebb, all of whom were directors of the Concert of Ancient Music, and Joah Bates, who was its musical director.

The manuscript at the University of Leeds appears to be that against which Cooke corrected a copy of *Some Account* now in the British Library.<sup>117</sup> A few minor differences between the manuscript and the print reflect editorial changes introduced by the printer, while an annotation on page 8 of the manuscript, 'Sig. b fol. 9', clearly refers to the print. Several of the annotations in the print refer to 'Booby', the moniker of the printer, Vize Slater. At the bottom of page 13 of the print Cooke added the mordant comment 'alterd by Booby -\ Reformed he said' in relation to three corrections he had entered on the page. The print Cooke annotated was not apparently a proof, since none of the corrections he marked appear in the only other copy known to me, that which Vincent Novello included in British Library, Add. MS 65387 along with an engraving of Benjamin Cooke's portrait and transcriptions of twenty-seven of his secular works.<sup>118</sup> The title page of *Some Account* indicates that it was 'printed for the author', and it may be the case that Henry was never able to sell them. He died in 1840 and 450 copies of *Some Account* are listed in the 1845 sale catalogue of Benjamin Cooke's library.

<sup>117</sup> General Reference Collection 10804.bbb.7.(4).

<sup>118</sup> In the table of contents, dated 1847, Novello recorded his high opinion of Cooke's music: 'Most of these curious Compositions, which are as beautiful as they are rare, have never yet been published.' Novello also assembled a volume of transcriptions of Benjamin Cooke's sacred works: British Library, Add. MS 65388.

## Conclusion

Cooke's 'Protest' and Arnold's letter are crucial sources for understanding the change of leadership at the Academy of Ancient Music in 1789, offering us direct insight into the emotions and responses of the primary protagonists in the affair. They also offer significant insights into the factors that led to the leadership crisis and to the reasons it was resolved in Arnold's favour. Perhaps the most revealing evidence in this respect are the sideswipes Cooke took in the 'Protest' at the musical abilities of the subscribers to the Academy, comments that probably left many of them puzzled. In 1789, none of London's professional concert series were predicated on subscribers possessing any degree of musical skill, nor had such skill ever been an expectation of concert subscription. London's concert series were primarily commercial undertakings in which there was a clear division between professional performers and those whose subscriptions paid for their services. Choices to subscribe were driven by general enjoyment of music, or indeed by the social desirability of the events.<sup>119</sup> The Academy of Ancient Music was alone in having been in existence for over a half century, with its origin and traditions rooted in a learned, participatory society rather than a commercial enterprise. In the 1780s, Cooke continued to cleave to the Academy's former traditions, in which a significant number of its members had been skilled performers. It is also clear that his allegiance to the 'Old' Academy extended beyond its scholarly and participatory ethos and was rooted in emotional ties to deceased members who had been his mentors and close friends. It is surely the latter which led to his self-confessed inability to renounce the organization until it had renounced him.

From a modern vantage it is noteworthy that Cooke succeeded in preserving many traditional principles of the Academy as late of 1783 in the face of the growth of subscription concert series and the increased musical professionalization that accompanied it. It may not be a coincidence that only after the death of James Mathias in 1782 significant changes were made to its operating principles. Mathias was president of the Academy at least in 1774; whether he held the post for a more extended period is not known. He was a skilled singer whose experience was rooted in an earlier period of the Academy, and he may have been instrumental in helping Cooke preserve the older principles of the institution. As a prominent and wealthy merchant, he was probably influential among the Academy's subscribers, whose constituency was characterized as 'chiefly bankers and merchants from the city'.<sup>120</sup> As he and other older members of the Academy died or retired, Cooke was left exposed. It seems likely that Cooke's comments in the 'Protest' unfavourably contrasting the old and new ways in which the Academy functioned had been voiced regularly by him since 1783, irritating newer subscribers, who surely viewed their relationship to the Academy as did subscribers to any of the other prominent subscription concerts of the day.

---

<sup>119</sup> McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn*, esp. ch.4, 'The Concert in London Life'.

<sup>120</sup> Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences* (London, 1826), 165; McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn*, 33–34.



The musical offering and the social appeal of the Academy were sufficient to attract subscribers in the years between 1783 and 1789 albeit with more than occasional difficulty. In that context it is easy to see why Samuel Arnold proved to be such an attractive prospect to the subscription base. His professional record as a composer, conductor, and theatre and oratorio director gave reason to believe he could lead the Academy effectively. Like Cooke he had the learned authority provided by a doctorate, and scholarly interests: most notably his Handel edition. Unlike Cooke, he had no previous association with the Academy and no personal investment in its historical operations. In November 1789, Academy subscribers may have reasonably expected that Arnold would support a musical repertoire broadly consistent with that which had prevailed at the Academy since 1783, without the resistance to the operation of a subscription series that characterized Cooke's musical leadership.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Arnold's successful thirteen-year leadership of the Academy seems to have largely eclipsed that of Cooke's, as indeed had Arnold's wider musical reputation. Charles Burney provided a lengthy and flattering biography of Arnold in Rees's *Cyclopaedia* in which his work at the Academy was said to have been 'conducted ... with honour to himself, and with satisfaction to the academicians and subscribers';<sup>121</sup> similar comments appeared in Sainsbury's *Dictionary of Musicians* of 1824.<sup>122</sup> No entry on Cooke appeared in the *Cyclopaedia* and the rather brief entry in the *Dictionary* made no mention of his association with the Academy.<sup>123</sup> Whether or not Henry Cooke knew of his father's omission from the *Cyclopaedia*, or the suppression of his work at the Academy in *Dictionary of Musicians*, he seems very likely to have known Ayrton's memoir of his father in the *Harmonicon* as well as that of Arnold. In *Some Account*, he must have hoped to redress a perceived imbalance in the reception of his father's achievements in relation to those of Arnold's, and to restore his father's contribution to the Academy. The hundreds of unsold copies of *Some Account* listed in the sale of his father's musical effects after his own death offer a mute testament to his project.

### Supplementary material

To view the Appendix for this article (transcriptions of Cooke's 'Protest' and Arnold's letter to Cooke), please visit <http://doi.org/10.1017/rma.2024.2>.

<sup>121</sup> Abraham Rees, *Cyclopaedia; or Universal Dictionary* (London, 1802–19). Arnold's entry appears in Volume 2, part four, published in April 1803.

<sup>122</sup> John Sainsbury, *A Dictionary of Musicians* (London, 1824), I, 32. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this reference.

<sup>123</sup> *A Dictionary of Musicians*, I, 171.