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Rachael Durkin

'Magnificence of promises': novelty instruments in concert in Britain, *c.*1750–1800

The impetus behind the creation of a new musical instrument is often complex, subject to a unique range of factors specific to the time and place. While changes in musical style may be one cause, broader economic, technological and sociocultural matters can wield significant influence on an instrument's design and dissemination.[1] Fashions, for example, largely drive the uptake of a new or improved instrument, whose degree of success is dictated by the whims and fancies of the time. Novelty, too, can spark interest in a new instrument. In the 18th century the idea of novelty became a fashionable trait in its own right, leading in a musical context to the presentation in concert of a range of new or unusual instruments.[2]

In this article I argue that novel musical instruments of the second half of the 18th century, whether imported from overseas or newly invented, were used as a means of self-promotion for the performer, and in some cases were intrinsically linked with their identity as immigrant musicians in Britain. I start by examining music marketing in the 18th century, then consider what novelty means in the context of musical performance. Using the work of Peter Holman and Simon McVeigh as a springboard,[3] I consider, firstly, imported musical instruments which existed in reasonable numbers in Britain, focusing on the mandolin, English guittar and viola d'amore. I then move on to observe the more fleeting innovations to grace British concert rooms and theatres, including the inventions of Charles Clagget, and I draw attention to the sociocultural forces which may have encouraged their development. I conclude by surmising that even with the best marketing and inventions, the majority of novelty instruments were only ever destined for public performance as promotional tools, and were not intended to be brought into the home for domestic music-making.

Music marketing

We know relatively little about the marketing of musical performances in the 18th century. The ephemeral evidence which has survived, namely newspapers, only provides a small snapshot of the performance activities in a town or city, and does not necessarily offer entirely reliable indications of programme content;[4] Cyril Ehrlich warns that newspapers were 'recklessly careless' in their reporting.[5] We do not know for sure who penned concert adverts, but whether it was a concert promotor or the musician themselves—these were often one and the same—there is evidence that on some level they understood the art of the marketing spiel. Work by Catherine Harbor has exposed the newspaper marketing practices of performers and concert promoters in London between 1672 and 1749,[6] practices that very much continued to develop for the rest of the 18th century and beyond as part of the accelerated commercialization of music. This improvement in marketing practice did not go unnoticed; Samuel Johnson would write in 1759 that 'The trade of advertising is now so near to perfection, that it is not easy to propose any improvement'.[7] But such perfection created issues of noise, as Johnson acknowledged: 'Advertisements are now so numerous that they are very negligently perused, and it has, therefore, become necessary to gain attention by magnificence of promises, and by eloquence sometimes sublime and sometimes pathetick'.[8]

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The marketing of concerts in the 18th century is of course part of a much larger cultural phenomenon involving experiences and networking, underpinned by capitalism, consumerism and fashion. Musical performances, like the pleasure gardens, theatres and assembly rooms, were part of what we would now call the 'experience economy': a term I use here to denote the purchase of intangible lived experiences much akin to modern concert attendance.[9] The running of such events was a commercial endeavour, and promoters worked to portray their distinctive offering as a place to see and be seen through much patter and puff. For example, the marketing of Vauxhall and Ranelagh gardens in London often relied on citing the presence of notable members of society— 'the Quality …, Nobility and Gentry'—as hosts or guests at events;[10] similar language is used across event marketing of the Georgian period. The social capital of attending was so great that there is much evidence of box-sharing at the theatre and opera, and of theatres being packed with all ranks of society.[11]

At a fundamental level, attendance at any of these experiences provided opportunities to network and socialize, and to stay abreast of fashionable society news. As a form of social posturing and self-fashioning, then, attendance at more learned events such as musical concerts and operas would provide fodder for conversation in exalted social circles, making it desirable to be at the forefront of developments as consumers of the latest styles of performance. It is here I locate one of the key factors behind the adoption or invention of unusual and novel musical instruments: in order to attract and retain an audience under the pressures of a rapidly growing concert scene, artists were forced to create distinctive experiences which met the appetite for fast-paced changes in music and wider cultural fashions.

A word on novelty

The idea of novelty in music, be it the performance itself, the performers or their instruments, is very much bound to wider notions of fashion in the 18th century. Fashion, Maxine Berg argues, is 'associated with the irrational and the impermanent', wholly reliant on the new and novel, 'the caprice and valorisation of ephemerality'.[12] But fashion was not the same as taste, which denoted a more measured sense of permanence.[13] Novelty was identified at the time as problematic, being 'the most superficial of all the affections … [it] changes its object perpetually' (1757),[14] 'enter[s] more into the *extreme*' (1783),[15] and had become the prevailing fashion, which 'every man who gives public exhibitions must consult' (1785).[16] Novelty therefore started as something quite distinctive, related to the more established fashions just enough that it could be readily accepted without diluting their unique identity. As the 18th century progressed, novelty then became a fashion in its own right, a trend which can be traced through advertisements for concerts, lessons and instrument sales, as musicians struggled to be seen as individuals in a burgeoning musical marketplace. For the consumer, novelty was 'a powerful symbol of wealth and status', and 'reflected a progressive outlook', demarcating (when done well) a line between fashionable concerts and those of lesser quality.[17]

Novelty in music can therefore be seen in a number of guises and at varying levels of quality during the 18th century. Some novelty concerts featured more traditional concert repertory coupled with an unusual act, such as Mr Rocke's performance in Aberdeen in 1759 which saw him perform 'a surprising Novelty' by playing on the violin and two virginals at the same time.[18] Novelty could also result from the arrival of a famous musician or composer from overseas, or the performance of a new and notable work, such as operas featuring Italian singers. The 1758 performance of the opera *Demetrio* at the King's Theatre, London, serves as a good example of an event that was positioned as prestigious and exclusive for the upper classes, as denoted by the expensive ticket prices: half a guinea for a box seat, or five shillings in the gallery.[19] The opera starred the castratos Gaetano Quilici and Ferdinando Tenducci, and while castratos were not a new phenomenon in London, they are still likely to have garnered attention.[20] Instrumental performances by women, such as Ann Ford,[21] or concerts featuring prodigious children, were also notable novelties[22]—the latter presenting a potentially lucrative way for families to capitalize on their child's talents. Alongside these high- and middle-brow performances, novelty entertainments served the lower end of the market with content that sat somewhere on a broad spectrum between serious performance and circus act.

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These entertainments were what we would liken today to variety shows, including non-musical events such as rope dancing (illus.1), comedic skits and visual effects alongside more traditional musical performances. They were often criticized for their more light-hearted approach to music-making.[23]

In 1777 one Signor Romain and his 'Italian Company' toured England performing their novelty concerts or entertainments. Romain was originally a member of Mr Breslaw's touring company, which performed variety shows across Britain. An advert for a concert in Edinburgh in 1774 by Breslaw includes an assurance that 'every performer in the company shall be capable of doing everything above mentioned, immediately by themselves'[24]—apparently indicative of a widespread issue of failure to deliver on the 'magnificence of [their] promises'.[25] Many of the elements found in Breslaw's performances were later adopted by Romain's Italian Company, including performers such as 'Sieur Rosignole', who was known for his imitation of bird calls.[26] The first mention of Romain's 'Italian Company' is found in 1777, the same time as Breslaw was promoting 'his ITALIAN COMPANY' in Leeds.[27] It seems that Romain left Breslaw's troupe to form his own, and Breslaw evidently saw this as unwanted rivalry.

Performances led by Romain featured Rossignol's bird calls, comic songs and acts, costumes, and more serious music billed as overtures, symphonies and trios. A performance in Ipswich was advertised as a 'Great Exhibition' consisting of four acts, alternating music ('musical exhibition') with comedic puppet shows ('The Ombres Chinoises').[28] Many concerts promoted Romain's own trick performance on the violin, being played in 'five different Attitudes': '1.

1 *The Rope Dance*, by Léonard Defrance, 18th century, oil on wood (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 71.105; image: public domain)

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Over his Head; 2. Under his Thigh; 3. Behind his Back; 4. Under his Arm; and 5. with his Foot'; this was accompanied on the 'Mandolina, la Mandola, & Tambour de Basso'.[29] Romain drops from the records by 1778.[30] Rossignol continued to work as a touring performer renowned firstly for his bird calls, and secondly for his performance on a violin without strings, accompanied by his own imitation of the instrument.[31] He was still performing this same act in 1795, when he appeared at the Theatre Royal in Edinburgh.[32]

As well as showcasing novelty acts, Romain's and Breslaw's Italian companies highlighted novelty in the guise of immigrant musicians. Migrant musicians were nothing new to 18th-century Britain—indeed, migrant musicians are recorded from the reign of Henry VIII,[33] bringing their music and instruments with them—but there was a notable influx over the course of the 18th century, in keeping with the taste for foreign music and in order to fill the skills gap left by a lack of trained British musicians. As early as 1728 Daniel Defoe had proposed the establishment of a music academy 'to prevent the expensive Importation of Foreign Musicians'.[34] Further unsuccessful proposals by John Potter in 1762, and by Charles Burney and Felice Giardini in 1774, also sought to resolve the lack of home talent, saving 'English talent the mortification, and the British purse from the depredations, of seeking a constant annual supply of genius and merit from foreign shores'.[35] This opposition to immigrant musicians was not necessarily vitriolic, and instead showed a mercantilist response to the often exorbitant fees paid to, particularly London-based, Italian singers; instrumentalists were generally poorly paid.[36] The new, highly trained talent from the Continent, often the product of the Italian *conservatori*,[37] introduced a range of musics, instruments and characters to the stage; supported the fervour for Italian opera; and met the growing demands of the domestic music tuition market, providing versatile tutors who often taught more than just music. Foreign musicians therefore became 'most fêted as novelties', particularly the Italian singers; Italian instrumentalists were supplanted by those from German-speaking countries over the course of the century.[38]

Novelty instruments in practice

It was a combination of the fascinations with the novel performance and with the novel musician which led to an influx of lesser-known instruments from the Continent, appropriately branded by Peter Holman as a 'cult of exotic instruments'.[39] These instruments were not necessarily new inventions, as I discuss later, but included those which were unusual in British concert culture because they were of a previous era, infrequently performed in public, or had been popularized in other countries. Holman reasons that one factor influencing their uptake was that professional musicians 'had to be able to play any exotic instruments their aristocratic pupils wished to learn',[40] and the instruments discussed below are all certainly found being offered for tuition. But there were undoubtedly other forces at play for the portfolio musician, particularly the successful marketing of concerts in a growing live entertainment industry, in which an unusual instrument would help to set a given performer's concerts apart from those of a competitor.

It should be noted that these novelty instruments dwelled primarily in the concert sphere of the bourgeoisie, rarely traversing up the social strata. This indicates that the hierarchies of entertainment still applied to new and novel instruments and their performers, particularly later in the 18th century as the market swelled to accommodate the rise in live entertainment in Britain. These trends are most evident in London, where there were multiple concerts or productions to choose from, at a range of entry fees and in venues of varying reputations. Novel instruments were not therefore a way for musicians to rise above their rank in society, but were instead a means to attract attention in an otherwise overcrowded market. Furthermore, the traits and societal position of each novel instrument communicated to a potential audience in its own specific way, meaning that while their use for marketing unites them as novelty instruments for fiscal gain, their successful deployment was largely dependent on their individual circumstances.

The 'Mandolina' and 'Mandola' which accompanied Signor Romain in 1777 are most likely to have been mandolins. In a recent article in this journal tracing the use of the mandolin in Britain

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1750–1800, Paul Sparks remarks that the instrument of the first half of the century—'a small five- or six-course gut-strung instrument (usually referred to nowadays as the *mandolino*)'—had failed to gain significant traction,[41] possibly due to its quiet timbre which rendered it incompatible with a busy concert room. The invention and importation of the Neapolitan mandolin (see illus.2) in the 1750s, built 'with a moveable bridge, end stringing and a bent or canted table, and strung with four mostly wire courses', created a louder instrument, more suitable for public performance, and aligned it with a move towards wire-strung instruments such as the English guittar (which I discuss below).[42] The *mandolina* known to Romain may have been the early gut-strung mandolin, and the *mandola* the newer Neapolitan instrument, or indeed he may have performed alongside two sizes of the same instrument; the inconsistent labelling of musical instruments at this time prevents us from accurately identifying Romain's ensemble.

2 Neapolitan mandolin by Antonius Vinaccia, Naples, 1781 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 89.4.2140; image: public domain)

What we can say is that the mandolin was often featured in variety acts like Romain's entertainments, and that a strong association between the instrument and Italian musicians is evident from surviving concert and tuition advertisements.[43] For example, a benefit concert for 'Signori MARTA and GARENZO' in Great Yarmouth in 1772 featured performances on the 'Mandolino' and lute,[44] and later in 1778 an afternoon of readings in Edinburgh was to be punctuated with musical performances, including 'some Airs on the Mandoline', being 'an instrument but little known in this country' and played by an unnamed Italian musician.[45] The mandolin appears to have been associated more with light-hearted performances, such as comic operas and Romain's variety acts, and less with serious works. Fanny Burney documents the reception of the mandolin at a performance of Bertoni's *Cimene* in 1783, a work in the *opera seria* style, remarking that the audience 'did not know whether it would be *right* or not to approve it', resulting in no applause.[46] The large number of surviving mandolins from the 18th century attests to the popularity of the instrument, possibly more so in the home than on the stage;[47] as such it is likely that we only catch a glimpse of its use through concert advertisements.

Another instrument occasionally brought from a domestic setting into the public domain is the English guittar (illus.3), often erroneously conflated with the new wire-strung mandolin. The English guittar is likely to be a development of the Moravian cittern brought to Britain by German luthiers such as Frederick Hintz and Remerus Liessem. The

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3 English guittar with pianoforte mechanism by Culliford, Rolfe & Barrow, London, late 18th century (The University of Edinburgh, 0308; image: licensed under Creative Commons CC BY 3.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

reason the instrument was rarely heard in public concerts is because it was primarily an instrument for use in the home, by women, to self-accompany singing—and, in the spirit of the age of politeness, to present them as both learned and attractive, due to the elegant posture created by the instrument's playing position. A relatively quiet parlour instrument, the English guittar is strung in double wire courses like a cittern, and most often tuned to two C major triads. Like the mandolin, it arrived in Britain in the 1750s, and rapidly grew in popularity in the mid 18th century; its name, English guittar—possibly deriving the double-t from the cittern, and 'English' to distinguish itself from the Spanish guitar—was quickly settled upon.[48]

The English guittar's popularity led to several improvements—switching lateral wooden pegs for a watch-key tuning mechanism to improve accuracy; the addition of a capotasto; the invention of a keyboard attachment to negate the need to learn proper right-hand technique; novel additions such as sympathetic strings and a tremulant bridge[49]—which speak of its importance to British amateur musicians. We can also learn about the popularity of the English guittar as a domestic instrument through newspaper adverts and surviving tuition books. For example, a Mr Saxallen, organist and dancing-master, offered music lessons in Chester in 1767 on 'harpsichord, spinet, violin, Guittar, or the new-invented Guittar, with a Bass to it, being the most genteel Instrument with Accompanyment, also the English Harp', as well as tuning and maintenance of the keyboards and guittars.[50] This is just one of numerous similar adverts to be found in both London and provincial newspapers. Tuition books were also regularly advertised for sale, and many examples survive in libraries today, such as *The Compleat Tutor for the Guittar* printed and sold by John Johnson in 1758.[51]

The extraction of the English guittar from the confines of the home, in the hands of a woman, to be performed upon in a public concert venue by a man, frames such a performance as a novelty, and attracted audiences as such. Concerts featuring the English guittar may have appealed to amateurs, who indulged in an opportunity to see their instrument played by a professional, offering a compelling explanation for why male performers chose to perform publicly on the feminine guittar.

Early in the English guittar's cultivation, a concert was billed by a Signor Marella, 'who by particular desire' would perform on the '*Viole d'Amour* and *Guittar*' in Oxford in 1756.[52] Giovanni Battista Marella is more known for his performance work

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in Dublin, where he performed on the violin and viola d'amore, forming a consortium of performers in 1751 to hire Dublin's Crow Street Music Hall for six years;[53] he also performed in the band as part of the coronation celebrations for George III in 1761.[54] Marella published music for the guittar in 1757 and 1762,[55] and was listed as a teacher of the 'guittar and viol d'amour' in 1763.[56] As a freelance musician with a portfolio career, each element of Marella's portfolio of performance, teaching and publication would serve as a form of cross-promotion.[57]

Further concerts featuring the guittar took place over the following three decades, though it was never a mainstay of the concert room. A concert on 15 February 1760 in Manchester featured a 'Favourite Lesson on the Guittar',[58] and between the acts of his own benefit concert a Master Valentine performed a solo on the guittar in Daventry on 4 April 1771.[59] As interest in the instrument began to wane, Count Boruwłaski 'the Polish Liliputian' was advertised as performing on the English guittar in the Sheffield assembly rooms in 1789, playing works composed by Signior Gonetti, Signior Bianchi and himself.[60] Józef Boruwłaski was a talented Polish musician, but was best known for his dwarfism,[61] which he capitalized on by 'receiv[ing] company' for an admission charge—with adverts leading with his height rather than his musical skill.[62] On the whole, then, concerts featuring the English guittar seem to have arisen as a response to domestic music-making trends, and suggest that musicians were savvy businessmen as well as accomplished artists.

The viola d'amore, also played by Marella, proved similarly novel in Britain, though not for the same reasons as the English guittar. A difficult instrument to play, the viola d'amore known to Marella was strung with six or seven bowed gut strings, and an additional set of untouched metal sympathetic strings which ran below the fingerboard and produced a silvery, ethereal sound. While the viola d'amore had been common in German-speaking lands—as shown today by the large number of instruments preserved in public and private collections—its relative rarity in Britain pegged it as a novelty act. The instrument seems to have attracted audiences through its unusual timbre and Italianized name, and the visual impact of its elongated pegbox, which set it apart from the violin and viol families.

The viola d'amore with sympathetic strings (being the latter and more widely adopted of two designs) is first found in Britain in the hands of Attilio Ariosti, who possibly introduced it from his time in Vienna, and whose association with the instrument is preserved by a portrait of him with a viola d'amore resting upon a harpsichord.[63] Players of the viola d'amore in Britain were often Italian or German-speaking, and had usually become acquainted with the instrument in their homeland before emigrating to Britain. The short life of the viola d'amore with sympathetic strings in Britain appears to end with the work of Carl Stamitz in the 1770s, and it never became popular enough to transcend the status of a novelty item. A satirical political advert in 1794 targeted William Pitt the Younger by portraying him as 'Signor Gulielmo Pittachio' running a farcical 'wonderful exhibition'. The viola d'amore featured in this 'exhibition' pokes fun at Pitt's lack of female companionship, in the process invoking the British disparagement of Italian entertainers, an awareness of the underlying connotations of the *viola of love*, and perhaps also the association of unusual instruments with immigrant musicians.[64] A century later, the efforts of Arnold Dolmetsch and other musicians as part of the first wave of the early music revival did little to reinvigorate the instrument's British presence, and there is scant evidence of viola d'amore manufacture in Britain until the early 20th century.[65]

One of the viola d'amore's most prominent exponents in Britain was Signor Passerini, a contemporary of Marella who, like many Italian emigrant musicians of the mid 18th century, also spent time in Dublin. Giuseppe Passerini and his wife Christina arrived in Edinburgh in 1751 following a period in St Petersburg, and took up a contract with the Edinburgh Musical Society, where they performed concerts of vocal and violin music and introduced a 'new Instrument, called *La Viole d'Amour*'.[66] What followed was a fractious relationship, resulting in the Passerinis' dismissal from their contract and removal to London in early 1753.[67] Once in London, the Passerinis quickly established themselves as regulars on the London concert scene, and occasionally travelled to other towns to perform.[68] In a lengthy advert promoting the launch of their 'academy' in 1760, Giuseppe Passerini advertised instruction in 'the following Branches of Musick: As

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4 *Englische violet* (viola angelica) by Paulus Alletsee, Munich, 1726 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981.7; image: public domain)

Singing, Playing Lessons or Thorough Bass on the Harpsichord or Organ, the English and Spanish Guittar, the Violin, Viol d'Amour, Viola Angelica, Violoncello, &c'.[69] Again we find the combination of English guittar and viola d'amore being taught, alongside the new Spanish guitar and the much lesser-known viola angelica. This last instrument, recognized more readily today as the *englische violet* (illus.4), was a rarer and larger sibling of the viola d'amore, strung with 21 strings (seven bowed, and 14 sympathetic). An advert for a concert by Passerini in Dublin in 1774 promotes his 'Solo on a new Instrument called, Viola Angelica, with 21 Strings',[70] alluding to its rarity even in a busy musical centre such as Dublin, and 14 years after its premiere in London.

Giuseppe's viola angelica was just one of many ways to attract an audience. Earlier in 1760, before the establishment of their academy, an advert for a concert by the Passerinis serves as an excellent example of product-orientated marketing, whereby specific elements of an event are drawn to the reader's attention in order to generate interest.[71] The concert, part of a subscription series, was to be held on 11 March 1760 at the Great Musick Room in Dean-Street, Soho: one of the main concert venues of central London.[72] The advert headlines with 'a Sacred Oratorio called the MESSIAH, composed by the late George Frederick Handel, Esq.', a well-known and much-loved work which would convey a sense of quality and familiarity—Handel still being very much in vogue in England. It then lists the names of the singers 'Signora Passerini, Miss Frederick, Mr. Hudson, and Mr. Champness' and the 'Chorusses by some of the best Singers', but 'Signor Passerini' is the only named instrumentalist, and is to be accompanied by the 'best Performers'. By 1760 the Passerinis had been steadily building a reputation in London—Giuseppe as a multi-instrumentalist, and Christina as a soprano.[73] Specific identification of the Passerinis, and the other well-known names on the London performance circuit foregrounded in the advert against the nameless 'best singers' and 'best performers', serves as a form of endorsement of the quality to be expected, and alludes to a large ensemble.

The novelty element of the concert is introduced around halfway through the advertised programme, with the first violin and a 'Solo on the Viola Angelica' to be performed by Giuseppe, and a concerto to be performed on the organ by the former child star

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Cassandra Frederick, 'newly composed by Signor Paradias', between the first and second acts.[74] The inclusion of the visually impressive viola angelica, in tandem with a new composition performed by a young woman who had been regarded as a child prodigy, would have piqued the curiosity of many who were keen to see and hear something new, but it is notable that these risks are cushioned by the familiarity of Handel's *Messiah*. Alfred Politz coined the term 'the familiarity principle' in a 1960 article on creative advertising, in which he stated that the principle formed a much overlooked but relatively simple premise, that 'something that is known inspires more confidence than something which is unknown'. In this case, Handel's *Messiah* would help to reassure those uncertain of the novelties that they would be of comparable quality to the promised familiar repertory.[75] In light of 18th-century concert etiquette—where it was typical to arrive for the second act, and for the audience to converse and move around the hall during the performance—it is possible that Giuseppe and Christina Passerini curated this halftime display to get patrons through the door with the promise of something novel,[76] while nevertheless echoing the presentation of organ concertos between the acts of sacred works by Handel himself.[77] The tickets were apparently 'Extraordinary', but subscription was also an option for the remaining two concerts of the series. The advert is completed with explicit instructions for servants to take their coaches to the Thrift-Street door, and chairs to the Dean-Street door 'to avoid Confusion'.[78] Concluding the advert with mention of servants, coaches and chairs positions the concert as one for those of, or aspiring to be of, higher socio-economic standing, and serves as a prime example of 'segmentation marketing', whereby a particular demographic is targeted—in this case the bourgeoisie.[79] The imputed 'confusion' to be created by all of the coaches and chairs generates a feeling of limited availability, much like the promised performances on the viola angelica and new organ concerto, of which patrons could not be sure of future opportunities to hear or see.

Whether written by Passerini, the management of the hall, or a third-party concert promoter, this advert cleverly exploits the persuasive language required for successful advertising copy, playing to the expectations of the couple's anticipated audience; it also demonstrates a rather sophisticated understanding of marketing psychology in an age before marketing theory. The mix of familiar, safe material with the unusual viola angelica and famous Cassandra Frederick were undoubtedly strategic choices made to maximize ticket sales, working to differentiate the Passerinis' offering from other concert series and the nearby opera, and to retain or attract new subscribers for future series. It is probable that in the planning of this concert, and many like it, programmes were devised with marketing as a central concern, the interchange between marketing and performance therefore playing a significant role in the shaping of 18th-century music consumption.

Fleeting novelties

Alongside these unusual, albeit established instruments in concert, the 18th century also bore witness to a flurry of inventions and rarer importations. I return here to Peter Holman's study of the viola da gamba in Britain, in which he helpfully collates a number of these 'exotic' organological anomalies,[80] many of which had little-to-no impact on wider music-making; as will be shown, some failed to last even one concert season. Success as an inventor-performer was difficult to achieve, particularly in a very crowded entertainment marketplace dominated by the more familiar opera and the dancing assemblies, and relied not only on expertise in the construction of, composition for and performance upon the instrument, but also, to an even greater extent, on luck.

The question of what constituted a new instrument versus an improvement is complex,[81] and we find instruments of various degrees of uniqueness each claiming to be new. To audiences, however, all that mattered was that *they* were experiencing something new—even if an instrument was not significantly different in organological terms from its predecessor. The majority of instruments performed in public at this time were strings or keyboards, with woodwind and brass (the exception being the flute) less typically associated with the concert room or social domestic music-making until much later in the century,[82] a pattern of usage we see extending to the majority of innovations considered below.

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The brothers Giacomo and Joseph Bernard Merchi were known as performers, teachers and composers working in England and France. While Joseph Bernard ultimately settled in France,[83] Giacomo appears to have split his time in England between London and Bath, performing on and teaching the Spanish guitar and English guittar, and playing on the 'calisoncino'. This instrument was most probably the same lute-type instrument played by the Italian brothers Colla who performed on the 'Calascioncino and Calascione, both Instruments of two Strings, of quite a new Construction',[84] more commonly referred to today as a *colascioncino* and recognized as a long-necked lute tuned in 5ths.[85] In addition to playing the unusual 'calisoncino', Giacomo appears to have dabbled briefly in instrument invention, premiering his 'Merchino-Moderno' in Bath in October 1768,[86] and his 'Liutino Moderno' in London the following spring, at his own benefit concert—the two instruments probably one and the same.[87] Nothing further is known of Merchi's invention(s) or his motivations to build an instrument, and a gap in his presence in the British concert scene is explained in 1774 when he advertised his teaching services in London having 'just come from the West Indies'.[88]

Victor Gonetti, an Italian musician from Naples, was similarly known for his portfolio career of teaching, performing and composition. Like Merchi, his presence in ephemera is scattered. He most often appears in concert adverts as a composer or performer playing the piano, English guittar, Spanish guitar or mandolin, as well as the psaltery, musical glasses and 'Apollo's Lyre' (or Harp) 'of his own invention, Imitating a full Band of Instruments'.[89] Gonetti, like Giuseppe Passerini, was sometimes accompanied by his wives, his first wife appearing to have played the same instruments as him.[90]

What constituted an 'Apollo's Lyre' is unknown, since no further description survives. But from its name and Gonetti's use of both plucked and bowed strings, it can be suggested that it was, at least in part, a string instrument. How the instrument imitated a 'full band' remains unclear. Gonetti did not advertise his instrument for sale in newspapers, but he did offer instruction on the instrument, which implies (assuming that its inclusion in adverts was not merely to draw attention) that he was able to facilitate the reproduction of the 'Apollo's Lyre'.[91] Gonetti's inventing stopped with his 'Apollo's Lyre', perhaps after he was bequeathed his friend Charles Dillner's equipment for his famous 'philosophical fireworks'.[92] In 1789 Gonetti toured the fireworks show across England and over to Dublin, providing music in the interludes,[93] but it is evident from the adverts that the fireworks took priority; they probably drew larger audiences than a traditional concert ever could.[94] Gonetti continued to perform on his 'Apollo's Lyre' alongside the musical glasses and Spanish guitar, often accompanied by his two children and some of his pupils.

Around the same time as Gonetti's 'Apollo's Lyre', the French musician Joseph Lefèvre (or Le Fevre) was attempting to bring to prominence in Britain the *cistre*, an instrument 'with sixteen cords, which is much in imitation of the harp, and which accompanies the voice'; he performed at least twice on the instrument in London in 1788.[95] The *cistre* described here was most probably an arch-cittern with a small number of bass diapasons, perhaps one of the 16-string instruments by Renault and Chatelain of Paris, which have 11 fretted strings (arranged as four double, and three single courses), and five off-board diapason strings.[96] Later in 1788, the 'foreign gentleman' who advertised himself as a 'Professor of a New Instrument called a CISTRE' may well have been Lefèvre trying to secure new pupils, as the description of the instrument is very similar to that in Lefèvre's adverts. On this occasion the advert sought to attract English guittar players in particular, by stressing that the *Cistre* 'may be played with more facility by those who understand the Guittar'.[97]

The year before Lefèvre's performance on the *cistre* he published a tuition book for the instrument, of which two copies survive.[98] The book was printed and sold by Longman and Broderip, who also made or sourced and sold the instruments, claiming that they were 'new improved' and listing them beside the instruments they were more known for (patent pianos and guittars).[99] It is likely that Longman and Broderip saw an opportunity to get in front of the trend for a new plucked instrument, with what appears to be the monopoly on the British supply of the *cistre* and its accompanying instruction booklet—from which latter Lefèvre presumably stood to benefit. Unfortunately for Lefèvre and for Longman and Broderip, the instrument failed to make a

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significant impact on British musical instrument preferences, and the *cistre* disappears from adverts by 1789.

In the 1760s the dulcimer player Georg Noëlli performed on the Pantaleon, an oversized dulcimer invented by his teacher, Pantaleon Hebenstreit.[100] Like Joseph Lefèvre with the *cistre*, Noëlli sought to capitalize on the instrument's uniqueness in Britain. Claimed to be ten or eleven feet long and strung with 276 gut strings,[101] the Pantaleon was toured by Noëlli across England. In an advert for a concert in Oxford on 6 May 1767 Noëlli described it as a 'new invented instrument called the PANTHALEONE, never heard in this Kingdom', promising at the foot of the advert that 'due Care will be taken to accommodate [the audience] with a sufficient Number of Seats'—presumably a ploy to encourage ticket sales.[102] With no indication of intention to sell, the Pantaleon was apparently an instrument to draw in an audience rather than to cross-promote material goods, and it seems that Noëlli, who was not the inventor, made his career primarily as a performer on the instrument.

While many of these new string instruments were plucked or struck,[103] there were a few bowed examples. In 1778 there is a very brief appearance of a new invention called the 'Ipolito' by François-Hippolyte Barthélemon of Bordeaux: a highly regarded violinist and composer, who also played the viola d'amore.[104] The new instrument is announced in connection with a concert in the Assembly Rooms in Hanover Square on 6 March 1778, at which it would make up a quartet together with hautboy, harp and flute. Appended to the advert is a brief description of the instrument: 'The Ipolito is a new instrument of five strings, invented by Mr. Hipolitus Barthelemon, and made by Mr Merlin'.[105] The success of the instrument can only be gauged from its exceptionally brief appearance in adverts, the last advertised appearance in concert being less than four weeks later.[106]

Based on Barthélemon's skills on the violin and viola d'amore, we can surmise that his 'Ipolito' would have been a bowed instrument of similar dimensions. The involvement of John Joseph Merlin, the famed inventor and maker of musical instruments, is notable given that a 1775 pentachord (now a cello) is stamped 'I. Merlin', though the invention of the pentachord is attributed to Sir Edward Walpole.[107] The 'Ipolito's' debut followed Barthélemon's return from Italy in October 1777,[108] probably part of the family's longer tour also visiting France and Germany.[109] That Barthélemon should return from the Continent, and within a few short months premiere a new musical instrument, suggests that the design of the 'Ipolito' was inspired by, or wholly taken from, an instrument encountered during the tour, the most probable candidate being the French *quinton*: a violin-shaped viol with five strings, bound with frets, which was popular at the time of Barthélemon's tour.

Among inventors of musical instruments Barthélemon is something of a special case: a successful and well-known musician in Britain already, he was operating in a different league of performance compared to Merchi and Gonetti, sitting at the top end of middling entertainment and occasionally traversing the middle–high brow divide.[110] However, by January 1779 the family's success was ebbing, with an advert announcing an upcoming benefit concert of which the takings would be 'entirely for the use of his Creditors'.[111] Barthélemon's desire to invent a musical instrument may have been rooted in recognition that his return to England in 1777 had not been as prosperous as he hoped, and a lack of concerts in the first half of the 1778–9 season suggests that the family's financial status was not in good health. The 'Ipolito' was very possibly an attempt to generate interest in Barthélemon as a player, once known for performing on the unusual viola d'amore, but the instrument was either unsuccessful or trumped by more lucrative performing opportunities for the remainder of the 1777–8 season.[112]

The invention or improvement of musical instruments was not just the preserve of the immigrant musicians, and it would be remiss of me not to consider briefly here one of the most prominent British-born innovators of the late 18th century. Charles Clagget is a particularly curious character of Georgian Britain's music scene, who made it his mission to achieve fame and fortune by inventing and improving musical instruments, primarily focusing on issues of intonation and the shortcomings of equal temperament.[113] Born in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk,[114] and not in Ireland as previously assumed, Clagget first trained as a dancer and musician before diversifying into musical instrument sales and

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invention. He secured two patents for a variety of innovations, some more successful and practical than others.

Clagget's first patent, of 1776, lists a number of improvements, including adaptations to the fingerboards of violins and guitars to improve tuning, more flexible capotastos, and a tool to help players tune their string instruments more accurately.[115] His second patent, of 1788, was more ambitious, detailing 'ten improvements' for instruments, including three new instruments.[116] His 'teleochordon' stop for harpsichords and pianos divided the octave into as many as 39 notes so that it could produce an accurate range of enharmonics to accompany the voice. The 'Aiuton', or metallic (or ever-tuned) organ, was a keyboard instrument constructed from a series of tuning forks and bars that required no tuning or maintenance, which he advertised as being resistant to changes in climate. His third invention, and the one we see today in our modern valved brass, is his 'Cromatic' (*sic*) trumpet or French horn, created by the joining of two instruments pitched a semitone apart, which allowed a full chromatic scale to be performed.

What is most interesting about Clagget's innovations is that his instruments were often paraded in concert both as a means to promote them for sale and to make money from ticket sales. Like Barthélemon, Clagget was a teacher and respected professional performer, and therefore knew how the performance market operated, including the advertising of concerts. A lengthy advert for a concert in Reading in March 1794, being the second concert of three, serves as an excellent example of how Clagget sought to promote his instruments for sale through demonstration of their performance.[117] The advert is full of qualifiers, such as 'Mr Clagget who is under patronage of the KING', a proposal to replicate his successful London 'Attic Concerts', and a quote from Joseph Haydn commending his inventions. Information about the instruments is provided to serve as marketing spiel, but notably, while all three of his instruments are promoted, only the 'Aiuton' and 'Teleochordon' feature in this concert, the 'Aiuton' used by Clagget's daughter to self-accompany, and the 'Teleochordon' to accompany a violin. What Clagget cleverly does is to delay the display of the 'Cromatic Horns or Trumpets' to the third and final concert of the series, to encourage repeat ticket sales—or the uptake of the subscription of one guinea for 12 tickets for each of the two remaining concerts.

In addition, Clagget also promotes the display of his instruments in the same theatre the day after the concert, charging an admittance of one shilling, although this was free to subscribers. He also uses this opportunity to try and sell some of his patent guitars with stepped fingerboards, and his 'tuning machines'—which he claims can be used by anyone, would be 'very useful in the country', and require no 'alteration or correction for a century at least'—at a price of three pounds and three shillings. Within this lengthy advert he also offers tuition in 'Modulation' which he promises 'will be perfected in ten lessons'. This advert, and its companion adverts for the series,[118] clearly demonstrate Clagget's nuanced understanding of marketing practice, and how he sought to sell his instruments using demonstration instead of by more passive means such as printed adverts or word of mouth.

While Clagget sat outside of the immigrant musician community, he was very much a key member of the British and Irish performance network, and his self-fashioning as a musical innovator is likely to have been influenced in part by the activities of other musicians he worked with.[119] Clagget's endeavours of mixed success—punctuated most significantly by his bankruptcy in 1793,[120] a year before his Reading concerts—sit towards the end of this 18th-century wave of organological innovation, beneath the looming shadow of increased standardization of musical forces and the traditionalism of the following century. That many of his inventions, like those of Gonetti, Merchi and Barthélemon, failed to have much impact on wider musical instrument construction proves that even with the most efficient and convincing framework for the promotion of new instruments, the widespread adoption of these changes was subject to a form of natural selection.

A number of more fleeting mentions of new musical instruments in contemporary reports perhaps indicate the ephemerality of the innovations concerned. In Aberdeen in 1759, a concert was given featuring the 'Psaltrencello' being 'an instrument newly invented', which accompanied the psaltery. The psaltery was popular in the Aberdeen area, appearing in

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several concerts in the second half of the century, and being made and sold by Joseph Ruddiman;[121] the reason for the instrument's popularity is not clear. The creation of a bass psaltery was a logical development, though a dearth of further references to the 'psaltrencello' suggests that it was not a successful invention.

In Derby in 1773 a Mrs Carleton, who was a performer on the musical glasses, announced her completion of a new musical instrument she called the 'Arcadian lyre', but no further evidence of this instrument survives.[122] The viola d'amore player Carl Stamitz announced his 'new-invented Instrument called the VIOLETTON' as a feature of his benefit concert at the Theatre Royal, London on 6 April 1778, but the instrument is not advertised in concert again after this date.[123] Meanwhile Mr Cheese, a blind organist from Manchester, promoted his new patented 'Grand Harmonica' in 1789 in Chester, an instrument 'always keeping in tune' with the tone produced by 'dry friction, upon cylindrical glasses of various sizes, revolving on spindles, which are performed upon organically', and which he promised to play every day (except Sundays) in the Haymarket, London.[124] During the next decade, a Mr Crassa from Spain premiered his new 'Harmonica Organizata' in May 1796, but like Mrs Carleton no further mention of the instrument or of Crassa is to be found in surviving ephemera.[125] Reports of inventions from overseas also appear in the British press, such as Mr Luxeul of Paris and his bellowless organ, and his application of a bellows mechanism to a flute 'so that the instrument requires no exertion of the lungs, and the holes of the flute are stopped by keys'.[126]

*

What we find in these examples is a mix of motivations behind the invention or importation of musical instruments. In many instances, the new instrument is used as a promotional tool to sell concert tickets, rather than examples of the instrument itself. Even Joseph Lefèvre does not appear to have pedalled the sale of the *cistre* he was evidently involved in importing, instead leaving this to Longman and Broderip. These instruments are paraded in concert on the basis of their newness and novelty, functioning in the same manner as the centring of Passerini's viola angelica to encourage ticket sales. But a new instrument needed to be recognizable in its marketing for the novelty to be appealing,[127] and it is perhaps here we may locate the failure of many of these instruments. The 'Liutino Moderno' by Merchi would have been largely unfathomable to readers of his concert adverts, as would Gonetti's 'Apollo's Lyre', in spite of the occasional vague appended explanation. Barthélemon's 'Ipolito' only graced the London concerts for a month, and despite associations with the famous Merlin it did not seem to be successful enough to warrant future performances or commentary. Clagget's numerous inventions and his personal prominence failed to garner the financial rewards he so desperately sought, and his legacy only echoes through the brass family; it seems likely that his instruments were more useful as promotional tools for concerts than in encouraging material sales.

The failure to adopt the majority of the novel instruments discussed here indicates that while audiences wished to experience these instruments in performance, that did not necessarily translate into a desire to own or perform upon them at home. Novel musical instruments were therefore more suited to the concert room or theatre as promotional tools for the performer, serving as an opportunity to satisfy public curiosity by creating a unique experience, and for the public in turn to be seen to participate in music at the forefront of 18th-century entertainment. As such, it is notable that a musician would go to the effort and expense of inventing and commissioning a new musical instrument with no evident plans to sell copies of it: this either indicates a confidence in ticket sales to recoup their outlays, or something more emotive at play.

The vast majority of musicians performing on unusual or new instruments were immigrants, working together in the concert rooms, theatres and opera houses across Britain and Ireland. It is not beyond possibility that as an expanding immigrant community in a country with rising xenophobic attitudes,[128] and working in a lowly regarded trade which lacked professionalization,[129] they developed a sense of collective identity separate from the British musicians. The shared wisdom of their social network may have influenced their decisions to perform on novel instruments, but many balanced this

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with performance on more common instruments and repertory in order to ensure a steady flow of employment opportunities. The moves by some to invent a new musical instrument were therefore a logical step for musicians seeking to define themselves both in the broader marketplace and in their own émigré-musician community, and may explain why it took until the mid century (as a point of critical mass) for new instruments to be debuted. The act of invention or improvement of musical instruments, then, becomes another signifier of their membership of their professional community, conforming not only to the external fashion for novelty at the time, but also to their collective identities as individuals within a rapidly growing community of performers.

Norfolk-born Charles Clagget contrasts with this group, but can similarly be positioned as an outsider, having spent a portion of his career in Ireland—where he met and married his Irish wife, and where his three children were born.[130] His return to London placed him on the fringes of British music-making, and it can be suggested that Clagget's innovations were, at least in part, an attempt to gain recognition from his peers while competing directly with the émigré musicians. These innovators are therefore united by their position outside the professional music-making clique, who were preoccupied with elite performances such as opera and costly subscription concerts. Such diversification within the middle strata of entertainment was perhaps their attempt to carve a niche in the market, and in some cases aspire to a higher rank of professional standing.

Whether imported or newly invented, novelty musical instruments were used as marketing tools by performers of the late 18th century to sell concert tickets and cross-promote their other services. From the study presented here, it can be seen that the idea of novelty reflected wider cultural trends, and it was therefore inevitable that musical instruments would similarly be imported or reinvented to meet this hunger for something new. While the upper classes did indulge in the unusual, novelty instruments in concert appear to have been aimed at the middling sorts. Each musician had their own unique reasons for employing or inventing a particular novelty instrument, but many were united through their émigré or outsider status as well as their need to remain competitive in the cutthroat entertainment industry. Further research is now required into the idea of novelty in performance more broadly, and how this traversed both social classes and the boundaries between public and private music-making.

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[1] L. Libin, 'Progress, adaptation, and the evolution of musical instruments', *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society*, xxvi (2000), pp.187–213, at p.212.

[2] For examples see P. Poulopoulos, 'The guitar in the British Isles, 1750–1810' (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2011), p.441; H. Sugimoto, 'The harp lute in Britain, 1800–1830: a study of the inventor Edward Light and his instruments' (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 2015), quoting Poulopoulos at p.78, and demonstrating that novelty played a key role in the development of instruments by Edward Light; J. Nex, 'Inventions and ideas on the peripheries of British piano design between 1752 and 1832', in *Muzio Clementi and British musical culture: sources, performance practice and style*, ed. L. L. Sala and R. H. Stewart-MacDonald (London, 2018), pp.84–101, discussing the importance of novelty in the manufacturing of pianos to ensure sales (pp.85–6).

[3] See especially Holman, *Life after death: the viola da gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Woodbridge, 2013), on music-making in Britain through the lens of the viol; and McVeigh, *Concert life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge, 1993), on performance culture in London, with significant attention paid to music advertising.

[4] See C. Bashford, 'Writing (British) concert history: the blessing and curse of ephemera', *Notes*, lxiv/3 (2008), pp.458–73, particularly pp.467–70; also R. McGuinness 'Gigs, roadies and promoters: marketing eighteenth-century concerts', in *Concert life in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed. S. Wollenberg and S. McVeigh (Farnham, 2004), pp.261–71.

[5] C. Ehrlich, *The music profession in Britain since the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1985), p.2.

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[6] C. Harbor, '"At the desire of several persons of quality and lovers of Musick": pervasive and persuasive advertising for public commercial concerts in London 1672–1749', *Journal of Marketing Management*, xxxiii/13–14 (2017), pp.1170–203.

[7] P. M. Briggs, '"News from the little World": a critical glance at eighteenth-century British advertising', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, xxiii (1994), pp.29–45, at p.29. Johnson's comments on advertising are found in his essay dated Saturday 20 January 1759 in *The Idler*, xl (1759); see *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, iv (Oxford: Talboys and Wheeler, 1825), pp.267–70.

[8] Briggs, 'News from the little World', p.35 (corrected from 1825 *Works*).

[9] The term 'experience economy' was coined by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in their 1998 article 'Welcome to the experience economy' (*Harvard Business Review*, July–August 1998), which distinguished experiences as separate from the services and goods economies. It is now widely used in business, economics, and tourism scholarship and practice.

[10] H. Greig, *The beau monde: fashionable society in Georgian London* (Oxford, 2013), p.71.

[11] Greig, *The beau monde*, pp.81–2, 86.

[12] M. Berg, *Luxury and pleasure in eighteenth-century Britain* (Oxford, 2007), pp.250–51.

[13] Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, p.250.

[14] As noted by Edmund Burke in the opening of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), quoted in P. Keen, *Literature, commerce, and the spectacle of modernity, 1750–1800* (Cambridge, 2012), p.12.

[15] *Morning Post*, 8 August 1783; quoted in Keen, *Literature, commerce, and the spectacle of modernity*, p.12.

[16] *Morning Post*, 6 October 1785, quoted in Keen, *Literature, commerce, and the spectacle of modernity*, p.12.

[17] McVeigh, *Concert life*, pp.78–9.

[18] *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 18 December 1759.

[19] H. Berry, *The castrato and his wife* (Oxford, 2011), pp.49–50.

[20] Berry (*The castrato*, pp.44–7) suggests that the exoticism of their voices, castrated state and associations with Catholicism all contributed to the appeal of the castratos, even if they were not strictly novel by the late 1750s.

[21] Peter Holman has written at length about Ann Ford, who opted to perform on less common instruments such as the viol and English guittar; see Holman, 'Ann Ford revisited', *Eighteenth-Century Music*, i/2 (2004), pp.157–81.

[22] An example is William Crotch (1775–1847), a child star from Norwich who captured the attention of Charles Burney, who discussed him in his published talk *Account of an Infant Musician* (London: J. Nichols, 1779). Burney remarked that such children were not uncommon, but that Crotch was distinctive in not coming from a professional musical family.

[23] An anonymous cleric wrote 'the *Musician* is somewhat more than a *Mountebank* or *Rope-Dancer*; he should preserve his dignity, he must not *trifle* and play *tricks*, he must not be *gay*, he must be *serious*' (Anonymous, *Euterpe; or Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music as a Part of Modern Education* (London: J. Dodsley, 1778), p.26; quoted in J. Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination: English culture in the eighteenth century* (London, 1997), p.402).

[24] *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 November 1774. Breslaw's advert concludes with 'Mr Breslaw intends quitting this business after this winter season in London', though he was still noted as leader of his touring company in 1776 (*Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 7 December 1776).

[25] Johnson on advertising, quoted in Briggs, 'News from the little World', p.35. McVeigh (*Concert life*, p.75) gives examples of performers being reproached for their 'admiral deception', and 'selling a "pig in a poke"'.

[26] Named as 'Gætana á la Rossignoel from Naples' in the *Ipswich Journal*, 14 June 1777. His name is never consistently spelled, creating such variations as Rossignoel, Rosignolle, Rossignole and Rosignole. An advert for a 'Signoir Nigtingale [*sic*]' in 1774 is likely to be Rossignol, claiming to be the 'late Musician in Ordinary to the King of Naples'. The concert would feature a 'GRAND CONCERTO ON THE VIOLIN without Strings, the MUSICK being of the best Composition, never displayed in England before', while Rossignol offered to 'imitate the Note of any Bird if required'. A 'Signoir Jeschett' also performed a solo on the clarinet. See *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 August 1774. For further discussion of Rossignol, see P. H. Highfill Jr., K. A. Burnim and E. A. Langhans, *A biographical dictionary of actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, managers & other stage personnel in London, 1660–1800*, xiii (Carbondale, IL, 1991), pp.115–17.

[27] *Leeds Intelligencer*, 9 September 1777.

[28] *Ipswich Journal*, 14 June 1777.

[29] *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 July 1777. This was evidently a favoured trick of Romain's.

[30] A 'Madame Romain' is listed as a touring performer from Sadler's Wells Theatre in the 1780s, known for her ability to dance on the tight rope without touching it with her feet, and also for playing two flutes at once. It seems likely that she was a relation of Romain. See *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 November 1786.

[31] See for example *Norfolk Chronicle*, 8 August 1778. An advert the following decade for a similar variety performance featured a Mr Herman, who also played a violin without strings, and claimed to be 'the Original ENGLISH ROSIGNOLE' as an imitator of birds (*Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 4 August 1788). Earlier, in 1755, a 'Signior Grimmacene' was 'particularly famous for his Humour in so whimsically

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imitating the Violoncello' as part of a troupe performing 'their unparalleled [*sic*] Exhibitions' in Chester, featuring a 'Dog of Knowledge', dancing, and 'Prince Abobebo the African' who performed on the slackwire as well as executing acrobatic contortions (*Chester Courant*, 12 August 1755).

[32] *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 February 1795.

[33] For example, see the Bassano family of instrument-makers and performers as documented in D. Lasocki and R. Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian musicians and instrument makers in England, 1531–1665* (Aldershot, 1995).

[34] Ehrlich, *The music profession*, pp.9–10; as quoted in B. Trowell, 'Daniel Defoe's plan for an Academy of Music at Christ's Hospital, with some notes on his attitude to music', in *Source materials and the interpretation of music: a memorial volume to Thurston Dart*, ed. I. Bent (London, 1981), pp.403–27, at p.407.

[35] As stated by Fanny Burney in support of Charles's and Giardini's plans; see Ehrlich, *The music profession*, pp.10–11.

[36] Ehrlich, *The music profession*, p.18.

[37] Ehrlich, *The music profession*, p.10.

[38] McVeigh, *Concert life*, p.81.

[39] Holman uses this term in his discussion of the luthier Frederick Hintz, linking a number of either lesser-known or new inventions to immigrant makers and players; see Holman, *Life after death*, pp.148–61.

[40] Holman, *Life after death*, pp.161–3, at p.163. Holman presents the life and work of Carl Abel as an example of a musician who turned to the bass viol in order to help make his musical act distinctive.

[41] P. Sparks, 'The mandolin in Britain, 1750–1800', *Early Music* xlvi/1 (2018), pp.55–66, at p.55.

[42] Sparks, 'The mandolin', p.56.

[43] See Sparks, 'The mandolin', p.60.

[44] *Ipswich Journal*, 16 May 1772.

[45] *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 July 1778.

[46] Diary entry for Friday 3 January 1783, in *The early journals and letters of Fanny Burney: volume V, 1782–1783*, ed. L. E. Troide and S. Cooke (Montreal and Kingston, 2012), p.239; quoted in Sparks, 'The mandolin', p.62.

[47] As supported by publications for mandolin typically aimed at the domestic market. For example, John Walsh published a book of 40 duets for 'Two Guitars, Mandelins or Cittars' in 1757, and Ignatius Sancho published his 'Minuets, cotillons & country dances' for violin, mandolin, German flute and harpsichord *c.*1775. Copies of both are held by the British Library.

[48] For a detailed history of the guitar, see Poulopoulos, 'The guitar': for tuning see p.14, discussion of etymology, pp.46–9, and origins, pp.51–66. Large numbers of English guittars from the 18th century are preserved in museums and collections, and they regularly appear for sale at auction. For further information on Moravian links, see L. Graf, 'John Frederick Hintz, eighteenth-century Moravian instrument maker, and the use of the cittern in Moravian worship', *Journal of Moravian History*, v (Autumn 2008), pp.7–33.

[49] See Poulopoulos, 'The guitar'.

[50] *Chester Courant*, 3 November 1767.

[51] *Newcastle Courant*, 21 October 1758; a copy is held at the National Library of Ireland, call no. JM 4541.

[52] *Oxford Journal*, 27 November 1756.

[53] Highfill, Burnim and Langhans, *Biographical dictionary*, iii (1973), p.92.

[54] *Dublin Courier*, 30 September 1761.

[55] *Sixty six Lessons for the Cetra or Guittar in every Key, both flat and sharp* (London, 1757), and *Compositions for the Cetra or Guittar with an accompaniment* [sic], *consisting of a variety of Pieces in every Stile of Music* (London: Printed for the Author, 1762); copies of both held by the British Library. The latter book's preface is signed 'J. B. Marella', and may instead be by Giovanni's son, Jean-Baptiste.

[56] As part of an announcement that Marella had been awarded the second prize in the Catch Club at Almack's composition competition; see *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, 20 May 1763.

[57] For discussion of the musician's career as a means of self-promotion, see S. McVeigh, 'The constrained entrepreneur: concert promotion in eighteenth-century London', in *Organisateurs et formes d'organisation du concert en Europe 1700–1920: Institutionnalisation et pratiques*, ed. H. E. Bödeker, P. Veit and M. Werner (Berlin, 2008), pp.47–56, at p.56.

[58] *Manchester Mercury*, 12 February 1760.

[59] *Northampton Mercury*, 1 April 1771. A 'J. Valentine' also featured in this concert, probably the composer John Valentine of Leicester. 'Master Valentine', who also sung and played the violin, is likely to be John's son, Thomas.

[60] *Sheffield Register, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire Universal Advertiser*, 13 November 1789.

[61] A. Grzeskowiak-Krwawicz, *Gulliver in the land of giants: a critical biography and the memoirs of the celebrated dwarf Joseph Boruwlaski* (Farnham, 2012), pp.1–3.

[62] For example, see *Stamford Mercury*, 14 September 1793, and *Saunders's News-Letter*, 29 June 1795.

[63] Engraving of Attilio Ariosti *c.*1719, held by the British Museum (1874,0808.1209); reproduced in R. Durkin, *The viola d'amore: its history and development* (Abingdon, 2021), p.40.

[64] *Wonderful exhibition! Signor Gulielmo Pittachio the sublime wonder of the world! …* (London, 1794). Copy held at the British Library, London.

[65] For a fuller discussion of the viola d'amore's revival, see Durkin, *The viola d'amore*, pp.124–40.

[66] *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 August 1751.

[67] For a discussion of the Passerinis' arrival in Edinburgh and work with the Edinburgh Musical Society, see S.

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T. Baxter, 'Italian music and musicians in Edinburgh *c*.1720–1800: a historical and critical study' (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 1999), pp.103–14. Upon his departure, Giuseppe announced that he 'has some Enemies here, who have done all they can do to spoil his Character', and that 'he owes no body in Edinburgh' (*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 1 February 1753; quoted in Baxter, 'Italian musicians', p.109).

[68] See Baxter, 'Italian musicians', p.113, listing Bath, Bristol, Oxford and Salisbury as some of the places they visited.

[69] *London Chronicle*, 24–6 July 1760.

[70] *Saunders's News-letter*, 2 February 1774. The first performance on the viola angelica in London, also by Passerini, took place in 1760 (*Public Advertiser*, 28 February 1760).

[71] While some advertisements in newspapers were simple announcements of concerts or concert series, many featured what Catherine Harbor categorizes as 'product-orientated information': programme details, key performers, instruments to be played. See Harbor, 'Pervasive and persuasive advertising', pp.1184–5.

[72] *London Chronicle*, 1–4 March 1760. All references to the advert in this and the following two paragraphs relate to this particular advert, and where necessary have been slightly corrected using a later advert published 4–6 March 1760.

[73] John O'Keeffe wrote that Christina was 'a first-rate singer'; see Baxter, 'Italian musicians', p.114, and John O'Keeffe, *Recollections of the Life of John O'Keeffe* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), i, p.56.

[74] Cassandra Frederick (*c*.1741–after 1779) had been a pupil of Domenico Paradies, and had been much lauded by Charles Burney who described her as 'the first early player, the neatest, and the best which had ever appeared in our country during infancy'. See R. Cowgill, 'Mozart and the construction of musical prodigies in early Georgian England', in *Musical prodigies: interpretations from psychology, education, musicology & ethnomusicology*, ed. G. E. McPherson (Oxford, 2016), pp.511–49, at p.518. Burney's account as quoted by Cowgill (note 24) can be found under the entry 'Wynne, Mrs. Cassandra Frederica' in *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, ed. Abraham Rees, 39 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1819), vol.xxxviii.

[75] A. Politz, 'The dilemma of creative advertising', *Journal of Marketing*, xxv/2 (1960), pp.1–6, at p.3.

[76] For an overview of audience conduct at this time, see McVeigh, *Concert life*, pp.60–61.

[77] On Handel's organ concertos, see W. D. Gudger, 'Handel and the organ concerto: what we know 250 years later', in *Handel tercentenary collection*, ed. S. Sadie and A. Hicks (London, 1987), pp.271–8.

[78] Thrift Street is now Frith Street.

[79] For an overview of segmentation marketing in the 18th and 19th centuries, see R. A. Fullerton, 'Segmentation in practice: an historical overview of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', in *The Routledge companion to marketing history*, ed. D. G. Brian Jones and M. Tadajewski (Abingdon, 2016), pp.85–95.

[80] Holman, *Life after death*, pp.161–3.

[81] See Jeremy Montagu's excellent appraisal of this challenging definition in 'The creation of new instruments', *The Galpin Society Journal*, lix (2006), pp.3–11.

[82] Brewer, *Pleasures*, pp.557–8. Aside from the obvious military associations for brass instruments, practicalities such as the volume of brass instruments in a confined space, their scale limitations as natural instruments, and the difficulties in mastering such instruments without professional training all resulted in few brass performances in public concerts. Woodwinds were similarly rare, but their versatility (and an interest in the newly invented clarinet) led to increased presence.

[83] B. van Boer, *Historical dictionary of music of the Classical period* (Plymouth, 2012), p.378.

[84] *Public Advertiser*, 18 February 1766.

[85] Holman, *Life after death*, p.161.

[86] *Bath Journal*, 24 October 1768, as quoted in K. E James, 'Concert life in eighteenth-century Bath' (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 1987), p.813.

[87] *Public Advertiser*, 22, 25 and 27 April 1769. The concert, at Hickford's Room, featured a variety of Italian musicians, and included Merchi performing on the 'calisoncino' during the second act.

[88] *Public Advertiser*, 15 January 1774.

[89] For example, see an advert for Gonetti's concert in the *Manchester Mercury*, 23 June 1789. The use of the terms 'Harp' and 'Lyre' appears to be interchangeable.

[90] 'Signora Gonetti will play on the Mandolin, Guitar, Psaltery, and Armonick Glasses' (*Morning Chronicle*, 31 May 1779). This is perhaps highlighted due to the unusualness of a woman playing publicly on the mandolin, guitar and psaltery; the musical glasses were more commonplace for women to play. Signora Gonetti died prematurely later that year, and Victor quickly remarried the following year (see announcement in *London Courant*, 27 November 1780). His second wife was also a musician, as witnessed in concert by John Marsh on 26 October 1781 (see *The John Marsh journals: the life and times of a gentleman composer (1752–1828)*, ed. B. Robins (Stuyvesant, NY, 1998), pp.252–3).

[91] *Morning Herald*, 18 April 1782.

[92] S. Werrett, *Thrifty science: making the most of materials in the history of experiment* (Chicago and London, 2019), p.138.

[93] Contemporary with Gonetti's foray into firework shows, John Cartwright was touring his own 'philosophical fireworks' show with musical interludes. Cartwright performed on the musical glasses which were said to be improved by him, and were

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advertised with equal emphasis to the fireworks. For example, see *Norfolk Chronicle*, 22 August 1789. Earlier adverts for his musical performances tell us that he was most known for performing on the musical glasses, and that he claimed to have improved the instrument; in 1786, an advert for his 'Public Breakfast' in Bath promotes that 'Mr. Cartwright will perform on his new-invented Grand Set of MUSICAL GLASSES' (*Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 25 May 1786).

[94] For example, see the adverts in *The World* on 11 March 1789, and later in the *Chester Courant* on 18 August 1789, both of which relegate the music to a few lines towards the bottom of the advert.

[95] *Morning Post*, 25 January 1788; Lefèvre then 'introduced a new French Instrument, called, Le CISTRE' at a concert in the King's Theatre, London, on 22 May 1788 (*The World*, 19 May 1788).

[96] For example, see Museum of Fine Art, Boston, accession number 1006.1223.

[97] *The World*, 19 September 1788.

[98] J. Lefèvre, *A concise method to attain the art of playing on the cistre* (London: Longman & Broderip, 1787). Copies held by the British Library, and the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[99] Lefèvre's tuition book is listed as being dedicated to Miss Macdonald, and the Cistre advertised for sale in an advert by Longman and Broderip, *The World*, 17 April 1787. In the book it is stated that the instrument was manufactured and sold by Longman and Broderip, and given their manufacture of plucked instruments, it is possible that the instrument was indeed made in their workshop. What the relationship was between Lefèvre and Longman and Broderdip is unknown.

[100] D. Burrows and R. Dunhill, *Music and theatre in Handel's world: the family papers of James Harris, 1732–1780* (Oxford, 2002), p.840.

[101] Charles Burney inspected a Pantaleon in disrepair in Dresden in 1772, recording that it was nine feet long, and was built to be strung with 186 strings; see C. Hogwood, 'A note on the frontispiece', in *Music in eighteenth-century England: essays in memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Hogwood and R. Luckett (Cambridge, 1983), pp.xv–xviii, at p.xvi.

[102] *Oxford Journal*, 2 May 1767.

[103] It is quicker and cheaper to construct plucked instruments as they can be made flat-backed, and this may have contributed to the imbalance between plucked and bowed instruments.

[104] Barthélemon appears in concert regularly from around 1764. For example, see *Public Advertiser*, 8 February 1764, which promises a 'solo on the Violin and a Concerto on the Viola d'Amore … of his own Composition'. Barthélemon also performed on the violin alongside the brothers Colla in the aforementioned concert advertised in the *Public Advertiser*, 18 February 1766.

[105] *Morning Post*, 2 March 1778.

[106] *Public Advertiser*, 30 March 1778.

[107] The instrument stamped 'I. Merlin' is now attributed to John Carter; see Holman, *Life after death*, pp.174–5.

[108] 'It is said, that the two act comic opera of *Belphegor*, which was in rehearsal two seasons ago, but afterwards postponed, is now getting up again at the same house; the music by Mr. Barthelemon, who is lately arrived in town from Italy' (*Morning Post*, 22 October 1777). A review of *Belphegor* commented that 'the Musick was by Mr. Barthelemon, and much too good for the Piece' (*St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 14–17 March 1778).

[109] N. Zaslaw, rev. S. McVeigh, 'Barthélemon, François-Hippolyte', *Grove Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com (accessed 27 May 2021).

[110] For example, Simon McVeigh notes that the Prince of Wales sent 'his young protégé' George Bridgetower to Barthélemon for tuition 'to develop "taste and feeling, in the *Andante* and *Adagio*"'; see McVeigh, *Concert life*, p.145.

[111] *Morning Chronicle*, 13 January 1779.

[112] Barthélemon also claimed to have worked with John Isaac Hawkins to invent the 'Claviole', a claim which Hawkins vehemently disputed; see *The Universal Magazine*, vii (London: H. D. Symonds, January–June 1807), pp.460–61, for Barthélemon's claim, and *The Universal Magazine*, viii (London: H. D. Symonds, July–December 1807), pp.165–7, for Hawkins's response.

[113] My separate article on the inventions of Charles Clagget will be published in the *Galpin Society Journal* in 2023, generously supported by a Galpin Society Grant 2021. With thanks to John Humphries and Jenny Nex for their enthusiastic discussions and encouragement of this work on Clagget's life and inventions.

[114] Clagget was baptized on 8 March 1733 in Great Yarmouth. See Norfolk Record Office, Norfolk Church of England Registers: PD 28/5.

[115] C. Clagget, Patent concerning 'Violins, &c', N°1140 (1776). Held by the British Library.

[116] C. Clagget, Patent concerning 'Musical Instruments', N°1664 (1778). Held by the British Library.

[117] *Reading Mercury*, 17 March 1794.

[118] The first concert is advertised on 10 March 1794, and the third on 24 March 1794, both in the *Reading Mercury*.

[119] Another key influencing factor in Clagget's move to invent musical instruments was his friendship with the engineer and former musical-instrument-maker James Watt; see Holman, *Life after death*, pp.165–6. The correspondence between Clagget and Watt is preserved in Watt's archive, held by Birmingham City Archives and Collections.

[120] The bankruptcy was announced in several newspapers and publications that year; an example can be found in the *Kentish Gazette*, 31 May 1793.

[121] An advert for Ruddiman from 1765 lists psalteries alongside violins, guitars, German flutes and dulcimers,

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and is placed above an advert for tuition on the same instruments by David Geddes (*Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 25 February 1765).

[122] *Derby Mercury*, 12 February 1773.

[123] Cited in Holman, *Life after death*, p.162. The first advert appears in the *Morning Chronicle*, 23 March 1778, and the last in the *Public Advertiser* on 6 April 1778.

[124] *Chester Chronicle*, 19 June 1789. A further advert in the *Oracle*, 4 April 1791, adds that there were 14 spindles, and is appended with 'This curious piece of Mechanism is the invention of a Gentleman totally deprived of his sight from the early period of three years of age'.

[125] *Oracle*, 16 May 1796; *True Briton*, 18 May 1796.

[126] *Derby Mercury*, 12 January 1792.

[127] Berg, *Luxury and pleasure*, p.251. Note also the links to Politz's 'familiarity principle' discussed earlier.

[128] See particularly D. Rohr, *The careers and social status of British musicians, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.12–14.

[129] Rohr, *British musicians*, p.165.

[130] Charles Clagget married Susannah Cross in Dublin on 20 November 1767 (Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records and Keeper of the State Papers in Ireland (Dublin, Ireland: Alexander Thom & Co., 1895–1899) accessed via Ancestry.com: *Dublin, Ireland, Probate Record and Marriage License Index, 1270–1858*). He confirmed his three children in a letter to James Watt on 16 January 1782 (Birmingham City Archives and Collections, James Watt Collection: MS/3219/4/1/6/40/1).

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Abstract

Rachael Durkin

'Magnificence of promises': novelty instruments in concert in Britain, *c.*1750–1800

In this article I explore the occurrence and use of novelty musical instruments in concert in the second half of the 18th century, arguing that these instruments were used as a means of self-promotion for the performer, and in some cases were intrinsically linked with their identity as immigrant musicians in Britain. I start by examining music marketing in the 18th century, then consider what novelty means in the context of musical performance. I consider, firstly, imported musical instruments which existed in reasonable numbers in Britain, focusing on the mandolin, English guittar and viola d'amore. I then move to observe the more fleeting inventions to grace British concert rooms and theatres, including the inventions of Charles Clagget, and I draw attention to the sociocultural forces which may have encouraged their development. I conclude by surmising that even with the best marketing and inventions, the majority of novelty instruments were only ever destined for public performance as promotional tools, and not to be brought into the home for domestic music-making.

Keywords: English guittar; viola d'amore; *englische violet*; mandolin; novelty instruments; organology; Georgian concerts; Charles Clagget

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