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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Profiteers of Slavery Go to the Opera: London, 1782–1808

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Abstract

The hugely discrepant valuations of the alterities of opera and racial slavery – differing additionally between the period under consideration and our own – would seem to preclude their being addressed in the same article. The former has been lauded as the *ne plus ultra* of human artistic expression. The latter was embraced as an essential economic driver, and morally, spiritually and legally sanctioned by the finest Anglo philosophical, religious and legal minds of the time. That the enslaved decried and rejected their capture and enforced labour – through suicide, rebellion, flight, sabotage and cultural separation – has long been clear. The use of the profits, obtained through the sale of commodities that slave labour produced, to fund musical activities, including opera, has remained hidden. By using the published lists of subscribers (issued as books and fans) for the King's Theatre, Haymarket, and combining that information with what can gleaned from demographic, genealogical and slavery sources, the extent to which the opera was dependent upon families whose wealth lay in plantation ownership or other forms of profit allied to it is established. The proportion is higher than might be supposed. Three families – Lewis, Young and the Heywood sisters – are spotlighted in case studies of box subscribers.

Keywords: Profits of slavery; Opera; London; Reparative history; Fans (hand-held)

Of all the ways in which the profits of slavery could be spent in London, a season subscription to a whole box or seats therein for the opera at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, must seem the most incongruous and indulgent.[1] What other art form was as removed from the lived experience of planters, merchants and colonial administrators and those they held in subjection, who dealt with the exigencies of slavery's goods – sugar, rum, cotton, rice, coffee, ivory – and slavery's consequences such as sickness, rebellion, destruction and death?[2] The British trade in the enslaved across the Atlantic from 1551 to 1825 removed

[1] The numerous other venues for expenditure include: country estate and house purchasing and improvement; art, furnishings and book collecting; education of children at home, school or college; investment in businesses; gambling; ownership of race horses; cock-fighting; keeping of hounds; grand tours; fashion and clothing; an expanded retinue of servants; more stylish coaches; lavish entertaining; patronage of creatives (artists, musicians, poets and other authors); membership of clubs and societies; election to parliament; frequent visits to theatres and pleasure gardens; better health care; higher quality food and drink; memorialisation of the deceased; purchase of officer positions in the army and navy; purchase of official administrative positions; charitable giving (to hospitals, churches, schools, the poor).

[2] That such things were ordered a little differently in Saint-Domingue/Haiti during the revolutionary era is evident from the work of Julia Prest, *Public Theatre and the Enslaved People of Colonial Saint-Domingue* (Cham, 2023). For

from Africa over 3.26 million persons, at least 526,000 of whom died *en route* to the Americas and the Caribbean.[3] The trade was at its height in the eighteenth century, when 78% of those so far enumerated were embarked. Between the years 1782 and 1808 the subscribing opera audience comprised a portion of the richest and most powerful persons in the land, with at least five royal princes, several prime ministers, cabinet members, parliamentarians (both noble and common), the nobility and gentry, a few military officers, government office holders, some bankers and merchants, lawyers, and courtesans, along with their spouses, partners, older children, relatives and friends.[4] Just what proportion of this audience was supported wholly or in part by slavery's profits is revealed in what follows. The consequence is that the opera singers, composers, instrumentalists, scenery artists, ballet dancers, costume designers and makers, *et alii*, whether imported or domestic, and the productions they mounted, benefitted directly from the profits of the slave economy.[5] In this article I offer a first look at the individuals who chose to subscribe for box seats and were able to do so in whole or part because their income (or loans) derived from:

(1) profits made from plantations on the Caribbean islands,
(2) trading in (or mortgaging) goods or property produced by or employing the labour of the enslaved that was located in the Caribbean or shipped to Britain, other British territories such as Canada and Ireland, or the United States (e.g. London's sugar merchants),
(3) financing or insuring plantations, slave voyages, or the shipping of slave-produced commodities,
(4) salaries or fees paid to administrators of colonies in the Caribbean or of the armed forces,
(5) dowry payments upon marriage when those had their origin in slave-economy activity,
(6) inherited wealth based on proprietorship of a North American colony that utilised the enslaved (e.g. Henry Harford of Maryland).

For most opera seasons during the period 1782–1808, a volume was issued annually listing the box and seat holders.[6] The information was also published in the form of fans, which could be purchased at shops in Pall Mall adjacent to the theatre and elsewhere, which

the French homeland see Julia Doe, *The Comedians of the King:* Opéra Comique *and the Bourbon Monarchy on the Eve of Revolution* (Chicago, 2021). For French practices of racist control see Mélanie Lamotte, 'Beyond the Atlantic: Unifying Racial Policies Across the Early French Empire', *William and Mary Quarterly* 81/1 (2024), 3–36.

[3] Slavevoyages.org/assessments/estimates (accessed 19 May 2023). These figures do not include the 1–2.25 million Native Americans enslaved in North America, Mexico and the Caribbean by the French, British and Spanish 1492–1900, on which see Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston, MA, 2016), [324].

[4] Male royalty across the period included George, Prince of Wales (later George IV), and his brothers Frederick, Duke of York, Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland (later King of Hanover), Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge, and William, Duke of Gloucester (later William IV). See below for consideration of Prime Ministers.

[5] Participation in the slave economy can be considered to include all who purchased items such as tobacco, sugar, coffee, rum and so on, and in aggregate those purchases are meaningful. In the present context, only capitalistic persons (in Marxist terms) are pertinent, which is to say those who invested in plantations, voyages and commodities, or who regulated and controlled them.

[6] The pertinence of these years derives from the re-opening of the theatre for the 1782–3 season after remodelling and enlargement, and the publication in January 1783 of the first printed list of subscribers; and from implementation from 1 March 1808 of the law passed in 1807 banning the use of British ships for slave trading and the disembarkation of slaves on British territories. For the parliamentary struggle see Stephen Farrell, '"Contrary to the Principles of Justice, Humanity and Sound Policy": The Slave Trade, Parliamentary Politics and the Abolition Act, 1807', *Parliamentary History* 26 (2007), 141–202.

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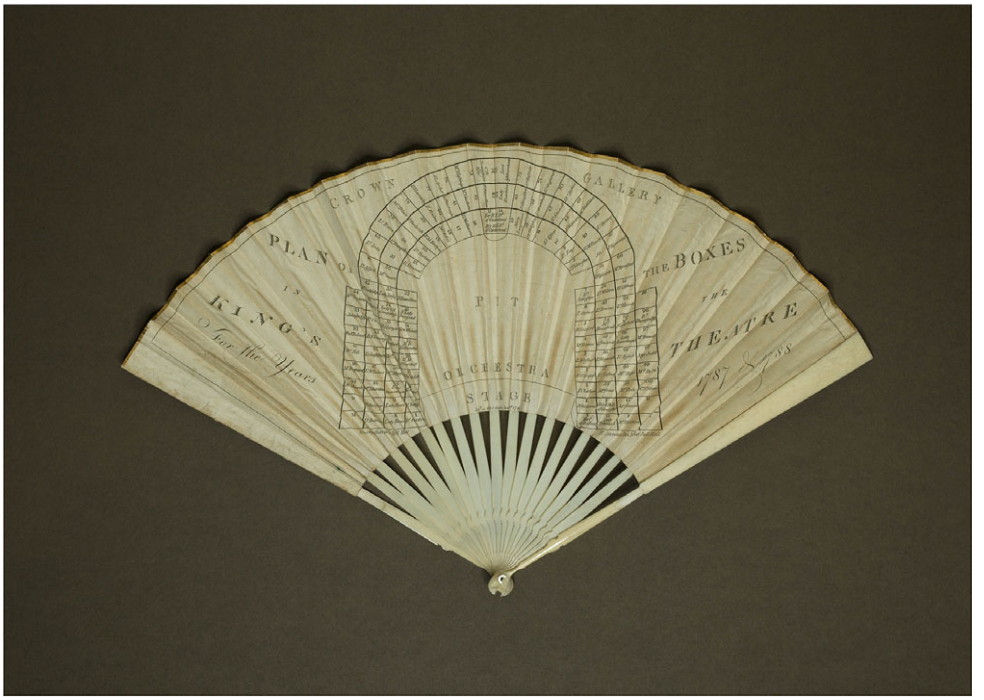

Figure 1. First 'official' fan, obverse. Plan of the boxes in the King's Theatre for the years 1787 & 1788 (H. Laurence); paper, uncoloured, bone sticks, double-sided. Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, London: AR 247. Photography by D. Court; image courtesy the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, London.

allowed attendees to more discreetly identify who was present (Figures 1–3). Both the printed volumes and the fans are now quite rare. Only single copies of the books are known for 1798 and 1802 (1805 has the most survivors, eight), while no fans exist for 1794, 1795, 1801, 1805 and 1807, and only single ones for most other years.[7]

The study of European music is perhaps the last area of cultural achievement to face up to the fact that its practitioners in earlier days and the works they created for and with audiences benefitted in part from audience patronage by those who profited from the wide span of the slave economy.[8] Given the vast literature on slavery, its economic, ecological, psychological, technological, social, cultural, religious and eventually musical effects, this is more than an omission; it is a dereliction of duty.[9] As I have written elsewhere, it is not

[7] Within the date range 1782–1808 are six years for which lists are presumed not to have been published, 1784–7, 1792–3, based on the lack of extant newspaper advertisements, volumes or fans. For readers who think in terms of theatrical seasons the years cited are those during which the season ended. Thus 1784 in the text is theatrical season 1783–4. I use the single year when mentioning the publications and fans themselves.

[8] Justification for this claim can be found in William Fourie, 'Musicology and Decolonial Analysis in the Age of Brexit', *Twentieth-Century Music* 17/2 (2020), 197–211; and Erin Johnson-Williams, 'Valuing Whiteness: The Presumed Innocence of Musical Truth', *Current Musicology* 109–110 (2022), 43–73. Johnson-Williams succinctly remarks, 'music is an artform that is *particularly* vulnerable to presumptions of and pretensions to innocence' (44).

[9] The responsibility to be candid about the benefits that music accrued from the profits of the slave economy has yet to be accepted by many writers on musical topics. The white-male frame within which music has been taught, written and heard may no longer have the chokehold it once did, but overcoming the racial aspect still requires a huge effort and continues to be resisted. See Philip Ewell, *On Music Theory and Making Music More Welcoming for Everyone* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2023).

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Figure 2. First 'official' fan, reverse. Subscribers to the boxes in the King's Theatre for the years 1787 & 1788 (H. Laurence); paper, uncoloured, bone sticks, double-sided. Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, London: AR 247. Photography by D. Court; image courtesy the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers, London

enough to say that eighteenth-century musicians or audiences were ignorant of either the issue of slavery *tout court* or of the horrors of the slave trade and working conditions in particular, because writing and talk about them were available in the form of pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles, and sermons, in homes, coffee houses and the streets, along with numerous rebuttals.[10] Music-loving families such as the Sharps actively worked to alleviate the plight of individual Blacks brought to their door as well as campaigned for the abolition of the trade.[11] That the music historians of the day, pioneers such as John Hawkins and Charles Burney, failed to acknowledge slavery's profits in making what was heard and taught possible, is to be expected.[12]

[10] See 'Critical Exchanges: Handel and Slave-Trading Companies', for David Hunter, 'Handel, an Investor in Slave-trading Companies: A Response to Ellen Harris', *Music & Letters* 103/3 (2022), 532–40.

[11] E. C. P. Lascelles, *Granville Sharp and the Freedom of Slaves in England* (London, 1928); Brian Crosby, 'Private Concerts on Land and Water: The Musical Activities of the Sharp Family, *c.* 1750–*c.* 1790', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 34 (2001), 1–118.

[12] The precedent set by Hawkins and Burney may have constituted part of the reluctance by subsequent music historians to investigate these matters. Pushback against such investigations is doubtless politically motivated but usually historically uninformed. For examples of researchers who have come under attack, including some of these authors, see Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (London, 2018); Antoon De Baets, *Crimes Against History* (London, 2019); Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural Britain's Colonial Connections* (Leeds, 2020); Sathnam Sanghera, *Empireland: How Imperialism has Shaped Modern Britain* (London, 2021); Sam Knight, 'Home Truth', *The New Yorker* (23 August 2021); Tommy Castellani and Fergal Jeffreys, 'Slavery Researcher Quits after Fellows Try to Silence Damning Report', *Varsity* (3 June 2022); Samira Shackle, 'The Backlash: How Slavery Research Came Under Fire', in *Cotton Capital* (London, 2023).

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Figure 3. First 'unofficial' fan. King's Theatre for 1788 [no imprint]; paper, coloured, gold leaf, wooden sticks, ivory guard sticks, single-sided. Fan Museum, Greenwich: HA 1791. Photography by and image courtesy of the Fan Museum, Greenwich.

The hugely discrepant valuations of the alterities of opera and racial slavery – differing additionally between the period under consideration and our own – would seem to preclude their being addressed in the same article.[13] One has been lauded as the *ne plus ultra* of human artistic expression (at least in the Western world). The other, both literally and figuratively, has been embraced as an essential economic driver, as morally, spiritually and legally sanctioned by the finest philosophical, religious and legal minds of the time. It has also been decried and rejected not only by the enslaved themselves – through suicide, rebellion, flight, sabotage and cultural separation – but also from the beginning of the eighteenth century, by a growing number of people in Britain and in its colonies in North America and the Caribbean (only thirteen of which formed the United States), as well as in other slave-trading nations.[14] The development of racially based slavery designed to benefit the owners

[13] Opera commentary has paid attention to slavery as a plot device, notably in abduction scenarios, but it has had nothing to say about actual as opposed to fictional enslavement. See, for example, Richard G. King, 'The First "Abduction" Opera: Lewis Theobald's and John Ernest Galliard's *The Happy Captive* (1741)', *Musical Quarterly* 84/1 (2000), 137–63. For the racism of stage presentations employing blacking-up, black-speaking and kinetic blackness (dances) see Noémie Ndiaye, *Scripts of Blackness: Early Modern Performance Culture and the Making of Race* (Philadelphia, 2022).

[14] For responses of the enslaved to their captivity see Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736–1831* (Urbana, IL, 1992); Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); Terri L. Snyder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago, 2015); Randy M. Browne, *Surviving Slavery in the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2020); Aline Helg, *Slave No More: Self-Liberation Before Abolitionism in the Americas*, trans. Lara Vergnaud (Chapel Hill, NC, 2020); Justin Iverson, *Rebels in Arms: Black Resistance and the Fight for Freedom in the Anglo-Atlantic* (Athens, GA, 2022).

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of conquered or stolen lands was a story long omitted from British history.[15] Even today, after so much scholarship and teaching, Britain's slave history remains contested.

What follows is a prosopographical study focused on rich white people. Nonetheless, I am actively conscious of the enslavement of the millions of men, women and children brought from Africa or born in captivity, and the Native Americans sold into bondage, who worked in brutal conditions in the Caribbean and North American colonies, and who died before their time far from family and home.[16] The immiseration of the enslaved cannot be equated to, let alone balanced (in some alchemical measuring device) by, the performance of an opera by Handel (*Giulio Cesare*, 1787), or more contemporary offerings by Cherubini, Paisiello or Cimarosa on the London stage.[17] Dismissal of the music of the African diaspora (and, we can add, of Native Americans) as primitive by writers such as Edward Long (1734–1813), whose son Robert, nephew George Ellis, and cousins had opera subscriptions, only adds to the necessity of the task.[18]

Reparative history includes the elucidation of colonialism and its effects on the subjugated both then and continuing to the present, as well as assessment of the attitudes and imaginations of the perpetrators of racism, the pervasive white privilege that enabled exploitation and violence. Disavowal – of interest, of pertinence to today, of relevance to historical enquiry, in short, affective numbness – may be a rhetorical strategy adopted by defensive historians, but it cannot eliminate the material traces, the facts, offered in what follows. As Catherine Hall has so clearly articulated, it is we, the '*beneficiaries* of the gross inequalities associated with slavery and colonialism', who 'need to develop a different understanding [...] of Britain's involvement in the slavery business'.[19] In the present context, the profits of racial ideology and practice, manifest as racial capitalism, enabled some persons to regularly attend the socially elite Italian opera at the King's Theatre at which newly composed works (and revivals) were performed by the most talented musicians of the day. This study works in tandem with the ongoing, collective effort to understand how and when African music traversed the Atlantic, was modified in a new environment, and

[15] Among the numerous titles that have sought to address slavery and racism these, from just the 1990s, stand out: James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London, 1992); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730–1830* (Madison, WI, 1996); Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London, 1997).

[16] For the creation of racial slavery by England for its own purposes from an early date see Michael Guasco, *Slaves and Englishmen: Human Bondage in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, 2014); Urvashi Chakravarty, *Fictions of Consent: Slavery, Servitude, and Free Service in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, 2022).

[17] For literature on the specifics of plantation life and the intersection of white owners/managers and the Black enslaved see Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, 'The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655–1788', *William and Mary Quarterly* 58/1 (2001), 205–28; Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); Richard S. Dunn, *A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650–1820* (Chicago, 2015); Colleen A. Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788–1838* (Athens, GA, 2015); Sasha Turner, *Contested Bodies: Pregnancy, Childrearing, and Slavery in Jamaica* (Philadelphia, 2017); Brooke N. Newman, *A Dark Inheritance: Blood, Race, and Sex in Colonial Jamaica* (New Haven, CT, 2018); and Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC, 2021).

[18] For a magisterial assessment of Edward Long's contribution to racist thought and practice see Catherine Hall, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism* (Cambridge, 2023). Several of Long's cousins including Dudley North (formerly Long) MP, Samuel Long and his wife Lady Jane, and either Charles Long (1747–1812) who married Jane Long (1756–1834), or Charles Long (1760–1837) MP, Baron Farnborough, who in 1793 married Amelia Hume, subscribed to opera seasons, along with Long's son Robert (1771–1825), and Long's nephew George Ellis (1753–1815). Samuel Long (1746–1807) MP, and/or Lady Jane (1769–1833) were subscribers from the year of their marriage, 1787, to 1807.

[19] Catherine Hall, 'Doing Reparatory History: Bringing "Race" and Slavery Back Home', *Race & Class* 60/1 (2018), 3–21, at 18.

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emerged as such a powerful force in the twentieth century.[20] It is offered in the spirit of reparation. Some conclusions must be interim rather than final, but I encourage others to pick up where I leave off.

* * *

The strengths and weaknesses of the various forces in Britain for and against abolition of the trade (and again in the push for emancipation in the period 1823–33) have been argued over by historians seeking to determine importance and value.[21] The merits of the abolitionists' cause – religious or moral objection, fellow-feeling for oppressed humans, the awakening of conscience, political mobilisation, declining economic importance of colonial plantations, the lack of immediate economic interest to the majority of the population – as well as the counter-arguments of those in favour of retention have been ranked. No historian would list attending the opera as a contributory factor, and yet numerous participants in the slave economy and in the political decision-making body ultimately responsible for whether slave trading or slave holding by the British were to be allowed to continue, spent two evenings a week for six or seven months if they went consistently, in a theatre about 1,100 yards (1 kilometre) as the crow flies from the building in which they deliberated such contentious matters.[22] The King's Theatre, Haymarket had been built by Sir John Vanbrugh and several Whig grandees during the first decade of the eighteenth century specifically for opera performances.[23] Located on the corner of the Haymarket and Pall Mall, close to the developing residential areas of St James's parish, Piccadilly and Mayfair, rather than in the Drury Lane and Covent Garden area to the east, the theatre enjoyed a genre monopoly thanks to the power of the Lord Chamberlain.[24] The Prince of Wales, the Duke of Bedford and the Marquis of Salisbury held what amounted to veto power over decisions made by the nominal managers.[25] Their treaty in October 1791 included a clause enabling the Duke and Marquis to select boxes at the King's Theatre for their friends who had been subscribers at the Pantheon the previous season.

Jennifer Hall-Witt has claimed that subscription lists lack detail sufficient to identify 'untitled subscribers' and thus she feels unable to comment on 'the professional occupations and family backgrounds of the middle-class couples who attended the opera', though she concedes that 'those whose income matched or exceeded that of the aristocracy and gentry, and who thus formed an elite of wealth' are to be differentiated from 'those with more

[20] For pointers see Martin Munro, *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas* (Berkeley, CA, 2010); Kofi Agawu, *The African Imagination in Music* (Oxford, 2016); Laurent Dubois, *The Banjo: America's African Instrument* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., with Melanie L. Zeck and Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *The Transformation of Black Music: The Rhythms, the Songs, and the Ships of the African Diaspora* (New York, 2017); David F. Garcia, *Listening for Africa: Freedom, Modernity, and the Logic of Black Music's African Origins* (Durham, NC, 2017); Mary Caton Lingard, *African Musicians in the Atlantic World: Legacies of Sound and Slavery* (Charlottesville, VA, 2023).

[21] Sources include Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944; 3rd edn Chapel Hill, NC, 2021); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988); Michael Jordan, *The Great Abolition Sham: The True Story of the End to the British Slave Trade* (Stroud, 2005); Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston, MA, 2005); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York, 2014); John R. Oldfield, *The Ties that Bind: Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Reform, c. 1820–1865* (Liverpool, 2021); David Richardson, *Principles and Agents: the British Slave Trade and its Abolition* (New Haven, CT, 2022).

[22] For the King's Theatre's locale and development see Michael Burden, 'London's Opera House in the Urban Landscape', in *Operatic Geographies: the Place of Opera and the Opera House*, ed. Suzanne Aspden (Chicago, 2019), 39–56; and his 'London's Opera House in Colour 1705–1844, with Diversions in Fencing, Masquerading, and a Visit from Elisabeth Félix', *Music in Art* 44/1–2 (2019), 19–56.

[23] Thomas McGeary, *Opera and Politics in Queen Anne's Britain, 1705–1714* (Woodbridge, 2022), and his 'More Light (and some Speculation) on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project', *Early Music* 48/1 (2020), 91–104.

[24] Another theatre in its vicinity, the so-called Little Theatre, Haymarket, put on stage plays.

[25] Judith Milhous, Gabriella Dideriksen and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Volume II, The Pantheon Opera and its Aftermath, 1789–1795* (Oxford, 2001), 128–33.

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Table 1. Cost of whole box or seat subscriptions for selected seasons at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1780s–1807

	1780s	1791–2	1793–4	1798–9[e]		1800–1	1805–6	1806–7
Box cost[a,b]	120[d]	120	150	150	180	180	180	240
Seat cost[c]		20	25					
Number of performances	[1782–83] [74]	50	[53]	50	60	60	60	[60]

[a] Prices are in guineas: 120 g. = £126, 240 g. = £252.

[b] Data derived from Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*, 279, with my additions in [ ].

[c] Published information is often lacking for single-seat costs.

[d] In terms of 2022 currency, £126 in 1783 equals £251,900 in income value (amount needed 'today' in order to buy that item), and £252 in 1807 equals £296,200. MeasuringWorth.com (accessed 20 February 2024). All currency equivalents in this paper derive from MeasuringWorth.com, which I prefer to other currency converters (including the rule-of-thumb multipliers devised by Robert D. Hume) due to its accuracy (specific to the historic year and the present), its flexibility (a variety of different converters, each with its own pertinence), and its widespread acceptance (having been started by economic historians).

[e] The two columns under 1798–9 show the cost of a 50-night and a 60-night season.

moderate income'.[26] Attempting to overlay class and economic vectors in a social analysis is unfruitful at best; exceptions will always emerge to ruin any hypothesis. Therefore I propose to circumvent the issue by assuming that those who subscribed to a box or a seat therein were of the elite, certainly one of wealth (the 'overly affluent' as some might characterise them), but also socially, comprising many persons who considered themselves as leaders.[27] Neither great wealth nor high social prestige were exclusionary in any strict sense (unlike the House of Lords, for example), inasmuch as there were no formal bars to being an opera subscriber. Nor was subscribing to the opera the only means of demonstrating great wealth and high social prestige.[28] But an opera box subscription was a clearly public way of doing it in the metropole (Table 1).

Boxes typically had six seats (though a few had eight), and there was no discount when buying the maximum. Attending all performances meant a cost of 14s. (£867.60 in 2022 income-value money) per seat per performance in 1806–7, in a six-seater box. While it is accurate to say that the nominal cost of a box doubled from the early 1790s to 1807, most of that increase was due to inflation. The pound lost over 45% of its value during those 16 years.[29] Attending the opera on a subscription basis was the most expensive form of theatrical entertainment at the time.[30] All of the names (even those where there are several

[26] Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780–1880* (Lebanon, NH, 2007), 307 n.13.

[27] William Weber characterised attendance at the opera during this period as 'presumed as a normal social act for anyone reckoned part of the *beau monde*' in his 'Musical Culture and the Capital City: The Epoch of the *beau monde* in London, 1700–1870', in *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (Aldershot, 2004), 71–89, at 77. For the term 'beau monde' and its synonyms see Hannah Greig, 'Uses and Meanings of "Beau Monde": A Supplementary Essay', in her *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford, 2013), 243–58, 304–8.

[28] Among the cultural objects that appealed to the wealthy, the First Folio edition of the works ostensibly written by William Shakespeare was, even in the eighteenth century, iconic. Persons who subscribed to the opera in 1783–1808 who also owned the volume and are noted for their Caribbean property holdings include: George Hibbert (West 58; now at the Beinecke Library, Yale University); Anthony Morris Storer (West 10; bequeathed to Eton College). For details see Anthony James West, *The Shakespeare First Folio, the History of the Book: Volume I, An Account of the First Folio Based on its Sales and Prices, 1623–2000* (Oxford, 2001), and *The Shakespeare First Folios: A Descriptive Catalogue*, ed. Eric Rasmussen and Anthony James West (Basingstoke, 2012). For the phenomenon more generally see Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book* (Oxford, 2016).

[29] https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/inflation/ (accessed 20 February 2024).

[30] High expense did not translate into high quality toilet facilities; see Michael Burden, 'Pots, Privies and WCs: Crapping at the Opera in London before 1830', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 23/1–2 (2011), 27–50.

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Table 2. Certain, uncertain and unidentified subscribers to the opera seasons at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1783, 1797, 1807, and their participation in the slave economy

	1783		1797		1807	
		Slave economy[a]		Slave economy		Slave economy
Certain[b]	313	30	554	103	423	74
Uncertain[c]	31	2	27	7	43	6
Unidentified[d]	12	–	68	–	26	–
Total	356	32	649	110	492	80
Percentage		9		17		16

[a] Numbers in the slave economy column indicate how many persons from the column to the immediate left were profiteers from the slave economy.

[b] A certain identification is made on the basis of a noble title, membership of the House of Commons, spousal or parental activity, uniqueness, profession, prominence.

[c] An uncertain identification indicates that two or more probable candidates exist, usually from the same family, e.g. brothers, sisters, eponymous aunts or uncles.

[d] An unidentified person is one who has a common name; a name not found in sources of the time, nor in standard reference sources; or cannot readily be distinguished among eponymous persons.

possibilities) can be tied to persons who were not only wealthy but also held 'a certain stature' in society. To show how this is possible let me explain my method.[31]

The first list published, dated 1783, was unofficial, as is clear from the author statement, 'By a Lady of Fashion' rather than a named person attached to the opera company.[32] Table 2 summarises the current findings about subscribers in terms of certainty of identification and participation in the slave economy for three of the seasons. 356 persons are named in the 1783 list.[33] Of these, forty-three persons are identified only by their surname, with no helpful appellation such as Gen. or Hon. Nonetheless, only twelve of those cannot be associated with an actual person or have several options making a single determination impossible. These dozen comprise both men and women, for although women have traditionally been harder to trace in biographical sources due to male primogeniture and other forms of neglect or disregard, males with common

[31] For an example of similar though more complicated work, due to having to identify individuals from both directions (who subscribed to printed music and were they profiting from the slave economy?), see David Hunter, 'Profiting from the Slave Economy and Subscribing to Music: The British Experience in the Eighteenth Century', in *Music by Subscription: Composers and their Networks in the British Music-Publishing Trade, 1676–1820*, ed. Simon D. I. Fleming and Martin Perkins (Abingdon, 2022), 198–219.

[32] A reproduction of the British Library copy is to be found in Eighteenth-Century Collections Online and a transcription is included by Michael Burden in *London Opera Observed, 1711–1844* (London, 2013), III:1–14. Burden comments that 'nearly all of [the names] are easily identified members of the aristocracy' (2)!

[33] Two forms of duplication exist in this first list and subsequent ones. The first occurs when a person subscribed for additional seats in the same box as themselves, such as three seats in box 81 named Mrs Murray. The second occurs when the same person is to be found in more than one box, such as Lord George Cavendish Senior who is in boxes 23, 43 and 49–50, or William Rumbold Esq. who is in boxes 40 and 46. That discrepancies exist between the names given in the 'Plan of the Boxes' section and the alphabetical list, and between years for persons who are clearly the same, only adds to the excitement. Other errors to be found include misnumbering of boxes in the alphabetical list (e.g. in the 1797 list, 'Leinster, Duchess of' has the printed number inked out and 37 written beside it). When subscribers have seats in two boxes usually but not always they are given twice in the alphabetical list.

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names such as Davies/Davis, Fawkener/Falkener, Hamilton and Palmer offer too many possibilities.[34]

Initial identification involves checking titled individuals in the standard reference sources.[35] All the men (except senior noblemen) are checked in the History of Parliament Online for possible election as members of the House of Commons.[36] To assess participation in the slave economy the first stop is 'Legacies of British Slavery', the database that continues to be updated and expanded as it extends its archival trawl into the more distant past from its initial conception as a list of all who received compensation under the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.[37] While the majority of cases can be solved quickly, a residue of tough nuts remains. These require the use of a variety of specialised sources for biographical data, newspaper databases, genealogical work on particular families and places, trade and social directories of the time, and the Victoria county histories as well as earlier ones by individual historians.[38] In some cases archival catalogues, such as Discovery (The National Archives of the UK), provide useful clues. Establishing accurate dates of birth, marriage and death is essential but in some cases the impediments are great (and not helped by amateur or religiously motivated genealogical research). While all sources retain the possibility of error, some are more error-prone or deliberately obfuscatory than others.[39] None of the thirty-one persons whose identity is uncertain in the surname-only rump of the 1783 list can be characterised as middle-class. They all belonged to wealthy families, or, in three cases, were the courtesans/mistresses/partners of wealthy men (Mrs Armistead, Mrs Robinson and Mrs Abington).[40] Sources of dowries can be particularly elusive, and sales of plantations are often hard to confirm.[41] I designate as profiteers only persons for whom clear evidence can be found, so the numbers are likely undercounted.

As far as the theatre's managers are concerned, in 1783 the present managers William Taylor (?1753–1825), and an MP 1797–1802, and former Thomas Harris (d. 1820) had box seats. Another former manager, Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), the playwright and MP 1780–1812, was represented, under the name 'Mrs Sheridan', either by his first wife Elizabeth Linley (1754–92), or one of his sisters Ann Elizabeth (1758–1837) or Alicia (1753–1817). Taylor paid Sheridan over £12,000 (about £164.5m in 2022 pounds as a share of GDP)

[34] The spelling of names was mutable during the period, even among the same family (e.g. Wesley, Westley, Wellesley), and on occasion mistranscribed by the list maker and/or printer. Foreign names are often a puzzle: the 1797 list has Schriebier, 1801 has Schriesbier, but the standard spelling is Schreiber. Some of the difficulties can be sorted by checking alternative spellings such as Colhoun for Colquhoun or Gallway for Galloway.

[35] *Complete Peerage* and *Complete Baronetage* sets by G. E. Cokayne; Burke's *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage*, and *Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry*, of which there are numerous editions; John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701–1800* (New Haven, CT, 1997); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edn).

[36] History of Parliament Online: www.historyofparliamentonline.org.

[37] Legacies of British Slavery: www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/.

[38] Benjamin Nangle, *The* Gentleman's Magazine: *Biographical and Obituary Notices, 1781–1819, An Index* (New York, 1980); Gale's *Burney Newspapers Collection* and *The Times Digital Archive*; *The British Newspaper Archive*; Vere Langford Oliver, *The History of the Island of Antigua* (London, 1894–9); William D. Rubinstein, *Who Were the Rich? Volume One, 1809–1839* (London, 2009); Edith Mary Johnston-Liik, *The History of the Irish Parliament, 1692–1800: Commons, Constituencies and Statutes* (Belfast, 2002); R. O. Bucholz, 'The Database of Court Officers: 1660–1837', https://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu; the *Survey of London*'s numerous volumes; Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700–1930* (Manchester, 2014).

[39] FamilySearch, the LDS genealogy site, must be used with great caution.

[40] For Mrs Armistead see Katie Hickman, *Courtesans: Money, Sex and Fame in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2003).

[41] In addition to the Heyford sisters, I have identified one other dowry, of £2000 (worth £12.6m in 2022 pounds as a share of GDP) for Jean (1786–1871), the daughter of James Wedderburn-Colvile (1739–1807), and Isabella (née Blackburn), owner of three plantations in Jamaica. In 1807 she married Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk (1771–1820).

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for his share in the theatre in 1781.[42] During his brief initial tenure financial losses mounted, so a group of trustees had to manage affairs until 1785. Rather surprisingly Taylor was restored in 1791, though with minimal involvement until 1793 (Sheridan was again manager 1792–3), and continued in post until 1803. After four years he replaced Francis Gould and ran things again from 1807 to 1813.[43]

One could conceive of the opera house and regular attendance thereat as a social club open to all who could pay, unlike the House of Commons, access to which, while it might entail considerable expenditure, was dependent upon the good will of the relatively few men in most constituencies who possessed a right to vote. Even though the opera house could seat over four times as many persons as were elected to the House of Commons, only a small minority of MPs, and a minority of Lords, attended the opera.[44] Indeed, not all of those leaders chose to attend. For example, past, present and future prime ministers and/or their spouses in 1783 were the Duke and Duchess of Grafton, the Marquis and Lady Rockingham, the Earl of Shelburne, the Duke of Portland and William Pitt the Younger. In 1794 the Duke of Portland, William Pitt and Lady Grenville were subscribers. In 1797 the list included the Duke of Portland, Lady Grenville, Lord and Lady Hawkesbury (he succeeded the 2nd Earl of Liverpool in 1808), William Pitt and George Canning. No prime ministers or their spouses subscribed in 1807. Future prime ministers such as Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey, Frederick J. Robinson (created Viscount Goderich in 1827 and the Earl of Ripon in 1833), Arthur Wellesley, who rose from Viscount Wellington in 1809 to Duke in 1814, and Spencer Percival did not feel the need to hold subscriptions. Presumably most MPs, as heirs to or clients of county grandees in many cases, did not feel the necessity to subscribe and mingle.[45] While several bankers had subscriptions, most did not. Similarly, a few merchants from the City paid for subscriptions but the vast majority did not. Evidently, these persons, already at the top of the social heap, found opera attendance neither necessary nor sufficient to maintain their positions, whether hard-won or inherited.

Slave economy profiteers are thought to have struggled financially during the American Revolutionary war, when dearth and destruction, and the interruption of trade were widespread in the Caribbean.[46] Clearly some were able to ride out the

[42] Taylor's career is summarised (not entirely accurately) by R. G. Thorne in his entry on Taylor for the History of Parliament; https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/taylor-william-i-1753-1825.

[43] Daniel Nalbach, *The King's Theatre, 1704–1867: London's First Italian Opera House* (London, 1972) is the concise overview. For the blow-by-blow detail of the first half of the period considered in this article see Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Volume I, The King's Theatre, Haymarket, 1778–1791* (Oxford, 1995), and Milhous, Dideriksen and Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Volume II* (2001).

[44] Approximately 660 members were elected to the House of Commons in 360 constituencies (in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland) in the general election that took place from late October to early December 1806. The number of lords eligible to sit in the House of Lords in the early nineteenth century was over 300. The capacity of the King's Theatre house after the rebuilding in 1792 was about 3000: 900 or more in boxes, 600 in the pit and 1500 in the gallery; Milhous, Dideriksen and Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Volume II* (2001), 222.

[45] Writers have long pointed out that opera seasons and Parliamentary sessions coincided. It would be more accurate to say that they overlapped. Only in one case during this period (1786) were the beginning and end dates coterminous. All the other seasons and sessions began or ended on different dates, sometimes months apart. See the Appendix for the details.

[46] On the economic upheavals of that time see Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944/2021). For the considerable amount of debate concerning the various Williams' theses see *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: the Legacy of Eric Williams*, ed. Barbara L. Solow and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge, 1987), and *Capitalism and Slavery Fifty Years Later: Eric Eustace Williams – A Reassessment of the Man and his Work*, ed. Heather Cateau and S. H. H. Carrington (New York, 2000). See also Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International*

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difficulties and purchase an opera box subscription. Fourteen years later, in 1797, a greater percentage drawn from a significantly larger pool of subscribers was willing to put down the necessary funds for their entertainment.[47] Whether the slight decline in subscribers and the slave-economy proportion over the next ten years is part of a trend or just annual variation remains to be established. Behavioural evidence suggests that a range of causes (both overt and covert) for subscription to and attendance at the opera is in operation, and while the result (purchasing a seat for a season in the opera house) may look the same, individuals bring their own reasons to bear. Regardless of the proximate causes, the data indicate that during the 1790s and 1800s one in six persons who subscribed was funded from slavery's profits.

* * *

The three case studies that follow are microhistories that serve to illustrate the complexities of individual cases while also contributing to the macro-level argument. Their detailed and highly personal stories may seem far removed from the conclusions reached about overall levels of support of the opera companies by persons who profited from the slave economy. But I suggest that paying close attention to personal and familial circumstances not only offers contrasting motivations (duration, persons, frequency) that are easily lost in higher-level analysis, but also shows how interconnected were the lives of seemingly disparate or autonomous families. Macro-level work, distanced as it inevitably is from individuals, comprises summarisation and is teleological in intent. By subsuming persons and their individual desires and decisions into a whole, a fiction of a singular audience is created. In-depth studies of historical opera and concert audiences are rare indeed, and none has heretofore paid attention to the income sources used to purchase seats. In disclosing a method and sharing what can be accomplished, I hope to encourage others to take up the work.

This contribution to the decolonisation efforts starting to make their way into the Anglosphere's music history and pedagogy, provides clear evidence for the material support of music-making in the metropole thanks to funds generated through the efforts of slave labour in the colonies and the continued upholding of the slave trade. At the level of individuals and families, the boxes' inhabitants provide contrasting evidence for their choices while simultaneously showing how profits from involvement in the slave economy could be put to use.[48]

Case Study 1: The Lewis family in Pit box 20. The Lewis family was well known to the powers-that-be. Father Matthew Lewis (1750–1812) had been Chief Clerk at the War Office since 1772, and Deputy Secretary at War since 1775, thanks in large measure to his superior William Wildman, Viscount Barrington (1717–93). He married in 1773 Frances Maria Sewell

Trade and Economic Development (Cambridge, 2002); and S. H. H. Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775–1810* (Gainesville, FL, 2002).

[47] One way in which this study could be carried further would be through thorough examination of the financial records of individuals and families, work that I have not been able to undertake. For example, the Jamaican estate accounts of James Modyford Heywood (1729–98), Case Study 3 below, are part of an extensive Chancery case, the documentation of which is held by The National Archives, Kew. For an example of the use to which the accounts of the large Jamaican estate Mesopotamia, owned by 1789 opera subscriber John Foster Barham (1759–1832), have been put, see Dunn, *A Tale of Two Plantations.* In 1792 the estate was producing a profit of £2000 (£23.5m in 2022 pounds as a share of GDP).

[48] The focus on families provides an instructive contrast with the experience of the enslaved. As Achille Mbembe expresses it, in 'the reality of slavery, loss is first of a genealogical order. In the New World, the Black slave is legally stripped of all kinship. Slaves are, in consequence, "without parents". The condition of *kinlessness* is imposed on them through law and power. And eviction from the world of legal kinship is an inherited condition.' Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC, 2017), 33.

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(d. 1822), a daughter of Sir Thomas Sewell (1758–68), a lawyer and MP, then judge, and Master of the Rolls. Their marriage, after the birth of four children, ended in a judicial separation in 1783 following Mrs Lewis's affair with the singer Samuel Harrison (1760–1812), who was a leading tenor and performed at the Handel Commemoration (1784), the Three Choirs festivals, the Concerts of Antient Music, as well as the pleasure gardens.[49] Lewis's career provided a large income due to the fees to which he was entitled at the War Office, which increased considerably during war time.[50] He also owned two plantations in Jamaica. His wealth allowed him to lease a brand-new house in Devonshire Place (no. 9), in the rapidly developing and exclusive Marylebone area, from about 1790.[51] Through his father's connections, son Matthew Gregory (1775–1818) served in 1794–5 as an attaché at the British embassy at The Hague but was withdrawn due to ongoing hostilities with the French. In his twenty-first year (1796), Matt (as he was known in the family) had his first novel *The Monk: A Romance* published anonymously, and then in a new edition with his name on it.[52] In May he ran successfully for Parliament, thanks in part to his father's influence and money. His two sisters, Frances Maria (1776–1862) and Sophia Elizabeth (1780–1819), were regular attendees at society balls and concerts.[53] Given that the box (pit level 20) was held for the six seasons that coincided with Matt's time in Parliament, I imagined that father had, at least initially, obtained it as a reward for his son and to support his ambition as a theatrical writer and legislator, in addition to providing a spot in the most elite of entertainment venues for his daughters to appear in public. The evidence points instead to somewhat different motivations (Table 3).

The subscriber list published in 1797 names Mrs Lewis as the holder of the box. In fact, she is very unlikely to have been the responsible party as she was subject to a purdah enforced by her family.[54] Rather, as will be made clear shortly, it was the two daughters (the Misses Lewis) who signed up for all six seats, presumably paying with their father's money, directly or indirectly.[55] In the following season, the occupants of the box are fully listed and comprised, in addition to Matt 'Monk' Lewis, his sisters and their father, Gov. Poyntz Ricketts and his wife Sophia. The Governor was an old friend of Lewis senior, both having been born in Jamaica. The Ricketts property in Jamaica had, supposedly, suffered greatly in the earthquake and hurricane of 1779. While the Ricketts were widely known in elite circles

[49] Mrs Lewis was a musician herself (Clementi supposedly was one of her teachers), and composers and performers such as Charles (1757–1834) and Samuel (1766–1837) Wesley, Louis de Camp (d. 1787), Frederick Charles Reinhold (1741–1815) and the Knyvets – presumably father Charles (1752–1822) and sons Charles (1773–1852) and William (1779–1856) – visited her regularly. Matthew G. Lewis, *The Life and Correspondence*, ed. Margaret Baron-Wilson (London, 1839), 1:11–19. My thanks to Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson for information on de Camp.

[50] See fn. 55 below for details.

[51] *Survey of London: South-East Marylebone*, ed. Philip Temple and Colin Thom, vols. 51–2 (London, 2017). William Thomas Beckford lived at no. 4, and Thomas Baring at no. 21 (1804–40).

[52] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance*, ed. D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Peterborough, ON, 2004). The book was said to continue 'to claim attention; in circulation it has extended to limits but rarely exampled'. *Oracle* (14 December 1796).

[53] Second son Barrington (1778–1800) died due to a spinal injury sustained in childhood.

[54] There is no evidence that Mrs Lewis became part of 'Princess Caroline's entourage' as Lewis biographer Macdonald has claimed; D. L. Macdonald, *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography* (Toronto, ON, 2000), 176. This is clear from the list of the Princess's household, for which see R.O. Bucholz, 'The Database of Court Officers: 1660–1837', https://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu (accessed June 2023).

[55] According to a table published in the *Morning Chronicle*, 9 October 1797, Mr Lewis's net receipts (i.e. after taxes) from his official salary and fees were, on an annual average for the years 1784–6, 1788–9 and 1791, £2207 18s. 3d. (£3.4m in 2022 pounds in terms of labour value), an amount that made him more than highly paid by the standards of the day, whereas in 1796 his official net income was £18,458 6s. 3d. (£28m likewise), a fortune at that time as it would be today. Profits from the plantations would have been additional to these sums.

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Table 3. Pit box 20 occupied by the Lewis and Ricketts families 1796–1802

Season	Seat 1	Seat 2	Seat 3	Seat 4	Seat 5	Seat 6
1796–7	Mrs [*recte* Misses] Lewis	ditto[a]	ditto	ditto	ditto	ditto
1797–8[b,c]	M. Lewis	Miss Lewis	Mrs Ricketts	Miss S. Lewis	Gov. Ricketts	M. G. Lewis
1798–9	M. Lewis	Miss Lewis	Miss S. Lewis	Mrs Ricketts	Gov. Ricketts	M. G. Lewis
1799–1800	Mrs Lushington	Mrs Ricketts	Miss S. Lewis	Gov. Ricketts	M. Lewis	M. G. Lewis
1800–1	Mrs Lushington	Mrs Ricketts	Miss S. Lewis	Miss Ricketts	M. Lewis	M. G. Lewis
1801–2	M. Lewis	Mrs Ricketts	Miss Ricketts	Mrs Lushington	Miss S. Lewis	M. G. Lewis

[a] As used in the 'Plan of the Boxes' section of the publications, 'ditto' means the seats so designated have been assigned to the person(s) named in the first seat.
[b] Names have been regularised.
[c] Information from fan (Fan Museum, Greenwich, HA255).

in London – they had signed as witnesses when David Garrick made his will, for example – their income had been much reduced.[56] The King approved Ricketts's appointment as Governor of Tobago in 1793, and then Barbados in 1794.[57] Whether it was Mr Lewis or the Governor who paid for the seats is unclear, but the Ricketts remained box-mates of the Lewises even after the Governor died in 1800, their daughter Isabella (1782–1845) taking over her father's seat for two seasons.

According to biographers of his son, upon retirement in 1803 Matthew Lewis transmogrified a long-standing friendship with Mrs Ricketts into something that went beyond the bounds of propriety, even though it was three years after the death of her husband and the Lewises had been separated for twenty years.[58] Rather surprisingly, the opera box proved to be one of the sticking points. In a letter to his mother thought to date from 1805, Matt wrote that 'Many years ago my Sisters refused to go into Public with [Mrs Poyntz Ricketts], and in consequence the Opera-Box (which before they had jointly) was divided into alternate weeks.'[59] It can hardly have been 'many years ago' that this alternation of occupation began if the relationship commenced in 1803. Nor would that have influenced the use of the box, as no subscription by the Lewises or the Ricketts can be found after 1802.[60] Indeed, in another letter, this one with secure dating of 13 January 1803, Lewis tells his mother that 'Sophia [... is] rather in the dumps at her Sister's not having yet succeeded in getting an Opera-Box.'[61] Either the relationship began earlier than has been supposed or 'Monk' Lewis was exaggerating, perhaps for his mother's sake, how long this alternation had been in effect.[62]

[56] On the witnessing of Garrick's will see *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little, Phoebe deK. Wilson and George M. Kahrl (Cambridge, MA, 1963), 1362–8. The Youngs (see Case Study 2) also were friends of the Garricks, as was Richard Rigby (1722–88), whom Garrick appointed one of four trustees of his estate. Rigby came from a slave-owning family with an estate in Antigua (sold in 1745), and one in Jamaica, where his eponymous father (d. 1730) had been Provost Marshal. Rigby was a London merchant trading in sugar, cocoa and coffee, as well as a successful politician, being an MP 1745–88, and Paymaster General 1768–82.

[57] The Tobago appointment is noted in the *Star and Evening Advertiser* (18 October 1793), and the Barbados one in the *Whitehall Evening Post* (8–11 February 1794).

[58] Macdonald, *Monk Lewis*, 18.

[59] Louis F. Peck, *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* (Cambridge, MA, 1961), 234.

[60] The lists for 1803–5 and 1807 are available via Google Books, scanned from copies at the British Library.

[61] Peck, *Life*, 220.

[62] Matt 'Monk' Lewis, in the letter of 1805 already cited, claims that Mrs Ricketts tried to meddle in the marriages of his sisters, writing that 'She did all in her power to prevent Maria's marriage', which took place in April 1799. Peck, *Life*, 234.

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Regarding Mrs Ricketts, 'Monk' Lewis says that 'She has been the cause of almost every quarrel that has happened in our family, ever since I can remember.' In which case, one wonders why the box with both families named was continued for so long. Furthermore, given that Gov. Ricketts was stationed in Barbados most of the time during the years in which he is named as a subscriber, it can hardly have been he who sat in the seat to which his name was attached.[63] Perhaps Isabella attended in his place. Perhaps the seat was left open, or another friend of the Lewises was offered the opportunity. Whatever the case may have been, it is clear that the names listed do not necessarily accord with those of the persons who attended. For William Lee, who, as keeper of the boxes and the purveyor of drinks and food in the Great Room, the constant churn of subscribers and seat users must have been a troublesome business.[64] Nonetheless he seems to have been scrupulous about recording the names of subscribers when they changed due to marriage or inheritance. Though he could do nothing in the printed lists for 1799 about Frances Maria Lewis becoming Mrs Lushington following her marriage to Henry in April of that year, he has her clearly marked as Mrs Lushington for the following season. Perhaps it was her husband who sat in the seat nominally assigned to Gov. Ricketts. The box was undoubtedly a family affair and intergenerational.

The Lushingtons were a notable family. Henry (1775–1863) was the eldest son and heir to Sir Stephen (1744–1807), who was an MP, a director of the East India Company, and its chosen chairman in 1790, after which he was created a baronet. Sir Stephen had married Hester Boldero (1753–1830), the eldest child of John Boldero (1713–89), and his wife. Hester's brothers Edward and Charles were in a banking partnership with the Lushingtons. The bank has recently been characterised as 'a global investment portfolio embedded in the provision of mortgages for West Indian planters'.[65] Though it collapsed in 1812 due in part to renewed war with the USA, the Bolderos were able to keep Aspenden Hall, Hertfordshire, and after Charles's death in 1851 it passed to Sir Henry, the 2nd Baronet.

Whether it was Frances or her sister Sophia Elizabeth who was responsible for designing the personal fan now in the Schreiber Collection at the British Museum remains to be established, but we can be certain that one of them did as it includes an image of the ivory opera ticket on which is inscribed '*Miss Lewis* PIT BOX No.20'.[66] Several snippets of music are visible among the poems and letters, including their brother's poem 'The Orphans Prayer, a Pathetic Ballad', with the music by Harriett Abrams. The sheet music version, probably published in 1800, was issued by Lavenu.[67] Sophia had literary aspirations. In about 1800 she translated the satiric novel *La nuit anglaise* by Léon-François-Marie Bellin de la Liborlière (Paris, 1799), which was published as *The Hero: Or, the Adventures of a Night* (London, 1815), and includes some mockery of her brother's

[63] For the Governor's Barbadian experiences, which included having a biracial mistress, see John Poyer, *The History of Barbados* (London, 1808). It would appear from the newspapers that Gov. Ricketts returned home from the Caribbean on the packet ship *Chesterfield* in June 1798 (*London Chronicle*, 21–3 June 1798, and elsewhere). While his subsequent departure is not noted, his return in March 1800 is, as he died in Liverpool on 8 April (*Morning Post*, 16 April 1800).

[64] For information on William Lee, see Milhous, Dideriksen and Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London: Volume II*, 315–17, 642, 740, 795, 801, 805, 807.

[65] Chris Jeppesen, 'East meets West: Exploring the Connections Between Britain, the Caribbean, and the East India Company, *c.* 1757–1857', in *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, ed. Kate Donnington, Ryan Hanley and Jessica Moody (Liverpool, 2016), 103.

[66] An artistic rendition of the fan is included in Lady Charlotte Schreiber, *Fans and Fan Leaves* (London, 1888–90), no. 143. Lady Charlotte (1812–95) is perhaps better known by her first husband's name, Guest, and as the translator of *The Mabinogion*. Her second husband, Charles Schreiber, was a grandson of William and Mary Schreiber, who could have been the Mrs Schreiber who subscribed to a seat in box 19 in 1797, 1798, 1800 and 1801.

[67] The British Library has a copy, Music G.805.j.(3.)

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Table 4. Box 84, Sir William and Lady Young and friends, 1794–1803

Season	Seat 1	Seat 2	Seat 3	Seat 4	Seat 5	Seat 6
1794–5[a]	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Sir W. W. Wynn	Sir H. V. Tempest	Hon. T. Brand	Sir W. Young
1795–6	Lady Young	Sir W. W. Wynn	Sir H. V. Tempest	Mr Orby Hunter	Miss Talbot	Sir W. Young
1796–7	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Sir W. W. Wynn	Sir H. V. Tempest	Hon. T. Brand	Sir W. Young
1797–8[b]	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Sir W. Young	Hon. T. Brand	Sir W. W. Wynn	Sir H. V. Tempest
1798–9	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Sir W. W. Wynn	Hon. T. Brand	Sir W. Young	Mr Henry
1799–1800	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Sir W. W. Wynn	Hon. T. Brand [empty][c]	Sir W. Young	B[d] [Hon. T. Brand][e]
1800–1	Lady Young	Miss Talbot	Hon. T. Brand	Sir W. Young	B[d]	B[d]
1801–2	Lady Young	Lady Young	Lady Young	Sir W. Young	Hon. T. Brand	Miss Talbot
1802–3	Lady Young	Lady Young	Lady Young	Sir W. Young	Hon. T. Brand	Miss Talbot

[a] Names have been regularised.
[b] Information from fan (Fan Museum, Greenwich, HA255).
[c] Fan has no name for this seat.
[d] As found in the 'Plan of the Boxes' section of some of the published lists and fans, B means blank, i.e. unrented.
[e] Fan has Hon. T. Brand.

novel.[68] In 1804 she married John Shedden (d. 1843), and it was he who received compensation of over £10,650 (over £54.5m in 2022 pounds as a share of GDP) under the 1833 Act for part ownership of two plantations in Jamaica.

The Lewis family was related to the Sewells not only through the marriage in 1773 of Matthew and Frances Maria, but also through the marriage in 1775 of her brother Robert (1751–1828) and Matthew's sister Sarah (dates unknown). Robert trained as a lawyer, went to Jamaica, was appointed Attorney General for the island 1780–95, and on returning became the agent for the island in London 1795–1806. He also obtained a seat in Parliament 1796–1802. Another Sewell, brother George (1755–1801), married into a Caribbean planter family, the Youngs, in 1796, 'after many perplexities & Obstacles', according to his wife, Mary (*c.* 1758–1821).[69] George had studied at Lincoln College, Oxford, took holy orders and was, at his death, the rector of Byfleet, Surrey. It is to the Young family, specifically Mary's brother Sir William, the 2nd Baronet, that we now turn our attention.

Case Study 2: Third Tier box 84, the Young family and friends. The inhabitants of Third Tier box 84 (see Table 4) were as follows.

(1) Barbara Young (d. 1830), the second wife of Sir William Young (they married in April 1793), daughter of Col. Richard Talbot (*c.* 1736–88) of Malahide Castle, Co. Dublin, and Margaret O'Reilly (d. 1834), who was created Baroness Talbot of Malahide in 1831. Barbara's brother, Admiral Sir John Talbot (*c.* 1769–1851), owned an estate on Montserrat.

[68] Montague Summers, *A Gothic Bibliography* (London, 1941), 340.
[69] Mary Young Sewell, 'Memorandum' book, National Library of Wales, Ottley Family (Additional) Papers 8. Mary noted significant family events from 1770 until 1801, the year her husband and her mother died.

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(2) Her husband Sir William Young (1749–1815), 2nd Baronet, plantation owner in Antigua and Tobago, MP for St Mawes 1784–1806 and Buckingham 1806–7, and Governor of Tobago 1807–15.[70]
(3) Her sister, either Frances (Fanny) Gabriella (early 1770s–1850), who first travelled on the Continent 1814–17, and who never married, or Charlotte (d. 1863), who married Captain John Cutcliffe (d. 1822) in 1808. Two other sisters (Catherine and Margaret) married before 1807.[71]
(4) Sir Watkin Williams Wynn (1772–1840), 5th Baronet, MP 1794–1840, was the eldest son of the eponymous MP 1772–89, music enthusiast and Handel-lover, and his second wife Lady Charlotte Grenville (1754–1832).[72] In 1817 he married Lady Henrietta Antonia Clive, daughter of Edward, the 1st Earl Powis.
(5) Sir Henry Vane Tempest (1771–1813), 2nd Baronet, MP 1794–1800, 1807–13, who married in 1799 Anne Katharine MacDonnell (1778–1834),[73] Countess of Antrim (Figure 4).
(6) Hon. Thomas Brand (1774–1851), MP 1807–19, who succeeded his mother in 1819 as 20th Baron Dacre. He married in 1819 Barbarina (1768–1854), author, daughter of Sir Chaloner Ogle (d. 1816), 1st Baronet, widow of Valentine Henry Wilmot (1757–1819), whose father had been a merchant on St Vincent.
(7) Present only for the 1795–6 season: Thomas Orby Hunter (1774–1847), of Croyland Abbey, Lincolnshire, and the eponymous grandson of an owner of an estate in Jamaica. (See the next case study for more detail.)
(8) Present only for the 1798–9 season: Mr Henry. No MPs of this period had this surname. Neither of Sir William's daughters married a Mr Henry. Two possibilities are John Henry (d. 1806), who was an officeholder on St Kitts, and Alexander Henry (dates unknown), a merchant in London who traded in slave-produced goods from Jamaica. Though his partnership declared bankruptcy in 1811 he continued to trade thereafter. His wife died on 31 July 1809, at Blackheath.

Sir William Young was the most senior in terms of age. He had not been a subscriber to the opera when his first wife, Sarah Lawrence (d. 1791), was alive, notwithstanding her interest in music. Presumably it was his second wife Barbara, along with one of her sisters, who were the more desirous of attending the spectacle.[74] Why they ceased to hold the box beyond 1803 is, at present, undetermined, as Sir William continued to be an active MP and an opponent of the abolition of the slave trade until he resigned in order to take up the post of Governor of

[70] The literature by and about Sir William is considerable. He was a notable apologist for slavery, advocated for amelioration (but not freedom or manumission) for the enslaved, actively participated in the West India lobby, and wrote poetry. In addition to the biography in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* see R. B. Sheridan, 'Sir William Young (1749–1815): Planter and Politician, with Special Reference to Slavery in the British West Indies', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 33/1–2 (1999), 1–6; David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783–1807* (Cambridge, 2009); and the forthcoming biography by P. J. Marshall.

[71] Extensive information about the Talbot family can be found in Stephen E. Talbot, *Into the Lion's Den: A Biographical History of the Talbots of Malahide* (published by the author, 2012), esp. 362–403 on Frances Gabriella, who made a name for herself on the Continent and was ennobled, being dubbed a Chanoinesse by the King of Bavaria, a Baronne by the Holy Roman Emperor, and later a Comtesse.

[72] On the 4th Baronet's Handelian passion see Martin Picker, 'Handeliana in the Rutgers University Library', *Journal of the Rutgers University Library* 29/1 (1965), 1–12, and 'Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and the Rutgers Handel Collection', *Journal of the Rutgers University Library*, 53/2 (1991), 17–26.

[73] In 1799, Anne Katharine (née) MacDonnell married Sir Henry Vane-Tempest, 2nd Baronet (d. 1813), of Wynyard, Co. Durham. In 1808 they were subscribers to box 21.

[74] Based on close examination of USA survey data, Craig Burton Upright concludes that men's attendance at 'high arts' events 'is more strongly influenced by spousal characteristics than is women's attendance'; 'Social Capital and Cultural Participation: Spousal Influences on Attendance at Arts Events', *Poetics* 32 (2004), 129–43.

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Figure 4. Fan (1808) that may have belonged to the Countess of Antrim. The New Opera Fan for 1808 (J. Michel); paper, uncoloured, wooden sticks, single-sided. 'Countess of Antrim' written on the reverse. Fan Museum, Greenwich: LDFAN 2005.24. Photography by and image courtesy of the Fan Museum, Greenwich.

Tobago in 1807. In contrast with the Lewis family, three seats in box 84 were occupied by younger male colleagues of Sir William from Parliament prior to their marriages (except for Sir Henry Vane Tempest).

Two of the regulars, Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and the Hon. Thomas Brand, also had seats in other boxes during this period. Sir Watkin spent some time in Pit box 25 in 1796–7 with Lady Catherine Cornewall (d. 1835), wife of Sir George, 2nd Baronet (1748–1819), MP 1774–96, 1802–7, who owned an estate in Grenada, she having been an opera subscriber since at least 1789; and Thomas Amyand (*c.* 1763–1805), a cousin of Sir George, and a director of the Bank of England.[75] That same season the Hon. Thomas Brand sojourned in Pit box 21 with Lady Caroline Beauclerk (*c.* 1775–1838), who in February 1797 married the Hon. Charles Dundas (1771–1810), MP 1798–1805, 1806–10, the third son of Sir Thomas Dundas (1741–1820), 2nd Baronet, who was created Baron Dundas in 1794, and who inherited estates in Dominica and Grenada from his father Lawrence Dundas (1712–81), 1st Baronet.[76] In other words, profiteers could be found throughout the house.

[75] Also in that box were Lady Elizabeth (*c.* 1756–1842), the daughter of Prime Minister George Grenville, who in 1787 married John Joshua Proby, Earl of Carysfort (1751–1828), as his second wife; Lady Anne (1772–1864), the daughter of Thomas Pitt, Baron Camelford, who married Lady Elizabeth's brother Lord William Grenville (1759–1834) in 1792 (he was to be Prime Minister 1806–7); Lady Rebecca Rushout, who in 1766 had married Sir John Rushout (1738–1800), 5th Baronet, MP 1761–96, and was created Baron Northwick in October 1797.

[76] Also in that box were Aubrey Beauclerk, 5th Duke of St Albans (1740–1802); his daughter Lady Catherine (*c.* 1768–1802); and Lady Maria Huntingfield, who had married in 1777 Joshua Vanneck (1745–1816), MP 1790–1816, succeeded 3rd Baronet 1791, and who was created Baron Huntingfield in 1796, a merchant with an immense estate in England, and one of the wealthiest persons in the country.

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Case Study 3: The daughters of James Modyford Heywood and his wife Catherine Hartopp. James Modyford Heywood (1729–98), MP 1768–74, was the son of James Heywood of Maristow, Devon, and Mary, a daughter of Sir Abraham Elton (1679–1742), 2nd Baronet, a notable Bristol merchant, slave trader and MP. From his father James inherited at least two plantations in Jamaica, including Heywood Hall, which he sold to the Glasgow merchant house of Robert Mackay & Co. in 1789.[77] Both the Heywoods and the Modyfords were long established as planters in Barbados and Jamaica. In 1754 James married Catherine Hartopp (1728–living in 1796) and they had one son (James, 1756–84) and five daughters (one of whom died in her first year).[78] The four daughters who reached adulthood were: Sophia (1758–1819), Emma (1763–1805), Maria Henrietta (1765–1836) and Frances (1771–1834). To each he gave £8000 (£12.3m in 2022 pounds in terms of income or GDP per capita), according to his will, money derived in part from the sale of Heywood plantation in 1796.[79] Except for Emma, the sisters were all subscribers to the opera (Table 5).[80]

Sophia married John Musters (1753–1827) in 1776. John was already known as a country sports afficionado at the time of their marriage. George Stubbs completed a picture of them on horseback in front of Colwick Hall, Nottinghamshire, the Musters family home.[81] They had two children – John (1777–1849) and Sophia Ann (1778–1850) – and a girl born in 1779 who died within a month. Supposedly Sophia did not enjoy country life, preferring the social whirl of London and the resorts of the fashionable. Frances Burney wrote to her sister Susanna in October 1779 from Brighton saying that Mrs Musters, 'an exceedingly pretty woman, [...] is the reigning Toast of the season'.[82] Some difficulties ensued, and the couple started living apart. Invited by her friend the Hon. Louisa Beckford (wife of Peter, MP, another country sports enthusiast, a plantation owner in Jamaica, and a cousin of the host), to spend Christmas 1781 with her cousin – the immensely wealthy Jamaican planter William Thomas Beckford (1760–1844) at Fonthill in Wiltshire – Sophia was apparently paired with George Pitt, Louisa's unmarried brother and an MP 1774–90, who succeeded as 2nd Baron

[77] Stephen Mullen, *Glasgow, Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: An Audit of Historic Connections and Modern Legacies* (2022) available online at www.glasgow.gov.uk.

[78] Catherine was the daughter of Chiverton Hartopp (1690–1759) and Catherine Mansfield (*c.* 1701–55), of Welby, Leicestershire. Another daughter, Mary (1732–1800) married in 1758 Richard Howe (1725/6–99), 4th Viscount Howe, who was raised to the earldom of Howe in 1788. His father, Emanuel Scrope Howe (*c.* 1700–35), 2nd Viscount and 4th Baronet, was an MP, and Governor of Barbados 1733–5. The Earl (a national hero for a famous naval victory) and/or his wife were subscribers to the opera in 1788, 1789 and 1791 (both the King's Theatre, Haymarket, and the Pantheon).

[79] Will of James Modyford Heywood, made 2 April 1796, proved 12 April 1798; TNA PROB 11/1305/76. One of the dangers to the enslaved of the sale of a plantation or estate was the break-up of their families. For an overview see Daniel Livesay, 'Transatlantic Family-Making: Jamaica and Great Britain', *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Latin American History* (2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.746; and the citations in n.17.

[80] Emma Heywood married, in 1783, Albemarle Bertie (1759–1824), a naval officer who rose to become admiral and received a baronetcy in 1812. He was the illegitimate son of Lord Albemarle Bertie, the second son of Peregrine Bertie, 2nd Duke of Ancaster and Kesteven. The marriage settlement, dated 4 June 1782, is at Lincolnshire Archives (2ANC3/C/71). Emma assisted her cousin Midshipman Peter Heywood (1773–1831) when he was imprisoned at Portsmouth awaiting court-martial as part of the saga of the mutiny on HMS Bounty, 1789–92. Captain Bertie was one of the officers conducting the court-martial. Heywood had not actively participated in the mutiny, but naval law required a finding of guilt. The court tempered its judgement through recommendation of a royal pardon. Emma's father James Modyford Heywood worked behind the scenes to ensure this was secured. See Peter Heywood and Nessy Heywood, *Innocent on the* Bounty*: The Court-Martial and Pardon of Midshipman Peter Heywood, in Letters*, ed. Donald A. Maxton and Rolf E. Du Rietz (Jefferson, NC, 2013).

[81] 'John and Sophia Musters Riding at Colwick Hall', 1777 (private collection). Stubbs also painted two of Sophia's spaniels. A few years later he painted pictures for Sophia's father, of a horse and two spaniels, and another horse with a white blaze. See Judy Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven, CT, 2007).

[82] *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Lars Troide and Steward Cooke, vol. 3, part 1, 1778–9 (Montreal and Kingston, 1994), 382.

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Table 5. Three Heywood sisters at the opera, 1793–1808

Season	Box 81	Box 82	Box 84	Box 85	Box 97
1793–4[a]				Mrs Musters	
1794–5[b]	Mrs Heywood Miss Heywood [Frances]			Mrs Musters	
1795–6[c]		Mrs Montolieu Miss Heywood [Frances]	Mr Orby Hunter		
1796–7		Mrs Montolieu		Mrs Musters	
1797–8[d]				Mrs Musters	
1798–9				Mrs Musters	
1799–1800[e]		[box empty]			
1800–1[f]		[box empty]			Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
1801–2		[box empty]			Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
	Pit box 9				
1802–3	Mr and Mrs Musters				Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
1803–4	Mr and Mrs Musters				Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
1804–5[g]					Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
1805–6[h]					Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter
1806–7					Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter Mrs Musters
1807–8[i]				Mrs Musters	Mrs Montolieu Mrs Orby Hunter

[a] Mrs Musters had box 99 PS at the Pantheon in 1791, her first opera subscription, and 7F at the Little Theatre in 1792.

[b] Mrs Heywood and her daughter shared with the Duke of Somerset (Edward Seymour, 11th Duke), the Hon. Mr Bagot, the Hon. Mr Moreton, Sir Willoughby Aston.

[c] Mrs Montolieu and her sister shared with the Hon. Mr Bagot, Sir Willoughby Aston, Col. Crewe and Mr Northey. No entry in the alphabetical list for Mrs Musters. Box 85 was occupied by the Hon. Mrs Cawthorne. Mr Orby Hunter was in the Young family's box, 84.

[d] Information from fan (Fan Museum, Greenwich, HA255).

[e] Box 85 was occupied by Marchioness Wellesley; she was Hyacinthe-Gabrielle (d. 1816), who had married in 1794 Richard Colley Wellesley (1760–1842), succeeded in 1781 as 2nd Earl Mornington, created Marquis Wellesley 1799, Governor of Bengal 1798–1805. He was the elder brother of Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington.

[f] Box 82 has 'March Worcester' in pencil in the copy at the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Lady Charlotte Sophia Leveson-Gower (1771–1854) on 16 May 1791 married Henry Charles Somerset (1766–1835), Marquis of Worcester, MP 1788–1803, who in 1803 succeeded as 6th Duke of Beaufort. Box 85 has Mrs Dickenson and others.

[g] Mrs Montolieu and Mrs Orby Hunter were joined by their husbands.

[h] Mrs Montolieu's husband joined the ladies.

[i] Information from fan (Fan Museum, Greenwich, LDFAN 2005.24).

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Rivers in 1803.[83] Upon his father's death in 1770, William Thomas became heir to an estate that included 2,245 slaves and about 22,000 acres in Jamaica.[84] He was already known as 'England's wealthiest son'. The party, designed to celebrate his coming of age, lasted several days and no expense was spared. Philippe de Loutherbourg created the scenes and special effects. The leading castrati from the opera in London performed.[85] While Beckford's novel *Vathek* (1785), which he framed as an additional Arabian Nights' tale, has become a locus classicus for literary and cultural critics, the party that provided the prefigurement has largely gone unconsidered in terms of its funding by and for profiteers of the slave economy.[86]

The lack of an even-handed biography has left Mrs Musters at the mercy of her critics. Admittedly, these included contemporaries such as her husband, who had her painted out of the two joint portraits by Stubbs. One quotation attributed to Fanny Burney has it that Mrs Musters 'was most beautiful, but most unhappy'. Unfortunately, it is not to be found in the latest or earlier editions of Burney's diaries and letters.[87] Instead, it appears to have been invented by Edward Hamilton (1811–1903), the notable botanist and homeopathic doctor, who wrote in his catalogue of Sir Joshua Reynolds's engraved works that, according to Burney, 'She was most beautiful, but most unhappy; and it is to her that a gentleman at a ball [...]' continuing the story related by Charlotte Barrett, in her edition of Burney's letters, told her by an unnamed man.[88] Mrs Barrett does not include the seven-word phrase, nor is it to be found used in the context of Mrs Musters in any other source prior to the publication of Hamilton's book, as far as HathiTrust and other full-text databases can tell.[89] After 1874 the phrase is widely, though mistakenly, used as a genuine Burney quotation.[90]

Family lore has it that Sophia Musters became a Bedchamber Woman to Queen Charlotte.[91] As in the case of Mrs Lewis, no such appointment can be found in the official records. That she had artistic talent is clear from a stained glass window she designed for the east window of Colwick church.[92] Edward Jones (1752–1824), 'Bardd y Brenin', dedicated his *Lyric Airs* (1804) to her, and was probably her daughter's harp teacher. Upon her death her husband had a monument erected at Colwick that portrayed her as 'Resignation', the three panels of the pedestal depicting painting, music and dancing.[93] The piece was made by the

[83] For more on the Beckfords see David Hunter, 'The Beckfords in England and Italy: A Case Study in the Musical Uses of the Profits of Slavery', *Early Music* 46/2 (2018), 285–98. Mrs Elizabeth Hervey (*c.* 1748–?1820), a novelist and William Thomas Beckford's stepsister, had a seat in box 6 in 1796, and in Pit box 19 (next to the Lewises) in 1797, 1798, 1799 (with her son 'Mr Hervey'), 1800 and 1801. Her son William (1777–1863) received almost £7000 (about £36m in 2022 pounds as a share of GDP) compensation under the 1833 Act for the enslaved on two Jamaican plantations that she had bequeathed him.

[84] Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven, CT, 2013), 147–8.

[85] J. W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (London, 1932), 90, quoting a note of Beckford's written in 1838.

[86] Lenses through which the novel has been considered include romanticism, exoticism, orientalism, homo/bisexuality, paedophilia, the aesthetic sublime, enchantment, homoeroticism, grotesquery and consumerism. That slavery can be a significant analytical lens for interpretation of the novel is clear from Peter H. Knox-Shaw, 'The West Indian *Vathek*', *Essays in Criticism* 43/4 (1993), 284–307.

[87] For an electronic version see 'The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney', InteLex Corp., 2002.

[88] Edward Hamilton, *Catalogue raisonné of the Engraved Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1874), 92.

[89] *Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (London, 1842–6), 1:437. In characterising Mrs Musters as 'The beautiful but unhappy', Charles Robert Leslie and Tom Taylor may, inadvertently, have started the hare running; *The Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London, 1865), II:374.

[90] See, for example, the entry for Mrs Musters in Thomas H. Ward and W. Roberts, *Romney: A Biographical and Critical Essay* (London, 1904), II:110.

[91] Patrick T. A. Musters, *The Musters: A Family Gathering*, 2nd edn (Oakham, 2001), 15.

[92] H. Tom Küpper, 'Amateur Stained Glass in English Churches, 1830–80', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 30 (2020), https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.2895 (accessed 23 February 2024).

[93] https://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/annesley/hmonumnt.php (accessed 21 August 2023).

noted sculptor Richard Westmacott (1775–1856), who had been a pupil of Antonio Canova.[94] Both the window and the monument were moved to Annesley All Saints church by the Chaworth-Musters family when they made Annesley their main seat.[95]

Maria Henrietta married, in 1786, Lewis/Louis Montolieu (1761–1817), a bank director at Hammersley's, which for a period was the bank used by George, Prince of Wales. After the birth of her children, she turned translator and writer and became quite well known, with two volumes of her own verses published and reissued between 1801 and 1822 in which she uses plants as moral guides.[96] Her husband ran, unsuccessfully, as a parliamentary candidate for Leicester in 1790.

The last sister to marry was Frances.[97] For her first season at the opera, 1794–5, her mother accompanied her. Whether she met Thomas Orby Hunter at the opera that season or he obtained his seat with the Youngs nearby in order to continue a courtship begun elsewhere we shall probably never know. They married in 1796. The proximity provides another reason for having a subscription, as well as an opportunity to point to the plantation ownership history of the Orby Hunters, which began with Maj.-Gen. Robert Hunter (*c.* 1666–1734), governor of Virginia, New York and New Jersey, and Jamaica, who married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir James Orby, Bt. Hunter was a director of the Royal Academy of Music by 1722.[98] The Jamaican estates, the details not yet established by the Legacies of British Slavery, passed to son Thomas Orby Hunter (*c.* 1716–69), MP 1741–59, 1760–9. His son Charles Orby Hunter (1750–91) sold the family's property in Surrey – Waverley Abbey House – in 1771. He married Elizabeth (d. 1813), daughter of George Howard of Dublin, and it was their son Thomas who inherited whatever remained in England, but possibly also in Jamaica.

As can be seen from Table 5, only for one year did the three sisters share a box, 97, in 1806–7. Prior to that Maria Henrietta and Frances shared the box, while Sophia had different boxes, including 85 and Pit box 9. Before her marriage, Frances joined her sister in box 81 for the 1794–5 season, and in box 82 for the 1795–6 season, when Hunter was in box 84. Sophia, as one of the leaders of fashion in high society and an active participant in the *beau monde* or *bon ton*, had numerous men share her box before 1800. These included: Prince Frederick, Duke of York (1793–5, 1796–7); John Manners, Duke of Rutland (1796–9); the Hon. Mr Lamb (1798–9); the Hon. George Pitt (1794–5, 1798–9). Only for one season, 1797–8, did a woman join her, Mrs Campbell. In the season 1802–3 Mr and Mrs Musters shared Pit box 9 with Mrs Jackson and Miss Morgan, and in 1803–4 they shared it with Mrs Jackson and Mr, Mrs and Miss Rolle (the identity of these individuals is uncertain).

* * *

The choice of subscribing to and attending the opera were activities undertaken with family and/or friends, and dependent upon others' interests, whether or not one was a profiteer of the slave economy. Lords, MPs and their spouses predominate among subscribers, but hundreds of other such persons felt no need to subscribe. Aesthetic preference (opera as acme) was not necessarily relevant, though if it had been second-rate, support is unlikely to

[94] Sadly, the large monument, which is signed by the artist, goes unconsidered by Marie Busco, *Sir Richard Westmacott, Sculptor* (Cambridge, 1994).

[95] John 'Jack', the son of Sophia and John Musters, in 1805 married Mary Ann Chaworth (1786–1832), heiress to the Chaworth family estates in Nottinghamshire. Their heirs were among the largest landowners in the county in 1872; Kevin Cahill, *Who Owns Britain* (Edinburgh, 2001), 251.

[96] *The Enchanted Plants* (1801), and *The Festival of the Rose* (1802).

[97] Burke's *Landed Gentry* has the wrong first name for her father; it is James not John.

[98] Donald Burrows et al., *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents*, vol. I 1609–1725 (Oxford, 2013), 565.

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have been forthcoming. The location of the theatre and its perceived exclusivity were significant draws. The activity was exclusive due to cost, interest and control of the necessary resources.

Owners of plantations on British islands in the Caribbean and other participants in the slave economy used their profits to fund box subscriptions at the opera house for their families and friends.[99] The Lewis family did so for five seasons, though family tensions supposedly resulted in an alternating sequence of attendees. For the Youngs, who had owned a plantation on Antigua since the 1720s that had been highly profitable, nine seasons with friends and family sufficed. The daughters of James Modyford Heywood received large dowries due to the early death of their brother and their father's decision to liquidate his properties in Jamaica and the estate of Maristow, Devon, which he sold to Manasseh Masseh Lopes (1755–1831), a merchant, MP 1802–6, 1807–8, 1812–19, 1820–9, who was created a baronet in 1805, and who came from a wealthy plantation-owning family in Jamaica. The women had their own agendas, and spouses with differing interests or demands, and shared a box only for one season.

The 1782–1808 subscribers who derived their profits from Caribbean estates experienced considerable variation in value and returns due to natural and human interventions.[100] Though such estates could be highly profitable when compared with agricultural estates in England, boom and bust cycles were common.[101] The churn of slave-economy subscribers occupying the boxes at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, is considerable. Of the thirty certain (known) individuals who subscribed for the 1782–3 season, only seven were themselves or a close family member present in 1806–7, even though the number of such subscribers had increased by 150% (from thirty to seventy-four).[102] This compares with an overall increase of subscribers by 138% (from 356 to 492).

Given the financial precariousness of opera production in London, the portion of subscription income (9–17%) contributed by the profiteers of the slave economy during these twenty-six seasons must be seen as crucial to the continued existence of the company and the genre.[103] Had it not been for the subscriptions by persons whose wealth derived from the slave economy it is clear that the company's continued existence would have been jeopardised.

[99] Of the ten leading landowners of Jamaica plantations in 1754, four heirs or successors were subscribers to the opera 1782–1808. For the list of eighty-eight landowners with 4000 acres or more in Jamaica in 1754 see Jack P. Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s: A Social Portrait* (Charlottesville, VA, 2016), 223–5.

[100] By contrast, during the decade of the Royal Academy of Music (1719–28), a third of the directors and season subscribers held stocks in the Royal African Company and/or South Sea Company that were then trading in slaves. Typically, RAM subscribers held stocks as part of diverse portfolios (as we would say today), so that they were not burned by bubbles or other excessive stock market movements. See David Hunter, *The Lives of George Frideric Handel* (Woodbridge, 2015), 204–6.

[101] Close examination of the accounts for the Cornewall family estates of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste in Grenada has provided valuable insight into this phenomenon; Susanne Seymour, Stephen Daniels and Charles Watkins, 'Estate and Empire: Sir George Cornewall's Management of Moccas, Herefordshire and La Taste, Grenada, 1771–1819', *Journal of Historical Geography* 24/3 (1998), 313–51.

[102] One of the families to maintain a subscription across twenty-six seasons was the Rigbys. Richard Rigby (see n.45) died unmarried in 1788 and his estates in Jamaica passed to his nephew Lt Col. Francis Hale Rigby (*c.* 1758–1827), MP 1779–84, who was the son of Rigby's sister Martha and her husband Gen. Bernard Hale. Frances Rumbold (1762–1836), who married the Lieutenant Colonel in 1785 became a King's Theatre regular. She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Rumbold (1736–91), Bt, a director of the East India Company, governor of Madras 1777–80, and MP 1770–90 and his first wife Frances Berriman (1738–64). Sir Thomas and his second wife Joanna (née Law) were also subscribers in 1783, taking a whole box (no. 46). The 'Miss Rumbold' listed likely was Frances.

[103] See Milhous, Dideriksen and Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, for the lawsuits, loans and bills that went unpaid, bills of exchange unhonoured and unsecured assets.

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Dedication. Dedicated to the memory of Robert D. Hume, mentor, friend, indefatigable researcher and writer, archival bloodhound, refiner of information, brewer of knowledge, distiller of wisdom.

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Appendix

Table A1. Parliamentary sessions and opera seasons, 1782–1808. Upper row for each year (dark fill): parliamentary session, beginning and end dates. Lower row for each year (light fill): opera season, beginning and end dates

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1782												5
											2	
1783							16				11	
						28					29	
1784			24		19			20				
							3					18
1785	25						2					
							2					
1786	24						11					
	24						11					23
1787	23				30						27	
							5					8
1788							11					
						28						
1789[a]		3						11				
	10					16, 27	11					
1790[b]	21						10				25	
	7					12, 15	17					
1791[c]						10						
		17					19					17
1792[d]	31					15						13
	7	14			9							

(*Continued*)

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Table A1. *Continued*

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1793[e]						21						
	26				29							
1794	21						11					30
	11					8						6
1795						27				29		
							11					12
1796					19					6		
							30				26	
1797							20				2	
							29				28	
1798						29					20	
								4				8
1799							12		24			
								3				
1800							29				11	31
	11							2				
1801		2					2			29		
	3						25					29
1802						28					29	
							24					4
1803								12			22	
							23					
1804							31					
	14							4			24	
1805	15				14							
							20					7
1806	21				6							15
								2				13
1807				27		22		14				
							23					21

(*Continued*)

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Table A1. *Continued*

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1808	21						4					
								2				

[a] Fire destroyed the King's Theatre, Haymarket, 17 June. Opera season completed at the Covent Garden Theatre.
[b] Initial part of opera season held at the Little Haymarket Theatre. Season completed at the Covent Garden Theatre.
[c] Opera season held at the Pantheon, Oxford Street.
[d] Opera season began at the Pantheon. Fire damaged the Pantheon 14 January. Season completed at the Little Theatre, Haymarket.
[e] Opera returned to rebuilt King's Theatre, Haymarket.
Sources: *The London Stage, 1660–1800*, pt. 5, 1776–1800, ed. C. B. Hogan (Carbondale, 1968); 'The London Stage Calendar 1800–1844', https://londonstage.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ (accessed 24 April 2023); Parliamentary sessions: https://www.james-gillray.org/pop/parliament.html (accessed 24 April 2023).

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