SECM · Society for Eighteenth-Century Music

NEWSLETTER

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Reinserting the "Her" into *Her*itage Institutions: Tracing Afrodiasporic Women Performers from the Eighteenth Century to Today through Museum Exhibitions

Emmanuela Wroth

As we witness an overhaul in what we consider data centers—with reports of AI photographing book contents before destroying the physical copies—the need is ever greater to protect libraries, archives, and museum collections, for both public and academic interests. Where libraries and archives are well understood as important scholarly resources, museum exhibitions are often considered one-directional disseminators for public (read: less "academic") knowledge. In what follows, I consider exhibits as key sites of mutual exchange and circulation of academic and public discourse, and as moments of arrival in understanding how scholarship can identify gaps in knowledge production and diffusion. We are perhaps familiar with the term "herstory" in recapturing erased women's histories. Equally important, I posit, is the reinsertion of the "her" into *her*itage institutions, especially in the recovery of intersectional histories that have been overlooked or erased due to additional markers of alterity beyond gender identity. My focus, which incorporates issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity, is on now-forgotten but once-celebrated Afrodiasporic women in Europe prior to the late nineteenth century.



Figure 1. Portrait of a Young Woman, *late 18th century, artist unknown. Saint Louis Art Museum. In the public domain.*

My Leverhulme Early Career research project "Diasporic Divas: Racialised and Gendered Celebrity in Western Europe, 1715–1925" was inspired by the 2023 *Diva* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A).[1] This exhibit charted the rise and transmutations of the diva, from 18th-century Italian opera stars to contemporary US pop icons. The first black diva it identified was the 20th-century African American singer and dancer Josephine Baker (1906–1975), who acquired celebrity in 1920s Paris. According to the curators, Baker became a "modern interdisciplinary diva" once the cult of the diva incorporated theater, dance, and more popular musical stars beyond opera.[2] A similar chronology featured in *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism* 2024 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met), where 20th-century African American divas such as Baker, Marian Anderson (1897–1993), and Katherine Dunham (1909–2006) were considered pioneering importers of Afrodiasporic performance culture to Europe.[3] These exhibitions implied that celebrated black women arrived in Europe as post-bellum American imports, once the cult of divadom was already fully established. "Diasporic Divas" challenges these chronologies by tracing other celebrated Afrodiasporic women performers whose careers centered in Europe, in the lead-up to the cult of the diva and during its heyday, positioning them as key in the cult's development throughout. From opera stars like the 18th-century Afro-Italian Vittoria Tesi (1701–1775) and the early-19th-century French-Haitian Caroline Branchu (1778–1850), to the mid-to-late 19th-century Afro-Prussian acrobat Miss La La (1858–1945) and the Afro-British variety star Joséphine Morcashani (1870–1929), I argue that these diasporic divas set the stage for Baker's divadom in turn-of-the-century Paris.

Conspicuously, the V&A's ongoing 2026/27 exhibit *The Music is Black: A British Story* reinscribes its 2023 *Diva* narrative by recounting black British music through today as only a 125-year history.[4] It is troubling that a key 19th-century British heritage institution fails to acknowledge black people as integral to music history in Britain and Europe before the 20th century. Similarly, while the British Library's 2024 exhibit, *Beyond the Bassline: 500 Years of Black British Music*, captured half a

1. Emmanuela Wroth, "Diasporic Divas: Racialized and Gendered Celebrity in Western Europe", in "Historicizing Celebrity," ed. Shaena Weitz, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 80, no. 2 (forthcoming, summer 2027).

2. Kate Bailey, *Diva* (V&A Publishing, 2023), 35.

3. Denise Murrell, *The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2024).

4. Jacqueline Springer, *The Music is Black: A British Story* (V&A Publishing, 2026).

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From the Editor

Sarah Waltz

The SECM Newsletter is published twice yearly, in Fall and Spring. Submissions in the following categories are encouraged:

- Original research articles;
- News of recent accomplishments from members of the society (publications, presentations, awards, performances, promotions, etc.);
- Reviews of performances of 18th-century music;
- Reviews of books, editions, or recordings of 18th-century music;
- Conference reports;
- Dissertations in progress on 18th-century music;
- Upcoming conferences and meetings;
- Calls for papers and manuscripts;
- Research reports and research resources;
- Grant opportunities.

Contributions should be submitted as an attachment to an e-mail message (preferably in Microsoft Word format) to the SECM Newsletter editor (sarah.waltz@me.com). Submissions must be received by September 1 for the Fall issue and by March 1 for the Spring issue. The digital edition of this Newsletter contains active hyperlinks, which can be identified by text in this color.

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President's Message

Alison DeSimone

I have a lot to celebrate in my first newsletter column as president of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music. After assuming this role in November 2025, I have been lucky enough to be involved with two incredible Society milestones: the first is the 25th anniversary of the SECM's founding in 2001, and the second is our 11th biennial conference, which was held in Mafra, Portugal in May.

The conference, which you can read more about in the report in this newsletter, meant more than just a gathering of scholars dedicated to understanding music in the eighteenth century. As I sat in the audience, listening to the papers, I realized that this conference also represented the greatest diversity of topics, composers, and places of any other SECM conference that I've attended. The theme of the conference—transnationalism—certainly helped, and holding the event in Portugal allowed many of our European-based colleagues to attend when they might otherwise not have been able to.

But it struck me that this conference contained a kind of unprescribed diversity that represented the principles the Society was founded on. In Sterling Murray's history of SECM, which you can find here, he conveys the importance of a society that would provide intellectual space for those whose research investigated everything outside and in between the "great masters" of the century. SECM became a place where scholars of eighteenth-century music could share and learn about topics that went far beyond the major cities and composers of the era. It has been through the Society that work on gender, race, class and economics, under-discussed genres, travel and transnationalism has thrived over the years. It was a pleasure to witness this expansion of what eighteenth-century music *means* as I listened to all of the incredible papers that my colleagues presented.

As the board and I gathered for our first meeting last January, we realized we wanted to learn more from our membership about what made the Society so important to them. In light of this, we released a survey to our members in April of 2026, asking about SECM's value and what other initiatives we could take as we plan for the future. We have the results, and will share them with all of you at the General Meeting when it is held later this fall—along with some ideas for new resources we can provide you. In the meantime, thank you to everyone who participated.

I also want to thank you all, the members of SECM, for your patience as we pivoted on our newsletter editorship earlier this year. I am grateful to Dr. Sarah Waltz, who stepped into the role on quick notice, and who has done a wonderful job putting together this edition. Please don't hesitate to reach out to her if you have member news, any recordings or books you might want to review, or an idea for a lead article.

SECM is thriving—thanks to all of you. It is hard to believe that the Society is, as of this coming November, twenty-five years old. I reached out to some of the founding members to get their perspective on why the Society was founded, and what it still means to them. In paraphrasing some of the responses, all addressed similar themes: international collaboration (manifested in our successful conference in May), the support of students working on eighteenth-century topics; and the continued importance of studying the musical eighteenth century holistically, rather than as

siloed bubbles around significant master composers. I personally am grateful for those founding members. SECM has been my scholarly home since my first conference in Charleston, SC in 2012. I have made friends for life through the Society; I have found exceptional critique and support amongst its membership, from my graduate school days through tenure. I hope that is true for all of you.

I look forward to seeing you all at our General Meeting later this year; we will send out a date, time, and virtual link as we get closer. In the meantime, don't hesitate to reach out to me: adesimone@secm.org or alisoncdesimone@gmail.com if you have any questions, concerns, or feedback for us.

Fall 2026 Member News

Jane Schatkin Hettrick recently published the following: "Rethinking Salieri in 2025: An Organist's Research Journey," *The American Organist* (May 2025, 54–65); a review of Siegwart Reichwald, "Mendelssohn and the Genesis of the Protestant A Cappella Movement" *The American Organist* (June 2025, 72–73); and "The State of Music in the Lutheran Church in Vienna at the Time of Beethoven: As Revealed in an Unpublished Document of Johann Andreas Streicher," *Sacred Music* (vol.152, no. 2, 2025, 7–20). She also gave an invited speech at the banquet of the *Protes'tant Conference*, held at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 25–26 June 2026. Entitled "A Celebration of *Te Laudamus*—A Hymnal for All Times," her speech served as the keynote address for the introduction of this historic new Lutheran hymnal.

Bertil van Boer is working with the Theresia Baroque Orchestra and CPO recordings on a new complete cycle of symphonies by Joseph Martin Kraus. These are intended to be released in 2027–28 and are being recorded at the Stift Ossiach in Austria.

Dorian Bandy has a new book chapter out, "Systematic Mozart," in *Mozart and His World*, ed. Simon Keefe (Chicago, 2026); and a new CD out, *The Revolutionary Oboe*, featuring period-instrument performances of chamber music for oboe and strings by Mozart, Kreutzer, Boccherini, Glück, and Widerkehr.

Alan Maddox is pleased to advise that his edited book *Antonio Caldara and the Performance of Power* will be published by mid-September. The details are: Alan Maddox, ed., *Antonio Caldara and the Performance of Power*. Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2026. Antonio Caldara (1670–1736) was one of the most highly regarded musicians of the early eighteenth century. As vice-Capellmeister and favourite composer to Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI (r.1711–1740) in Vienna, he was at the center of European power. Here, he produced a prodigious stream of sacred and secular music glorifying the Emperor. Yet, under the Viennese court's tightly regulated system, his music was not widely disseminated, and his achievements have until recently been eclipsed by those of his famous contemporaries including J. S. Bach, Handel and Vivaldi. In this volume, an international group of scholars re-evaluates Caldara's achievement with a particular focus on his role in the projection of Habsburg political and cultural power. The book provides new insights into a creative, versatile composer, the quality of whose oeuvre is now increasingly being recognised.

Janet Page and **Vanessa Rogers** are thrilled to announce that their co-edited book, *Eighteenth-Century Opera and Ballet: New Perspectives on Sources and Practice*, has just been published by the University of Rochester / Boydell & Brewer Press in the Eastman Studies in Music series edited by Ralph Locke. The volume is a *Festschrift* for Bruce Alan Brown, who retired from USC in 2022, and includes a bibliography of his works as well as contributions by Thomas Bauman, Daniel Brandenburg, Irene Brandenburg, Rogério Budasz, Michael Burden, Lisa de Alwis, Anne Desler, Dexter Edge, Helena Kazárová, Michael Lorenz, John A. Rice, and Neal Zaslaw. Copies can currently be purchased at 40% discount. (Download the flyer on the left-hand side of the book's webpage.)

Martin Eybl announces a New Special Issue: *Paper and Copyists in Viennese Opera Scores*. This new special issue of *Musicologica Austriaca: Journal for Austrian Music Studies* explores the material history and production of Viennese opera scores between 1760 and 1775. Published online on 2 April 2026, the issue presents research from two FWF-funded projects (2014–2025).

The contributions examine opera manuscripts not simply as a source of musical texts, but as material objects whose paper, watermarks, staff ruling, handwriting, binding, and production processes can reveal their origins, chronology, and circulation. Among the topics addressed are the production of music paper in the Toscolano region, the characteristics of professionally copied Viennese scores (with a special focus on the important copyist Theresia Ziss), collaborative practices in copyist workshops, and the codicological evidence surrounding different Viennese versions of Salieri's *La locandiera*.

The special issue offers valuable new perspectives on manuscript production and music copying, complementing the project's online resources, which provide access to score profiles, watermark documentation, information on copyists, and a Copyist Identifier. Starting in 2025, the current phase of the project turns its attention to earlier decades of manuscript production in Vienna, extending the scope back to 1725 and to even earlier periods.

Read the special issue: Paper and Copyists in Viennese Opera Scores — Musicologica Austriaca

DOI: 10.71045/musau.2026.SI1

Project Website: <https://doi.org/10.21939/x9gthx>

Financial Report

The Society ended the 2025/26 fiscal year with a $194.76 deficit of revenue over expenses, compared with a $105.82 deficit in 2024/25. In April there had been a $4,942.69 surplus, before the payout of conference expenses ($5,404.18) and awards ($750).

The financial position of the Society remains strong, with $28,941.06 in total assets as of June 30, 2026 (down from $29,135.82 at the end of the previous fiscal year).

Membership currently stands at 107 members, continuing a modest decline from 114 members reported last year.

More detailed financial statements are available from the Treasurer.

CFP: Symposium: The Keyboard Works of William Herschel. A one-day symposium at St. Botolph without Aldgate, London, Saturday, May 15th, 2027.

Organizers: Margaret-Mary Sauppé, DMA, Organist; Sarah Waltz, Ph.D., Musicologist

In recent years, there has been a growth of interest in the keyboard music of William Herschel (1738–1822) among musicians and academics, resulting in new editions of his music and a decent number of online music recordings. As a way of bringing academics, performers, and Herschel historians together, this symposium will examine Herschel's organ and larger keyboard works from analytical, organological, and historical perspectives. The goal of this symposium is to deepen appreciation for the artistic side of Herschel's life and works, and to promote more performances of his keyboard music.

We would welcome papers that include or relate to the following topics:

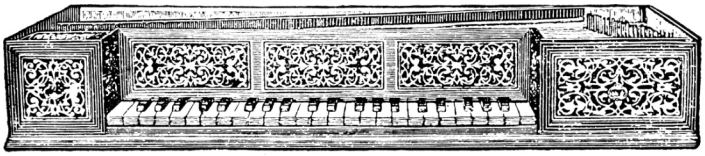
- A history of the period 1765–1782, as it pertains to Enlightenment arts and sciences
- An overview of Herschel's musical life, with a focus on his organ and larger keyboard works
- A discussion of the organs Herschel would have played
- Special attention directed to Herschel's harpsichord works
- An analysis of Herschel's organ works within the context of Georgian British organ music
- The relationship between Herschel's musical and scientific thinking
- Approaching the performance of Herschel's organ works from the perspective of historical performance practice
- A playing demonstration of Herschel's music, with explanations touching on the above concepts
- Participation in the final organ concert at the end of the day

Paper presentation and performance lecture slots are expected to be approximately 30–40 minutes, with time included for audience questions. Submissions should include a brief biography of approximately 150 words and a one-page abstract describing the nature of the proposed paper.

Organists interested in playing a piece by William Herschel for the final concert should email the organizers directly.

For submissions, questions, and other inquiries, please contact Margaret-Mary Sauppé (dotsanddashes6.28@gmail.com) or Sarah Waltz (swaltz@pacific.edu). Submissions can also be made directly to the website:

<https://sites.google.com/view/the-keyboard-works-of-herschel/home>



Conference Report: Transnational Musical and Theatrical Influences in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World

Alison DeSimone

With Danielle Kuntz and Erica Levenson

The Society for Eighteenth-Century Music and Divino Sospiro/Centro de Estudos Musicais Setecentistas de Portugal held SECM's 11th Biennial Conference at the Museu Nacional da Música in Mafra, Portugal from 28–31 May 2026. The conference provided three days of intellectual discussion on musics from around the Atlantic world; interspersed between papers and panels, attendees were treated to exquisite Portuguese food and drink as well as experiences that showed off the richness of musical culture that Portugal had to offer.

The conference began in the afternoon of Thursday, May 28. Our host venue was the Museu Nacional da Música, which has found a new home at the Mafra National Palace. Sitting atop a hill overlooking the ocean, the enormous palace currently houses a Portuguese military school in the former monastery, as well as a museum, the music museum, a cafe, and beautiful gardens. After introductions from Edward Ayres de Abreu, the director of the music museum; Hugo Moreira Luís, the mayor of Mafra; Alison DeSimone, president of SECM; and Massimo Mazzeo, director of the Centro de Estudos Musicais Setecentistas, attendees were treated to the first paper. André Ferreira discussed his recent work on the six organs of Mafra. He skillfully argued that composers wrote repertoire for these organs to be played together, and an accompanying video demonstrated this in action (unfortunately, the chapel was closed to the public for renovations, so we could not hear them in person). We were also treated to a tour of the Museu Nacional da Música, hosted by Edward Ayres de Abreu, whose exhibition is brilliantly curated around the use of instruments, rather than organological typology or ethnic origin. There are plenty of interactive exhibits as well, including the ability to "perform" a spatial contemporary work in surround sound (and video). Participants had unfettered access to the entire exhibition during the conference, and it was a real treat to be able to walk the exhibition halls during breaks and while hustling to our different conference spaces. The day ended with a catered reception for attendees.

Our first full day of the conference began with a paper from our keynote speaker, Javier Marín-López (Universidad de Jaén), who spoke on private musical libraries in the colonial Atlantic. These are under-considered sites when discussing musical circulation in the eighteenth century, he argued, but these collections show the breadth and diversity of music that was being consumed around the Hispanic world. The music that ended up in private libraries in Mexico included works by composers from across Iberia as well as Italy, pointing to a transnational circulation that relied upon colonial musicians to perform, adapt, study, and preserve these repertoires.

Our second session, moderated by Danielle Kuntz (Baldwin Wallace University) first featured Paul Feller-Simmons (University of Oklahoma), who discussed how Christians in the Dutch Republic used music as a means of discussing, containing, or even mocking the country's Portuguese Jewish population. Javier Gándara Feijóo (iHUS-Universidade de Santiago de Compostela) spoke on António de Araújo e Azevedo, Count of Barca, who traveled the world and who wrote home about his musical experiences



The National Palace in Mafra, Portugal. The Museu Nacional da Música, in the left wing (behind the scaffolding), was the site of the joint SECM/Divino Sospiro/Centro de Estudos Musicais Setecentistas de Portugal meeting.

across Europe and the Hispanic world, including Rio de Janeiro. Devon J. Borowski (Harvard University) rounded out the session with a talk on *modinhas*, a popular music style in eighteenth-century Brazil that became an obsession for William Beckford when he traveled to Lisbon.

After a delicious lunch at a local restaurant, attendees were treated to a special tour of the convent of Mafra's Royal Palace, which currently houses a military academy. We toured the convent (normally off-limits); a favorite room of ours was where the monks sat for their exams, with balconies overlooking the main floor so that the proctors could oversee their students.

Julie Doe (Columbia University) kicked off Friday's afternoon session by tracing the lives and careers of two Afro-descendent sopranos, both of whom had diverging careers as singers in Paris. While Caroline Branchu (discussed in the lead article of this issue) became a star, largely owing to family connections, Constance-Marie Corbin's career faltered, illustrating that even after the abolition of slavery in France, race and class still largely determined one's social and professional success. Paul Corneilson (Packard Humanities Institute), jointly with Karl Böhmer (Villa Musica), spoke about J. C. Bach's cantata *Rinaldo ed Armida*, and reconstructed its performances from London to Leipzig as well as other places in Europe as it traveled along with other singers and performers. Our final talk of the day was a lecture recital given by Nicola Pignatiello (Università degli studi di Roma Tor Vergata, recipient of the Sterling Murray Travel Award), who demonstrated how two Spanish guitar manuscripts taught a type of transnational pedagogy that can still be used today to teach children technique, musical basics, and improvisation.

On Saturday morning, we returned for two papers. Emilia Pelliccia (University of Kassel) presented on Viennese singers who moved between courts in the Habsburg empire, establishing transnational networks and even furnishing original compositions that circulated around Europe. Hedy Law (University of British Columbia) spoke about the *opéra comique Les Visitandines* (1792), with music by François Devienne, and how its tunes were adapted beyond the stage during the revolution.

After a coffee break, Michael Carlson (University of Notre Dame) spoke about Jesuit missionaries in South America, and how their transnational travels helped to incorporate Roman opera into the zarzuela as the genre became influential in converting indigenous populations. Joining us virtually, Francesco Milella González Luna (Complutense University of Madrid) presented on the later years of Spanish colonialism in Central America, focusing on new operas composed and premiered in Mexico in the early nineteenth century as Spanish influence waned. David Cranmer's (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) talk on Marcos Portugal traced the life



and career as the composer worked his way up as the musical director of the Teatro de São Carlos in Lisbon and then following the royal court to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil during their exile in 1807.

Following another exquisite local lunch, including much camaraderie (and a little wine!), we returned to hear Giuseppina Raggi's (Departamento de História da Arte – Universidade NOVA de Lisboa) paper on the theater, and how Black musical ensembles were depicted visually both across Europe and in Central and South America, as a counter to how musicians of color were described by Europeans in travelogues. Astried Nielsch (International Council for Transitions of Music and Dance) joined us by video, sharing a talk on publications of dance music for the harp and how these works connected Latin American folk music to West African musical styles for kora and other types of plucked indigenous instruments.

Our next session was a book presentation, featuring new volumes by Pedro Memelsdorff, who spoke about *Musique et société dans les Caraïbes françaises, 1750–1810* and Reinhard Eisendle, who could not join us in person, but whose recently published books include *Don Giovanni in Rio and New York*. To end the day, Massimo Mazzeo hosted a round table entitled "Lost in Translation? Transatlantic Musical Exchanges in the Eighteenth Century: Echoes, Reflections, and Resonances on Our Time," featuring Jorge Chaminé, Drew Edward Davies, Pedro Memelsdorff, and





Javier Marín-López. The discussion turned toward the way in which studying transnationalism in the eighteenth century relates to our own struggles with globalism and transnational identity in the twenty-first century.

In the evening, participants were treated to a concert, *Devoção e Estravagâcia,* performed by our host ensemble Divino Sospiro, directed by Massimo Mazzeo. The concert featured music by Francisco Garcia Fajer, Giovanni Bononcini, Francisco Antonio de Almeida, Giuseppe Totti, and Marcos Portugal—composers about whom we'd learned during the previous two days.

On Sunday morning, the day began with Erica Levenson's (University of Michigan) talk, which examined how child theatrical performers on the London stage, often performing as "Lilliputians" in popular pantomimes, became a focal point for eighteenth-century thinking about the slippage between miniatures, children, and adults. Afterward, in a virtual presentation, Elena Mazzoleni (University of Bergamo) and Catarina Pagnini (University of Florence) shared their work on the transmission of pantomime and dance practices to the U.S. in the late eighteenth century by French and Italian performers. After a brief coffee break, we ended the last day with an impressive talk by undergraduate Michael Cherbini (Florida Gulf Coast University, and recipient of the Student Paper Prize), who examined the pedagogical resonances of two Ibero-American primary sources—the *Livro de Lecciones a Solo Violin* by Nicolas Olivari (fl. 18th century) and the *Casta a Lições* by Pedro Lopes Nogueira (fl. 1686–1700?).

It was incredible to attend such a diverse conference—in terms of the topics discussed as well as the representation of scholars from all over the world. We could not think of a better way to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Society, and on behalf of the board, thank you to Massimo Mazzeo, Iskrena Yordanova, and Danielle Kuntz—as well as all the sponsors—for putting together such an enjoyable and engaging event.

Conference Report: "Beyond Corelli: Geminiani and the instrumental music of his time"

Centro Studi Opera Omnia Luigi Boccherini | Italian Institute for Applied Musicology

Peter Walls

Held in beautiful Lovere on the shores of Lake Iseo in Lombardy, this conference had been conceived as a way of celebrating the completion of the *Francesco Geminiani Opera Omnia* (the last of its 22 volumes having been published in 2025).[1] The project had been initiated by Christopher Hogwood who was General Editor until his death in 2014. Rudolf Rasch then completed the third of the volumes that Christopher himself had been editing and assumed the role of General Editor. In addition to assisting the editors of other volumes, Professor Rasch edited ten volumes (and co-edited another). It was fitting that he should give the keynote address in Lovere. Rasch's paper, teasingly entitled "Who was Geminiani?," drew on his encyclopedic knowledge of the composer's life, publications, performances, and reception. One interesting aspect of this was to remind us of the gaps in Geminiani biography. Rasch drew attention to Cheryll Duncan's discovery that Geminiani had, after all, returned to his native Italy for a visit in 1749,[2] and described Geminiani as having been "incognito" during the four years he spent in Paris from 1751.

The keynote was complemented by a session on Geminiani biography beginning with an illuminating paper from Guido Olivieri that focused on Geminiani's activities in Naples between 1709 and 1714 (effectively another of the biographical gaps). Expanding on his "Geminiani e Napoli" (2000), Olivieri offered fascinating insights into the activities of Francesco Geminiani and his violinist brother, Michele.[3] Marcus Held tackled the puzzlingly youthful appearance of Geminiani in Andrea Soldi's late 1730s portrait of the composer (see next page) by arguing that it needs to be read, not as a quasi-photographic likeness, but as a genre piece—Geminiani as composer (elegant and learned, with the score of Corelli's Op. 6 No. 8 open in front of him). The most obvious analogue here might be the Henry Howard portrait of Corelli himself.[4] Held's perspective fitted well with the case made later in the conference by Enrico Gatti. Tegan Sutherland, quoting Aaron Hill's ironic representation of the decline of taste in England, argued that Geminiani's standing in English society may be attributed to his eschewing display in favor of musical substance (priorities that are explicit in the taste treatises).

The idiosyncratic *Guida Armonica* featured strongly in the session on Geminiani's treatises. My own paper took as its point of

1. See <https://www.utorpheus.com/index.php?route=geminiani/home>.

2. Cheryll Duncan, "Castrati and impresarios in London: two mid-eighteenth-century lawsuits," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 24/1 (2012), 46–65.

3. Guido Olivieri, 'Geminiani e Napoli,' *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* 34/1 (2000), 27–41.

4. On this portrait and its rhetorical position, see my "Reconstructing the Archangel: Corelli 'ad vivum pinxit'," *Early Music* 35/4 (2007), 525–38.



Francesco Geminiani
late 1730s, by Andrea Soldi
The Foundling Museum, London

departure an assertion I had made in the introduction to *The Art of Playing on the Violin*[5] that there was little reason to presuppose that an original Italian draft preceded this treatise in either its English (1751) or French (*L'art de jouer le violon*, 1752) versions. My purpose was to see whether that also held true for the various versions of the Accompaniment treatise and the *Guida* group of treatises. In neither case is it possible to come up with a plausible stemma that would show a descent from a single original text (in any language). This reinforces the sense that Geminiani's music examples are paramount in the treatises with the text forming, often, an incidental gloss. A paper jointly prepared by Frida Moreno and Fabrizio Ammetto, who are preparing a Spanish-language edition of the *Guida* group, demonstrated conclusively (through an analysis of errors) that the Bologna manuscript (I-Bc, Ms. G. 122) of the *Guida* derived from the printed edition. Nicola Pignatiello gave an engaging paper on the "*Guida Armonica* as a Musical Labyrinth," seeing it less as a harmonic treatise than as an exercise in what would now be called combinatorics and placing it within a tradition of musical labyrinths going back to the Middle Ages. The session on treatises was rounded out by Augustin Szokos giving a practitioner's view of the pedagogical usefulness of the Accompaniment treatise(s).

5. Vol. 12 in the *Geminiani Opera Omnia*.

The treatises came back into focus the following day. Javier Lupiáñez Ruiz offered a comparative reading of Geminiani's Taste treatises with Tartini's "Regole per arrivare a saper ben sonar il violino," which had been circulating in manuscript from about the time of the Geminiani publications. In pointing out that Geminiani's music examples often provide excellent exercises on topics covered in the Tartini text, he reinforced the sense that the music examples themselves are the core of Geminiani's theoretical writings. Ruiz suggested that Geminiani's 1749 visit to Italy may have provided an opportunity for some cross-fertilization between Geminiani's and Tartini's pedagogical approaches.

Given the "Beyond Corelli" theme of the conference, it was fitting that two papers dealt with the legacy of il Bolognese. Maximiliano Segura Sánchez examined the bass lines (mostly designated "violone ò cimbalo") in publications by Estienne Roger that are seen as reinforcing the canonic centrality of Corelli's Opus 5. He demonstrated that sonatas by Michele Mascitti, Angelo Michele Besseghi, Giuseppe Valentini and others introduce interesting variations on the Corellian paradigm, drawing attention, for example, to the passage in the second movement of Nicola Cosimi's Op. 1 No. 11 where arpeggiation in the violin part alternates with similar arpeggiation in the bass violin part (without the use of figures). Enrico Gatti focused on the distinctly different profile of Geminiani alongside his erstwhile master. Gatti emphasized Corelli's status as "classical" composer, with compositions (and, as far as we can know, a performance style) that eschewed ostentatious virtuosity. Using the Geminiani-embellished version of Corelli Op. 5 No. 9 published by Hawkins, Gatti stressed Geminiani's originality and the difference in approach from the embellishments in the celebrated 1710 Roger edition. He also singled out the beautiful Composizione VIII in *The Art of Playing on the Violin* as a superb example of a "gavotte tendre."

And that, almost, was it for Geminiani himself. Agata Meissner, in examining the transformation of the Op. 4 violin sonatas in the *Pièces de clavecin*, illuminated Geminiani's strong sense of the appropriate idiom for the keyboard (especially as that relates to ornamentation and bass line realization).

There was, however, a rich collection of papers on Geminiani's associates and contemporaries. Galliano Ciliberti joined the conference online to highlight the extraordinary technical and freewheeling fantasy of Francesco Antonio Bonporti's Op. 10 *Inventioni* (1712). Marta Violetta Nahon examined the mostly unpublished works of Antonio Martinelli. Martinelli taught cello and violin at three of the four Venetian orphanages from the mid-1720s. His compositions have a particular interest as pedagogical vehicles for his students, who included Chiara della Pietà (orphan, abandoned at 2 months) and Maddalena Lombardini (a paying student).

One of the surprising (chance) features of this conference was the absence of any audible music examples, live or recorded, until the final morning. That session opened with a paper from Estelle Murphy on Matthew Dubourg supported by recorded examples. Thanks to a minuet in one of the Dubourg manuscripts in the Royal College of Music (GB-Lcm MSS 847-850) Murphy was able to establish Dubourg's authorship of an impressive sonata for violin and concertante harpsichord. The same sonata reappears in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (VM7-2513), rescored for "violino e tamb[ourin]." There was a lively discussion about the identity of the tambourin, with Guido Olivieri

suggesting that it was likely a similar instrument to the Italian Buttafuoco.

Lucía Catalán Báguena reported on the research that she is doing on the English violin treatises that preceded the publication of Geminiani's *Art of Playing on the Violin*. Mariateresa Dellaborra and Danilo Prefumo presented on the English editions of Giuseppe Sammartini's Concerti Grossi, including a discussion of the role of the viola in these works (with a concertino of just two violins). They referred to Charles Avison's fascinating preface to his own Opus 3 Concerti that, somewhat surprisingly, seems explicitly to envisage a single viola (as part of the concertino) alongside larger numbers of violins.

The final session was devoted to some of Geminiani's contemporaries in London. Costanza Leuzzi, joining the conference online, gave an account of the life and works of the remarkable Elizabeth Turner (singer, composer, and harpsichordist). Rosemarie Darby gave a fascinating account of Thomas Arne's career and, finally, Barnaby Priest presented on the work that he and Alyson McLamore have been doing on Robert Bremner's *Periodical Overtures* (about which they have written in the Spring 2025 issue of this *Newsletter*). This clearly successful series provides a fascinating insight into popular taste on the one hand and into Bremner's commercial astuteness on the other—with instrumentation determined by an easy fit for existing ensembles.

A volume based on the papers at the conference is planned for publication in 2028.

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millennium of black British music-making, women only emerge in its narrative at the close of the 19th century, with the singer and instrumentalist Amanda Aldridge (1866–1956).[5] A subsequent "female stardom" section featured figures from the 20th century onwards, like the singers Belle Davies (1874–1938) and Shirley Bassey (1937–). The exhibit therefore overlooked at least a century of black women musicians in Britain by excluding, among others, the Afrodescendant singer and actor Rachael Baptist (fl. 1750–1775) who performed in 18th-century England and Ireland. The Met's 2025 exhibit *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style* likewise focused almost exclusively on black men's history across the USA and Europe from the 18th century to today, through the figure of the dandy.[6] While acknowledging key 20th-century African-American women in the history of black dandyism, including Baker and Gladys Bentley (1907–1960), it again disregarded earlier important black women figures in Europe, such as the aforementioned 19th-century Afro-British variety star Joséphine Morcashani, who acquired celebrity in drag performances as a "dandy diva."[7]

All this notwithstanding, this increased focus in museums in recent years on black history and herstory has allowed me to locate gaps in knowledge production and advance my scholarship. Although the Musée d'Orsay's 2019 exhibit *Black Models: from Géricault to Matisse* omitted a significant historical black woman—the Jamaican-born supermodel Fanny Eaton (1835–1924) of 19th-century London—it helped me identify a performer at Paris' Théâtre des Variétés in the 1850s as the Afro-Cuban singer, instrumentalist, and dancer María Martínez (fl. 1820–1870). Previously, scholars claimed there was no way of naming this performer whom certain contemporary reviews had anonymized as a "négresse" [negress].[8] My research demonstrates that Martínez was a pioneer who transported her native and nascent Cuban and Andalucian musical genres—such as flamenco—across 19th-century Western Europe, the influence of which is still felt today, for example in popular operas such as *Carmen*.[9]

Similarly, the National Gallery's 2024 exhibit *Discover Degas & Miss La La* provided great insights into Miss La La (born Olga Brown), the 19th-century Afro-Prussian aerialist and gymnast.[10] Whereas Degas is by far the better-remembered one today, in 1879 when La La posed for her oil portrait it was Degas who gained recognition and exposure by association with her as a celebrity. At the exhibition's study day—in conversation with the Tate Britain curator Dr. Carol Jacobi—I also identified a new case study for my research: Finette (born Joséphine Durwend, fl. 1840–1870), the Créole can-can dancer from Réunion who acquired celebrity in mid-19th-century Europe through her pioneering performances of the emerging can-can dance. Dr. Jacobi subsequently invited me to contribute to an audio guide on Finette for the Tate Britain's 2026 *James McNeill Whistler* exhibit, and disseminate my findings at the museum's conference, "Whistler in Action."[11] As with Degas and La La, although Whistler is now much better remembered, at the time of her 1859 etching, Whistler gained in reputation by capturing Finette's celebrity portrait.

While historically celebrated figures such as Martínez, La La, and Finette have begun populating mainstream exhibitions, they

5. Paul Bradshaw, *Beyond the Bassline: 500 Years of Black British Music* (British Library Publishing, 2024).

6. Monica L. Miller, *Superfine: Tailoring Black Style* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2025).

7. Jeff Bowersox, "Josephine Morcashani, a Dandy Diva: Racial Masquerade, Gender Play, and Class Critique on European Variety Stages, 1870-1929," *Theatre Survey* 67 no. 1 (forthcoming, January 2027).

8. David Hillery, *The Théâtre des Variétés in 1852* (Manchester University Press, 2012), 53.

9. Emmanuela Wroth, "From Branchu to Baker: Tracing Afrodiasporic Racialized and Gendered Celebrity Performance Practices across Nineteenth-Century Paris" in *Women's Innovations in Theatre, Dance, and Performance,* Volume 1: Performers, Eds. Colleen Kim Daniher and Marlis Schweitzer (Bloomsbury, forthcoming).

10. Anne Robbins et al., *Discover Degas & Miss La La* (National Gallery Global, 2024).

11. Carol Jacobi, *James McNeill Whistler* (Tate Publishing, 2026), and "Finding Finette at Tate Britain's James McNeill Whistler exhibition" <https://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/about/news/finding-finette-at-tate-britains-james-mcneill-whistler-exhibition/>. Accessed September 6, 2026. [Editor's Note: for UK readers and visitors the aforementioned Tate Britain exhibition is open until September 26, 2026, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/whistler>.

remain somewhat marginal within them. The National Gallery's *Discover Degas & Miss La La* is perhaps an exception, in its spotlighting of La La in its title and display, unlike The Burrell Collection's concurrent 2024 *Discovering Degas* that featured La La only in passing. What is more, this intensified inclusion of black and Afrodiasporic women performers in Western heritage institutions typically extends only as far back as the 19th century, as if previously they did not exist in or contribute to "Western" and "European" history and culture.[12] The groundbreaking 2023 *Seeing Race Before Race* exhibit at Chicago's Newberry Library has led the way in broadening our conversations around race in museums to include pre-19th-century constructions, by exploring the roots of racialized modes of thinking across the globe from the Middle Ages to 1800, through identity markers relating to skin color, geography, language, dress, class, and religion. Although the curators omitted earlier 17th-century constructions—namely by the French physician François Bernier (1620–1688)—of "race" as a pseudoscientific category dependent primarily on its intersection with gender, they quite literally mapped out how we might conceive of otherness before the rise of race science in the 18th and 19th centuries.[13] The exhibit made valuable contributions to public and academic discourse: with a two-way exchange of information, it invited visitors' active participation, asking them to answer provocations such as "how can understanding the past help us envision a more inclusive and equitable world?"[14]

The Folger Institute's exhibition *To Hear Her Speak: Black Women and Shakespeare* (October 2026 through May 2027) will also further advance academic and public conversations around the intersection of gender and race-making in early-modern Europe.[15] In doing so, it offers important contextual information for a case study recently incorporated into my research: the Afrodescendent performer Rachael Baptist, who is believed to have played Shakespeare's Juliet in 1750–60s Britain. Given that Baptist performed both spoken and sung repertoire, in addition to trying to "hear her speak" (to borrow from the exhibit), I consider what it was like to hear her sing. By studying Baptist alongside her contemporary, the Afro-Italian opera star Vittoria Tesi, my research forges transhistorical and transdisciplinary connections. Its focus on the somewhat neglected 18th-century European context connects these early-modern theorizations on the construction of race and otherness in performance culture in Europe prior to 1800[16] with existing scholarship on racialized women performers in Europe from the 19th century onwards.[17] As a multidisciplinary performer, the case of Baptist also offers a bridge between scholarship on racialized performance culture in Europe in above-mentioned literary and theater studies and recent historical musicological scholarship on Afrodescendent racialized voices and performers in Europe, from the 17th-century Italian peninsula to later 19th-century Germanic contexts.[18]

Given the inherently sonic, visual, and kinetic nature of the performance cultures in question, it is important to capture and disseminate these erased or forgotten histories through multimedia formats. As such, exhibitions are key mediums for this recuperative work. These displays also allow for more accessible and diverse information circulation, ensuring the engagement of broader demographics in a multidirectional exchange of knowledge. Of course, it requires more creativity to study performers and performance cultures prior to the advent of photography, sound recording, and video recording technologies. I am therefore eager to see how the Folger Institute's *To Hear Her Speak: Black Women and Shakespeare* will attempt to reconfigure how ephemeral performances might have looked or sounded prior to the late 19th century. In my own recovery of figures like the 18th-century Baptist and Tesi, or the early 19th-century Branchu, I am particularly guided by iconographic documents, following the lead of scholars such as Eileen J. Southern, Josephine Wright, and Tina M. Campt, who use historical images to understand the sound of Afrodescendent musicians.[19]

With Baptist, current work that recaptures her performances and career draws on an anonymous and undated late-18th-century portrait entitled *Portrait of a Young Woman* [see Figure 1], which does not necessarily portray Baptist. For example, this image is used as the cover art for the 2024 album "Rachel Baptist: Ireland's Black Syren," in which soprano Rachel Redmond sings Baptist's arias with the Irish Baroque Orchestra, under Peter Whelan's direction. This anonymous image is perhaps somewhat symbolic of the historical erasure of celebrated black women historically, and the need to recapture their names and stories through any sources we can. To this end, to accompany the *To Hear Her Speak: Black Women and Shakespeare* exhibit, I will deliver a paper on zoom to the Folger Community Scholars entitled "To Hear Rachel Baptist Speak and Sing, as Juliet and in other roles in 18th-century Britain and Ireland" on January 29, 2027, at 4.30pm (EST).[20]

12. For deconstructing the terms "Western" and "European," see David Irving, *The Making of European Music in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2024).

13. On 17th-century categorizations of race and gender see Sabrina Strings, *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (New York University Press, 2019), 67–98.

14. Noémie Ndiaye and Lia Markey, *Seeing Race Before Race* (ACMRS Press, 2023).

15. Patricia Akhimie, *To Hear Her Speak: Black Women and Shakespeare* (ACMRS Press, 2026).

16. For example, Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024); Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference: Race and Conduct in the Early Modern World* (Routledge, 2018); and Miles Grier, *Inkface: Othello and White Authority in the Era of Atlantic Slavery* (University of Virginia Press, 2023).

17. See Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire*: *Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-Century France* (The University of Georgia Press, 2020); Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York University Press, 2015); and Rochelle Rowe, "Beauty, Ugliness, and Ideas of Difference: Sara Baartman, Fanny Eaton, and Black Women's Performance of Beauty in the Nineteenth-Century City," *A Cultural History of Beauty in the Age of Empire*, vol. 5, ed. Jessica P. Clark (Bloomsbury, 2026).

18. Emily Wilbourne, *Voice, Slavery, and Race in Seventeenth-Century Florence* (Oxford University Press, 2023); Kira Thurman, *Singing Like Germans: Black Musicians in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms* (Cornell University Press, 2021).

19. Eileen J. Southern and Josephine Wright, *Images: Iconography of Music in African-American Culture (1770s–1920s)* (Routledge, 2000); Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke University Press, 2017).

20. https://www.folger.edu/research/the-folger-institute/folger-community-scholars/