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THE IMPACT OF ROUSSEAU ON THE HISTORIES OF BURNLEY AND HAWKINS: A STUDY IN THE ETHICS OF MUSICOLOGY

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The importance of ethics to the writing of music history has not been examined enough.¹ What is an author's fundamental purpose? Is it the desire to respect humanity, or the hope of maintaining a notion of one's own superiority? Is there a hope to see where people different from oneself have thoughts and emotions as deep and as valuable as one's own, or a desire to hold other people up to ridicule?

These matters can be valuable and vividly considered as we look at the histories written by Charles Burney and John Hawkins—each of which, in its own right, is a monumental work of scholarship—and compare the very different ways each author responded to the ideas of perhaps the most influential philosopher of their time: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. I will also be drawing from the work of the contemporary philosopher who has contributed most deeply to the understanding of the true relation of art and life, Eli Siegel (1902–78), the founder of Aesthetic Realism.

I will begin by discussing 18th-century British politics, because it is necessary to clear up a widespread misunderstanding. Burney has often been characterized as a loyal “Church-and-King” man—a true Tory. Herbert Schueller wrote about him that way,² as did Percy Scholes,³ and many others. Were this true, it would make his politics like those of Hawkins, who was a conservative magistrate knighted by George III for helping to

¹ That Rousseau, in an elemental way, associated music and ethics can be seen throughout his work. For example, in his article on opera for the *Dictionnaire de musique*, he explains that the melodic accent of the passions give sounds “the moral effects which create all of music's energy”. And in his *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, he writes of the danger of denigrating ethics: “In this century when every effort is made to materialize all the operations of the soul and to deprive human feelings of all morality, I am mistaken if the new philosophy does not become as fatal to good taste as it is to virtue”. He called there likewise for “a more subtle metaphysics” which would respect the primal reality of ethics, music, and their interaction. See John T. Scott, “The harmony between Rousseau's music theory and his philosophy”, *The journal of the history of ideas* 109/2 (1998) 305–06.

² Schueller goes so far as to say that “both Burney and Hawkins [were] Church-and-King men who disliked every form of republicanism and dissidence”. Herbert Schueller, “The use and decorum of music as described in British literature, 1700–1780”, *The journal of the history of ideas* 13/1 (January 1952) 90.

³ Percy Scholes, *The great Dr. Burney* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) 311.

quell popular revolts—among them demonstrations in Middlesex demanding equitable representation in Parliament.

But it is not true; Burney at heart was no Tory. That he needed to be on good terms with those in power is apparent; his students came largely from the privileged classes, and he relied on them to support his family. But would a dyed-in-the-wool conservative sup with John Wilkes,⁴ England's leading radical, at a time when Wilkes was defending America's revolution and calling for a new political dispensation, one designed to lessen aristocratic power while extending the right to vote?⁵ Hardly, and yet Burney did exactly that, scandalizing several of his friends.⁶

And Hawkins? He was a leader in the effort to deny Wilkes a seat in Parliament, even though he had obtained a majority of the vote lawfully.

Burney, a Tory? How then to account for these words, early in his *A general history of music*: "it is no uncommon thing for the rich to treat the poor with as much insolence, as if it were a crime not to be born to a great estate."⁷ Or the letters to his close friend, the Rev. Thomas Twining, in which he bitterly complains about the crown?⁸ The King, he tells Twining, was pressuring him—giving broad hints that a future position at court depended on praising, without stint, the king's favorite composer: Händel, a German who had become an Englishman, just as George's family had done.

As biographer Roger Lonsdale writes, "Burney was tortured by this conflict between his duty as a historian and his knowledge that all kinds of honors might come to him, if only he could please and flatter the King."⁹ To Twining he writes:

I see that I am in great danger of doing myself more harm than good by this business ...
But I will not write like an Apostate—I will not deny my liberal principles.¹⁰

In 1784 "liberal" was a fairly radical word. In this letter to a dear and discrete friend, Burney lets loose in a way he dared not in the royal presence. The King, he complained, wanted to reduce him to "the State of a hireling... Scribbler." "Into what a scrape am I got?" he continues. "I may do myself irreparable mischief—& *can*, I fear, derive no

⁴ See Alvaro Ribeiro, Jr., ed., *The letters of Dr. Charles Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) vol. 1, in particular Burney's letter to Mrs. Thrale of 1 November 1777. In that letter Burney "covers his tracks," saying "even City patriots are now ashamed to be seen in his company" (238). In fact, as the editor indicates in a footnote on that page, he had dined with Wilkes some months earlier! See also in that footnote the testimony offered in a letter of Samuel Crisp to Burney of 17 December 1776.

⁵ Ribeiro, *The letters*, 188. In a letter to Twining of 18 October 1775, Burney writes that "in matters of opinion," he was "now & then a patriot, & for Wilks [sic] & Liberty." Later he writes very differently. To Fanny, 23 August 1796, he writes, "How glad I am to recollect that I have been all my life loyal to such excellent sovereigns, & fighting & scolding with Wilkites-Foxites-Democrates-revolutionists-Jacobins-& Anarchists." By this time, however, Fanny had married a French General who had emigrated after that nation's republican revolution. Also, she was on royal pension. He has, in other words, developed a convenient memory!

⁶ Scholes, *The great Dr. Burney*, 315. A footnote includes a description of Johnson's intense reaction to Boswell's friendships with both Wilkes and Rousseau. In 1766 he said, "Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years." Johnson continues by saying, vis-à-vis Rousseau and Voltaire, "Why, Sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them." This is 15 February 1766. He calls him an "infidel writer" on 10 June 1784—along with Voltaire and Hume.

⁷ Charles Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957) vol. 1, 18.

⁸ See *ibid.*, vol. 1, 19, for an expression of his gratitude to Twining.

⁹ Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A literary biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) 302.

¹⁰ Letter of 31 July 1784. Quoted in Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney*, 302.

good—considering the hands I am in.” And, he adds—tellingly, in French: “Les grands Hommes! qu’ils sont!”¹¹

Across the channel, some years before, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in a letter to the statesman de Malesherbes, wrote, “I hate the great. I hate their rank, their harshness, their prejudice, their pettiness, and all their ways.”¹² Rousseau, as was well-known, had done something that had little or no precedent: He turned down a lifetime pension from a King rather than compromise his intellectual and artistic freedom—for such a pension was proffered by Louis XV after the premiere of *Le devin du village*.

How did Burney see Rousseau? Let’s begin in 1771. At a time when Rousseau was widely denounced as a heretic, a danger to society for espousing such notions as the equality of man,¹³ Burney publicly declared the French philosopher a “Man-Mountain,”¹⁴ thus implying that he was a giant, like Gulliver, and that his opponents were Lilliputians.¹⁵

Burney said this in *The present state of music in France and Italy*. Read as an autobiographical novel rather than as a repository of musicological information, the book takes on the quality of a quest.¹⁶ Burney sets off to France to meet Rousseau, intending to make him, as he would tell Pierre Guy, the “hero” of his forthcoming history.¹⁷ He misses him here, misses him by hours there;¹⁸ finally, just days before his return to England, he finds him at last, and they speak.¹⁹ The quest successful, the “novel” draws quickly to a close.²⁰

¹¹ Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney*, 303. In a postscript Burney adds, “all I have written about his M-----y & Bates is rigorously sub sigillo”.

¹² See Jean Gucheno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1967) vol. 2, 74.

¹³ James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* Great books of the western world 44 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952) 125. On 20 July 1763, Johnson says about the *Treatise on inequality* that its author was “led astray by a childish desire of novelty”.

¹⁴ Charles Burney, *Dr. Burney’s musical tours in Europe*, ed. by Percy A. Scholes (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) vol. 1, 313. Since Rousseau was by no means imposing in physical stature, it is obvious Burney is referring to intellectual or ethical greatness. See also page 315 where Burney, obviously combating the bad press Rousseau had gotten in England, writes, “He did not bite, nor knock me down”. See page 59, where Burney, in Milan, quotes Count Firmian as saying that “Rousseau was not the misanthrope people took him to be, but on the contrary [was] soft, polite, and engaging in his manner”.

¹⁵ See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 129, where he comments on Rousseau’s “uncommon boldness and courage”.

¹⁶ Burney, as Johnson’s friend, undoubtedly knew of *Rasselas*, a 1759 philosophical novel also involving travel and a man’s quest for knowledge. Related novels are Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift’s *Gulliver’s travels* (1726), each of which manifests a central character traveling to strange lands, and learning there. Epistolary novels were popular at this time, which by their very technique are first-person narratives (albeit, on occasion, multiply so). Two examples are Richardson’s *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748) and Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774). Whatever models Burney had in mind, it remains apparent that he makes use of novelistic techniques in the accounts of his European journeys. Johnson, reading Burney’s first published travelogues, declared that they would be a model for future writings by him; and in 1775 he published *A journey to the western islands of Scotland*, in which Burney’s stylistic influence can be observed.

¹⁷ Ribeiro, *The letters*, vol. 1, 74. Letter of Burney to Pierre Guy, 28 February 1771.

¹⁸ Burney and Scholes, *Dr. Burney’s musical tours*, vol. 1, 22. In italics, Burney says: “I must see him, if possible.” He learns from Robert Walpole, son of Horace Walpole, that Rousseau is not in Paris; rather, Lyon (p. 23). So he sets off to find him there. Not finding him in Lyon, he immediately sets off for Geneva, Rousseau’s “home town”.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 312–13. He leaves a gathering of very distinguished company to leap at a sudden chance to see Rousseau, arranged for him by Guy.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 315. Burney writes, “I regarded the meeting with M. Rousseau at Paris, as a singularly fortunate completion of my personal intercourse with the learned and ingenious on the continent: I was so happy as to converse for a considerable time with him upon music, a subject which has received such embellishments from his pen, that the driest parts of it are rendered interesting by his manner of treating them, both in the *Encyclopedie*, and in his *Musical Dictionary*.”

Burney had tried for years to meet him—on earlier trips to France and in 1766, in England, when the French philosopher was in exile.²¹ That year he and Garrick brought to the London stage an English version of *Le devin* in a translation done by Burney years before.²² The production, incidentally, had some additional music composed by Burney. Unfortunately, *The cunning man* (for this was its title) did not have a long enough run to enable Rousseau, then living in the British countryside, to come to town and see it, much to Burney's chagrin.

He had admired Rousseau as early as the mid 1740s. They shared a connection with the music-loving 4th Earl of Holderness, Robert d'Arcy, whom Rousseau had met in 1743 in Venice when d'Arcy was British ambassador and Rousseau was secretary to the French ambassador. Burney had dedicated to d'Arcy his first publication, the *Six sonatas for two violins and bass*.²³

Burney eagerly followed Rousseau's writings, beginning with his *Dissertation sur la musique moderne* (1743), which, surprisingly, given its early date and its focus on somewhat arcane issues of musical notation, was widely reviewed in England.²⁴ And Burney was one of the earliest English subscribers to Diderot's encyclopedia—Rousseau, of course, being its chief musical contributor.²⁵ It is also likely that when Burney's brother Richard named his first-born son Charles Rousseau Burney, and asked the future historian to stand as godfather, the conjoining of names was no accident.²⁶

Burney's care for Rousseau was lifelong.²⁷ Even in Napoleonic times he championed him—and that took courage. Rousseau's writings were seen as having helped spark the French Revolution,²⁸ and in those days there was something approaching invasion hysteria in England.²⁹

Nevertheless in 1801, for Rees's *Cyclopaedia*, Burney wrote that, in Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique*, there was "more good taste, intelligence, and extensive views ...

²¹ For example, on his trip in France in 1763 with Susan and Hetty Burney (Charles's wife).

²² He was made aware of the opera—and Rousseau's courage before the French throne—shortly after its 1752 premiere through his friend Fulke Greville, who was then in Paris.

²³ This was apparently early in 1748, though Fanny, in her *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, says 1747. See Frances Burney, *Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney 1726–1769*, ed. from autograph fragments by Slava Klima, Garry Bowers, and Kerry S. Grant (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

²⁴ It pains scholars interested in the relation of Rousseau and Burney that among her father's manuscripts which Fanny destroyed was a book containing his notes on Rousseau's *Confessions*. See F. Burney, *Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney*, xxxi.

²⁵ In his 1771 book on touring France and Italy, he indicates that his subscription started in 1751, the first year of its publication. See Burney and Scholes, *Dr. Burney's musical tours*, vol. 1, 312.

²⁶ Supporting me in this is Kate Chisholm, author of *Fanny Burney: Her life 1752–1840* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998). In an e-mail communication of 4 August 2004, she pointed out that all of Richard Burney's sons are named after prominent Europeans: Richard Gustavus, James Adolphus, and Thomas Frederick. Charles Rousseau was born in 1747. Richard Burney, Kate Chisholm tells me (e-mail, 30 June 2004), was fluent in French, as was Charles Burney. He was a dancing master. Perhaps he knew Rousseau's *Les muses galantes* of 1743, or his *Dissertation sur la musique moderne* of the previous year? The Burney Family Memorandum (the "Worcester Memorandum" at Yale) indicates that "Mr. Rousseau", the other godfather, was "an Intimate Friend". But research into English genealogical records yields no person named Rousseau who lived near where the Burneys lived at the time. If this is not Jean-Jacques, then this "intimate friend", who appears nowhere else in any document of any of the Burneys, fell very swiftly from that position of intimacy.

²⁷ As late as 1814, the year of his death, Burney is still calling Rousseau's *Lettre* the best music criticism yet in the world. See Kerry Grant, *Dr. Burney as critic and historian of music*. Studies in musicology 62 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) 62.

²⁸ A clear statement of this is made by Charles B. Paul, "Music and ideology: Rameau, Rousseau, and 1789", *The journal of the history of ideas* 32/3 (July–September 1971) 406. Also, on 10 October 1794 his remains (and those of Voltaire) were interred by the French Revolutionary government in the newly constructed Pantheon.

²⁹ Much of the humor of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's 1779 comedy, *The critic*, arises from a desire to satirize that exaggerated hysteria.

than in all the books on the subject of music which the literature of France can boast.”³⁰ And, he added, Rousseau’s *Lettre sur la musique française*³¹ “may be safely pronounced the best piece of musical criticism that has ever been produced in any modern language.”³²

Given the political climate, Burney had to be careful; he prudently limits his praise to musical matters. Still, it was gutsy to praise Rousseau at all. One searches with difficulty to find other Englishmen of the time—let alone anyone as prominent as Burney—writing in such a laudatory manner; pre-1789, yes;³³ during the Napoleonic years, no.

Unlike Hawkins, who was the judge that defended the royal policy of pressing men into involuntary naval service and the magistrate who could write with thinly veiled sarcasm at how “we live in an age in which humanity is the fashion,”³⁴ Burney—like Rousseau—believed in the power of human sympathy.³⁵ Not only is this belief reflected in the many passages of his history where he praises a composer or performer for showing “feeling,”³⁶ it was manifest in the one occasion when Burney ventured onto the stage of public policy.

It concerned music. In August 1774 Burney coauthored a proposal for a national music school which was delivered to the board of governors of the Foundling Hospital.³⁷ That proposal shows—as did the sentence from his “Preface” quoted earlier—his feeling for the poor.³⁸ It calls on the governors to discover talented youth unable to afford musical education and support them. It also makes the sharp point of declaring it “professional” education.

³⁰ From the entry on “Rousseau, Jean Jacques”, in Abraham Rees, ed., *Cyclopaedia, or universal dictionary of arts, sciences, and literature*, vol. 30, 1819. Burney drew heavily on Rousseau’s writings for his contributions to this work—acknowledging his source, however, clearly and gratefully.

³¹ Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 970. He says, “There was too much good sense, taste, and reason in this letter for it to be read with indifference; it was abused, but never answered.”

³² Rees, “Rousseau, Jean Jacques”. Cited in Kerry S. Grant, *Dr. Burney as critic and historian of music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) 62.

³³ *The monthly review* (August 1753) has a favorable review of Rousseau by, of all people, Johnson, who had dealt with Rousseau as early as 7 September 1751 (*The Rambler*). See Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). On page 10 he notes that when the *Lettre sur les spectacles* appeared in English translation in 1759, it was reviewed at length by the *London chronicle*, *Monthly review*, *Critical review*, *London magazine*, and *Burke’s Annual register*. Even so, the praise was not untempered by criticism. See page 11. Also see, beginning on page 231, Brian J. Hanley, *Samuel Johnson as book reviewer* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 2002). Equally worth noting is this fact: Adam Smith wrote praisingly about Rousseau’s *Discourse on inequality* in a 1756 letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh review*. See Alan Ritter and Julia Conaway Bondanella, ed., *Rousseau’s political writings* (New York: W.W. Norton & Comp., 1988) 204–05.

³⁴ Percy Scholes, *The life and activities of Sir John Hawkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) 95.

³⁵ In Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 705, he uses the phrase “the common good”, which, as William Weber points out, “came from the tradition of republican political thought, and probably derived specifically from his extensive reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau”. William Weber, *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) 217.

³⁶ Donald J. Greene—in *The politics of Samuel Johnson* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1973) 16—writes of how different Boswell’s and Johnson’s generations were, saying: “In the interim people had learned to feel and to introspect; Steele and Rousseau, the sentimental novelists and the sentimental dramatists, had done their work; the romantic age had begun.” See also Alan Lessem, “Imitation and expression: Opposing French and British views in the 18th century”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27/2 (summer 1974) 329: “The notion of ‘expression’ was bound to appeal to a new, large group of listeners demanding the right to cherish their own private feelings. Inevitably, intellectual gratification gave way to emotional stimulus as the final criterion of artistic and musical merit.”

³⁷ He proposed this along with the violinist Giardini, who was already one of the governors of the hospital. See Jamie Croy Kassler, “Burney’s ‘Sketch of a plan for a public music school’”, *The musical quarterly* 50/2 (April 1977) 210–34.

³⁸ On this subject, compare how Burney writes about Händel and the Foundling Hospital, and Hawkins. Hawkins makes it seem as though Händel was foolish to have to do with it.

Why did this matter? It mattered because there was prejudice in England concerning the distinction between trade and profession. In a book of anecdotes, published in three volumes between 1822 and 1824, Matilda Hawkins, the historian's daughter, notes sniffily that a "profession constitutes gentility and a trade does not."³⁹ Hawkins, barrister and magistrate, had such gentility; Burney—the musician trained as an apprentice to Thomas Arne—was, in the eyes of the Hawkins family, a mere tradesman, despite his 1769 Oxford doctorate.

What does Hawkins say about Rousseau? Very little; the only direct reference is in his 1777 *Life of Samuel Johnson*, which preceded Boswell's more famous biography by 14 years.⁴⁰ In a digression (Hawkins was famous for these) he writes of Rousseau, Fielding, and Sterne, presenting all three as "men of loose principles," adding the following:

It is their endeavor to commute for their failings by professions of greater love to mankind, more tender affections and finer feelings than they will allow men of more regular lives, whom they deem formalists, to possess. Their generous notions supercede all obligation: they are a law to themselves, and having good hearts and abounding in human kindness, are above those considerations that bind men to that rule of conduct which is founded in a sense of duty. Of this new school of morality, Fielding, Rousseau, and Sterne are the principal teachers, and great is the mischief they have done by their documents.⁴¹

Part of the mischief, Hawkins indicates, was encouraging the idea of "goodness of heart"—an idea, he says, which has corrupted "the rising generation."⁴²

The writing of music history always has, explicitly or implicitly, a view of society in it, a view of humanity.⁴³ Therefore, as we read music history—even music theory—we have a right to ask not only how accurate the author is concerning hard fact, but how warm his or her heart. For there is such a thing as an accurate emotion; there is something other people, and other things, deserve from us—what Eli Siegel called "ontological courtesy."⁴⁴ "The greatest danger or temptation of [any person]," he wrote, "is to get a false importance or glory from the lessening of things not [oneself]; which lessening is Contempt."⁴⁵

Rousseau—and, for that matter, Fielding and Sterne—wrote about humanity in a way that combated various contemptuous notions in those aristocratic times. Thus it is not surprising that while Burney in his history cites Rousseau more than 30 times, Hawkins never mentions him.⁴⁶ It is certainly not a matter of ignorance; Hawkins read

³⁹ Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, *Memoirs, anecdotes, facts, and opinions* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, et al., 1824) 2 vols. An excellent selection from this lengthy work, edited by Francis Henry Skrine, is entitled *Gossip about Dr. Johnson and others* (London: Eveleigh, Nash, and Grayson, Ltd., 1926).

⁴⁰ Johnson had named Hawkins his literary executor.

⁴¹ John Hawkins, *The life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. and abridged by Bertram H. Davis (New York: Macmillan, 1961) 97.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴³ See Peter Cosgrove, "Affective unities: The esthetics of music and factional instability in 18th-century England," *Eighteenth-century studies* 20/2 (winter 1988–89) 134–36. Cosgrove explicitly relates the works of Burney and Hawkins to the political questions of their day—and specifically the question of how "to mediate between the polarizing tendencies towards anarchic freedom or arbitrary conformity." Burney writes of these opposites, explaining that "good music is always found between these two extremes."

⁴⁴ See Eli Siegel's poem "The breviary of ontological courtesy," *The right of Aesthetic Realism to be known* 559 (21 December 1983) 1.

⁴⁵ Eli Siegel, *The "Modern quarterly": Beginnings of Aesthetic Realism, 1922–1923* (New York: Definition Press, 1997) 7.

⁴⁶ See Grant, *Dr. Burney as critic*, 68.

Rousseau.⁴⁷ But he would give no credit to a man he saw as an enemy to his notion of privilege and authority.⁴⁸

In Hawkins's "Preliminary discourse", nearly every recent dictionary or history is mentioned, including (to cite only those in the French language) works by Grassineau, Brossard, and de Blainville.⁴⁹ What of Rousseau's 1767 *Dictionnaire de musique*, which not only was well-known on the continent, but, in the 1770 translation by William Waring, also had success in England? Not a word.⁵⁰

Rousseau jolted Europe, and made the world kinder,⁵¹ by insisting on human equality.⁵² Modern civilization was not—just by virtue of being modern—superior to other societies, Rousseau told his readers. Rather, the modern world needed to learn not only from the ancients, but also from their so-called primitive contemporaries.⁵³

This belief is reflected in his musical writings. For example, in his dictionary he quotes melodies from China, Persia, and the native tribes of Brazil—astutely observing (centuries before postmodern critical theory) the following:⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Burney, himself, says so. Further, John Mainwaring cites Rousseau in his *Memoirs of the life of the late George Frederick Handel* (1760)—a text Hawkins knew. See William Weber, "The intellectual origins of musical canon in eighteenth-century England", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47/3 (fall 1974) 488–520.

⁴⁸ In Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 981, the author notes that various musical "authorities"—such as the Abbé Roussier and M. de la Border—"were awed perhaps by the thunder of Rousseau's eloquence, while alive; but no sooner were they sure that the lion was dead, than they plucked up a courage, and boldly attacked him at all points". Hawkins, at several points in his *General history*, seems to attack Rousseau obliquely—picking fights with Temple and Vossius (long since dead) that concern Rousseau-like doctrines. See John Hawkins, *A general history of the science and practice of music* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963) xxviii, where he writes about the "degeneracy of modern times". Also see page 917, the "Conclusion" to his *A general history*, where he makes note of those "fanciful reasoners", who assert "that there is in the course of things a general and perpetual declination from that state of perfection in which the author of nature originally constituted the world". On page xxix, he sarcastically writes, "The loss of arts is a plausible topic of declamation, but the possibility of such a calamity by other means than a second deluge, or the interposition of any less powerful agent than God himself, is a matter of doubt, and when appearances every where around us favor the opinion of our improvement not only in literature, but in the sciences and all the manual arts, it is wonderful that the contrary notion should ever have got footing among mankind." He then criticizes "some writers for complimenting nations less enlightened than ourselves with the possession or enjoyment of arts which it is pretended we have lost; as they do when they magnify the attainments of nations comparatively barbarous, and making those countries on which the beams of knowledge can scarcely be said to have yet dawned the theatres of virtue and the schools of science, recommend them as fit exemplars for our imitation."

⁴⁹ Hawkins, *A general history*, xxiv and following.

⁵⁰ Compare Burney, who says that that book, "affords not only more amusement, but more historical information relative to the art, than perhaps any book of the size that is extant. Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 13. Note, too, that Burney begins his *A general history* with a set of definitions (vol. 1, 21–22).

⁵¹ Among those who vouch for this was Immanuel Kant, who, in his *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime* (1764), wrote, "I am an investigator by inclination. I feel a great thirst for knowledge and an impatient eagerness to advance, also satisfaction at each progressive step. There was a time when I thought that all this could constitute the honor of humanity, and I despised the mob, which knows nothing about it. Rousseau set me straight. This dazzling excellence vanishes; I learn to honor men, and would consider myself much less useful than common laborers if I did not believe that this consideration could give all the others a value, to establish the rights of humanity." Cited in Ritter and Bondanella, *Rousseau's political writings*, 207–08.

⁵² In the *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* he asks whether it is natural that "children should command old men, fools wise men, and that the privileged few should gorge themselves with superfluities, while the starving multitudes are in want of the care necessities of life?" Cited by Richard B. Sewall, "Dr. Johnson, Rousseau, and reform", *The age of Johnson: Essays presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker*, ed. by Frederick Whitley Hillis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949) 311.

⁵³ As Duffy points out in his *Rousseau in England*, 12, Rousseau also questioned the "superiority" of city life to rural in his novel *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1760; English ed., 1761).

⁵⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Dictionary of Music", in *Essay on the origin of languages and writings related to music*, trans. and ed. by John T. Scott. The collected writings of Rousseau 7 (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998) 446. Here, given the Brazilian origins of these melodies, it is likely the translator, who calls them "Canadian", mistook the late 16th-century usage of the word "Canada", which, then, could—and in this instance certainly did—refer to the New World as such. In his definition of "Accent" Rousseau makes clear his respect for each cultural tradition on a basis of fundamental equality. He writes, "... the universal accent of nature which draws from every man inarticulate cries is one

A conformity of Modulation with our *Music* will be found in all these pieces which will possibly make some admire the goodness and universality of our rules, and for others will perhaps render suspect the intelligence or the fidelity of those who have transmitted these Tunes to us.⁵⁵

When Burney, in their Paris meeting, showed him an outline of his projected history, what excited Rousseau most was the prospect of an extended section on “National Music”. “Ah, that is good”, he said; “It is what I waited for!”⁵⁶

Unfortunately, Burney planned to deal with that subject in his fifth volume, one that was never written.⁵⁷ Perhaps after four volumes and 2000 pages—and another 1000 or so for his book on the life and letters of Metastasio which followed close upon the history (1796)⁵⁸—Burney was exhausted. We do know he had arthritic trouble with his writing hand.

Yet even without that extra volume, we can observe the author’s desire to use music to show a large and universal respect for humanity. For example, on the opening page of his “Preface”, Burney writes as follows:

The love of lengthened tones and modulated sounds, different from those of speech, and regulated by a stated measure, seems a passion implanted in human nature throughout the globe; for we hear of no people, however wild and savage in other particulars, who have not music of some kind or other, with which we may suppose them to be greatly delighted, by their constant use of it.⁵⁹

It is important that Burney specifically exempts music from being merely “wild and savage”; there is something, he asserts, to be respected about music wherever it is made—something speaking well of humanity. It is only sensible, he continues, to see that music has been “in the highest estimation at all times, and in every place.”⁶⁰

Later in the “Preface”, Burney comments on Shakespeare’s classic statement in *The merchant of Venice*, that the man who is not moved by music “is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils”. He notes, once again, that music “has been admired and cultivated by great and eminent persons at all times and in every country”, and at the end of a wonderfully extended 18th-century paragraph he adds that it is “no hyperbole” to declare that “the man who is capable of being affected by sweet sounds, is a being *more perfectly organized*, than he who is insensible to, or offended by them.”⁶¹

thing, and the accent of the language which engenders the melody peculiar to a nation is another”. *Ibid.*, 371. As John T. Scott comments on page 306, it is Rousseau’s belief that while “the ‘same accent of passion’ reigns in all souls, there is a prodigious variety of accented expression in different languages and musics”.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁵⁶ Burney and Scholes, *Dr. Burney’s musical tours*, vol. 1, 315.

⁵⁷ In Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 46–47, we learn that he originally intended to talk about these matters in his next installment to *A general history*. On those pages he also compares, quite respectfully, Chinese and Scottish scales, and indicates that he wrote to people in Canton in order to get more precise information about Chinese music. See, too, his letter of late September/early October 1777 to Matthew Raper—a lengthy letter on Chinese music found in Ribeiro, *The letters*, 231–35. Far later Burney did, in fact, write about Chinese music—for Rees’s *Cyclopaedia*. It is around this same time that Burney wrote a letter (13 March 1802) to a “Mr. Huttner” in which he wrote of his desire to complete his *A general history* through a volume on “national music”, and that to this end he had “collected specimens from every civilized part of the Globe”. See Scholes, *The great Dr. Burney*, vol. 1, 301.

⁵⁸ Charles Burney, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Abate Metastasio* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1796).

⁵⁹ Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 11.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 18.

Compare the generous, respectful and deeply insightful approach of Rousseau and Burney to that of Hawkins. In his “Dedication and preface”, inscribed to George III, are arrogant sentences, redolent with superiority and the hope for contempt. That hope, we shall see, sadly blinded Hawkins and made at least this aspect of his writing deeply inaccurate.

After first saying he wished “to demonstrate that [music’s] principles are founded in certain general and universal laws”,⁶² Hawkins, unconscious of what he is about to do, then undermines his entire endeavor by excluding a vast range of humanity.⁶³ He writes:

Now the best music of barbarians is said to be hideous and astonishing sounds. Of what importance then can it be to enquire into a practice that has not its foundations in science or system, or to know what are the sounds that most delight a Hottentot, a wild American, or even a more refined Chinese?⁶⁴

As Eli Siegel so clearly explained in his book *Self and world*: “Contempt is not interested in knowledge as knowledge, only in knowledge making ego the one thing.”⁶⁵ And in his 1923 essay “The equality of man”, which carries Rousseau’s argument significantly forward, Siegel wrote: “The question of men’s relation to men is certainly the most important one man can ask.”⁶⁶

Hawkins was terrified (as was most of “genteel” Europe) to ask that question honestly; terrified at the idea of there being anything like true human equality. This did not prevent him from acts of remarkable kindness towards people close to him. He was, for example, deeply generous to his sister-in-law when she was excluded from her brother’s will.⁶⁷ Nor did it prevent him from writing with deep insight about music with which, in one manner or another, he felt he could associate himself.

But as happens often with people—both in the 18th century and now—ego imposes a limit on our ethical imagination, and we sharply curtail the range of our fellow-feeling.⁶⁸ Burney, while not seeing this core ethical matter with the depth or courage Rousseau did—and certainly capable of an unhandsome competitiveness vis-à-vis Hawkins and his history—nevertheless learned from Rousseau how, as a scholar, to question narrowness in himself; and it shows in his history.

In researching the various strands of contempt and respect for humanity present in 17th- and 18th-century European musicological thought,⁶⁹ I have tried to determine whether there was a link between the philosopher Rousseau and a Jean Rousseau—also of Geneva—who was a close companion of Jean de Léry on his famous 1557 voyage to Brazil. So far the evidence is enticing, but full genealogical documentation is lacking.

⁶² Hawkins, *A general history*, xix, in the “Dedication” to the King. These laws, which Hawkins says can also be discovered in “the material world”, are harmony, symmetry, proportion, order.

⁶³ Two pioneering works dealing with how racism, both subtle and overt, originates, and how it can be combated, are Arnold Perey’s *Gwe: A novel against racism* (New York: Waverley Place Press, 2005) and Alice Bernstein, ed., *Aesthetic Realism and the answer to racism* (New York: Orange Angle Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Hawkins says this in his “Dedication”. Hawkins, *A general history*, xix.

⁶⁵ Eli Siegel, *Self and world: An explanation of Aesthetic Realism* (New York: Definition Press, 1981) 7.

⁶⁶ Siegel, *The “Modern quarterly”*, 41.

⁶⁷ See Bertram A. Davis, *A proof of eminence: The life of Sir John Hawkins* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1973) 65.

⁶⁸ Rousseau emphasized how both language and music begins with fellow feeling—the desire to communicate with one’s fellows.

⁶⁹ See Edward Green, “Meeting the new: What 21st-century educators can learn from the earliest ethnomusicologists’ about the appreciation of music”, *Journal of historical research in music education* 29/1 (October 2007) 39–54.

In his writings, de Léry discusses at length the music-making of the Brazilian Tupinambá. What is remarkable is how this young Calvinist missionary, hearing the music at first as a sign of devil-worship, comes to respect it and be moved by it. He writes, for example, of one of their melodies, “I was altogether captivated . . . every time I remember it with beating heart, it seems to me that I still have [it] in my ears.”⁷⁰

The history of that voyage was not published until 1578,⁷¹ and musical notation of these Brazilian songs was not included until de Léry published a Latin version of the history in 1586. Thus, it would be nearly 30 years since he first heard these songs. That is a long time for a 16th-century European to remain “captivated” by a seemingly “primitive” music. A desire to respect, even cherish, what is very different from oneself is present.

In 1636 these transcriptions found their way into Mersenne’s *Harmonie universelle*; in 1767 into Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s dictionary. Might we speculate that perhaps there was a kind of family tradition among the Rousseaus concerning the musical—even the “noble”—savage? It is an intriguing idea.

In any event, it is clear that Jean-Jacques Rousseau, like Mersenne, was interested—respectfully interested—in world music. There was a desire for something approaching an honest universality of musical vision.

Hawkins, however, in his lengthy chapter on Mersenne, makes no mention of these transcriptions. He does indicate that Mersenne wrote about Chinese and Indian instruments, but—with a narrowness of spirit quite at odds with that of the author of the *Harmonie universelle*—Hawkins feels compelled to slander these, calling them “barbarous and ill-constructed.”⁷²

This is a cautionary tale. To see how far contempt can blind an otherwise careful scholar (and in regard to the music he loved, Hawkins was exactly that—one of the premiere scholars of the world), consider the following: While he saw fit to include several transcriptions of bird song, and even one for the vocalism of the South American sloth—praising these animals for their harmoniousness and “perfect intonation”⁷³—Hawkins would not extend this courtesy to certain members of his own species.

Without any sign of censure, he quotes statements by Johannes Kepler about the “mangled and abhorrent” intervals in Turkish music. Of the singing of the Turks and Hungarians, we are told that it “resembles the noises of brute animals rather than the sounds of the human voice.”⁷⁴

Burney will have none of this. Far from encouraging his readers to despise people in distant lands, he pointedly says that until “the last century”—that is, the 17th—“the number of our secular and popular melodies did not greatly exceed that of the Turks.”⁷⁵ And he attributes this not to any inherent European superiority, but to the wide-spread application of a new technology: the printing press.

For this essay, I will not expand on the triangular relation between Rousseau, Burney, and Hawkins—how all three men saw opera; how they estimated the worth

⁷⁰ From Jean de Léry, *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*. An excerpt, with translation, is found in Frank Harrison, *Time, place and music* (Amsterdam: Frits Knupf, 1973) 6–24. This citation is on p. 22.

⁷¹ See Harrison, *Time, place and music*, 6–7, for details of early editions.

⁷² Hawkins, *A general history*, 612, originally chapter 127 of the work.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 619.

⁷⁵ Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 784.

of Rameau;⁷⁶ how they saw the interaction of counterpoint,⁷⁷ melody, rhythm,⁷⁸ and harmony; their opinions concerning ancient Greek music;⁷⁹ and how they conceived the relation of language, poetry, and music.⁸⁰ It is not always the case that Burney aligns with Rousseau, and Hawkins plays the odd man out. Nor is Hawkins always the party guilty of narrowness of vision.⁸¹ Rousseau, in particular, could be unnecessarily combative and provocative. And Hawkins welcomed the possibility of music having philosophic significance in a way that Burney—very unfortunately, I believe—did not. Early in his *A general history*, Hawkins writes of how the principles of music “are founded in the very frame and constitution of the universe.”⁸² No such statement is present in Burney; he seems constitutionally averse to exploring the issue.

It is a central belief of Aesthetic Realism that art, indeed, has metaphysical substance, and therefore any attempt to sever art and philosophy limits the precision and the freedom of one’s mind. “The world, art, and self,” said Eli Siegel, “explain each other; each is the aesthetic oneness of opposites.”⁸³

Hawkins is to be honored for his willingness to consider the ontological implications of music. Still, if he were on the right track when it came to cosmic issues, he remained deeply in the wrong as to many down-to-earth, human situations. There was a sizable contempt in him—an enjoyment of looking down on other people, especially those who seemed placed in the world, geographically and culturally, at a remove from himself—that is not found in either Rousseau or Burney. And it does mar his *A general history*, valuable as it undoubtedly is in so many other regards.

My purpose has been to highlight a fact hardly ever brought to the fore in academic gatherings. Namely, that scholarship without good will—without the conscious hope to use the study of music to respect people more—is doomed to inaccuracy. The hope for contempt, as Eli Siegel explained, hurts our perception; the hope for respect deepens it. To see value and meaning in what, at first glance, is alien to us, is the core not only of human kindness, but of all true intelligence.

⁷⁶ Burney questions Rameau’s originality as theorist, while valuing him as composer. See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 968 and following. Hawkins rates him “very high” as theorist, and cites Händel’s opinion of him. See Hawkins, *A general history*, 901.

⁷⁷ See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 969. In its footnote (d) Burney speaks, in keeping with Rousseau’s terminology, of the way music was “manacled by narrow rules, formed on Gothic productions”, Hawkins’s favorite music was the madrigal. In his history, Burney calls it a “many-headed monster”. See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 304.

⁷⁸ See Eve Kisch, “Rameau and Rousseau”, *Music & letters* 22/2 (April 1941) 97–114. Both Burney and Rousseau are shocked by irregular meters.

⁷⁹ Burney, *A general history*, vol. 1, 15, where he writes “What the ancient music really was, it is not easy to determine; the whole is now become a matter of faith; but of this we are certain, that it was something with which mankind was extremely delighted”. Compare with Hawkins’s generally debunking “Conclusion” to the entire *General history*. See Hawkins, *A general history*, 917 and following. See also, xxviii, where he asks whether “our reverence for antiquity has not been carried too far both as to matters of science and morality.”

⁸⁰ Note that Book IV of Burney’s history begins with an “Essay on the euphony of languages”. Also note that where Hawkins is entirely against the idea of music as “imitation” (see Hawkins, *A general history*, xxvii and xx), Burney still has some notion of it. See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 255. Rousseau definitely sees it as an art of imitation.

⁸¹ Burney, in his “Essay on musical criticism”, criticizes exclusiveness as a form of contempt, and there is reason to think he may, obliquely, have been referring to Hawkins—among others. See Burney, *A general history*, vol. 2, 7–11. Meanwhile, as Herbert Schueller points out, Hawkins had a less restricted, a deeper, notion of the power of music than most—Burney, perhaps, included: He “shared with seventeenth-century writers a belief in the ability of music to arouse ecstasy. But in so believing he was almost alone in his time”. Schueller, “The use and decorum”, 86. On page 87 he tells of how “Hawkins probably was one of the few writers to insist after 1750 that religious music leads the soul to God”. The most laudatory account of Hawkins’s character is by W. Wright Roberts, who speaks of an “even-handed justice” in him. See W. Wright Roberts, “The trial of Midas the Second”, *Music & letters* 14/4 (October 1933) 306.

⁸² Hawkins, *A general history*, xxxvii.

⁸³ Siegel, *The “Modern quarterly”*, 53.

