

Mrs. Midnight, Dr. Burney,  
the Jew's Harp, and the Salt-Box

by David Lasocki

In 1749, one "Fustian Sackbut" published in London the text of An Ode on Saint Caecilia's Day: adapted to the ancient British musick; as it was performed on the twenty-second of November. As a second edition under his own name proved, the author was in fact Bonnell Thornton (1724-68), still a student at Oxford University but already making a reputation for himself as a writer and wit.<sup>1</sup> The Ode was clearly intended to mock the tradition of serious St. Cecilia's Day odes, famous examples of which were set by Purcell and Handel. Thornton wrote in the burlesque preface he appended to the work:

This Ode, I am sensible, is not without Faults; tho' I cannot help thinking it far superior to the Odes of Johnny Dryden, Jemmy Addison, Sawney Pope, Nick Rowe, little Kit Smart, &c. &c. or of any that have written or shall write on Saint Cecilia's Day.

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1. See Dictionary of National Biography 19, 777-79.

Robert M. Myers in fact gives credit to Thornton for having "brought the tradition to an amusing end."<sup>2</sup>

The term "ancient British Musick" in the title of the Ode referred to the use of those supposedly ancient British instruments the salt-box (that is, a box in which salt was kept, apparently beaten with the fists--and perhaps sometimes with the salt spoon), the marrow-bones, the cleavers, the hurdy-gurdy, and the Jew's harp. Alan Dugald McKillop writes: "The point of the jest lay in the use of rough and burlesque music, known to popular humorous tradition, in connection with literary satire."<sup>3</sup> The text of the Ode is divided into recitatives, airs, choruses, and a "grand symphony." The Jew's harp was featured in a recitative and air:

#### RECITATIVE

Strike, strike the soft Judaic harp,  
                     Soft and sharp,  
 By teeth coercive in firm durance kept,  
 And lightly by the volant finger swept.

#### AIR

Buzzing twangs the iron lyre  
                     Shrilly thrilling,  
                     Trembling, trilling,  
 Whizzing with the wav'ring wire.

The reference to the Jew's harp is contracted in the final recitative of the Ode:

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2. "Neo-Classical Criticism of the Ode for Music," Proceedings of the Modern Language Association 62 (June 1947), 410.
  3. "Bonnell Thornton's Burlesque Ode," Notes and Queries 194/15 (23 July 1949), 322.



The purpose of the "ancient British Musick" is to fly the flag:

If this Ode contributes in the least to lessen our false taste in admiring that foreign Musick now so much in vogue, and to recall the ancient British spirit, together with the ancient British harmony, I shall not think the pains I employed on the composition [that is, writing] entirely flung away on my countrymen.

Was Thornton's Ode actually performed in 1749? Edward Jones wrote in 1784:

I am informed that the famous Dr. [Thomas] Arne had formerly a Benefit Concert, in the Little Theatre, in the Haymarket, on the 22nd of November, in the year 1749, where he introduced all these instruments and allotted to each of them a Solo part; and that this was the Ode to which he adapted them.<sup>5</sup>

Percy A. Scholes points out that Jones was a friend of Dr. Charles Burney (who definitely set the same ode later; see below) and suggests that Jones may have heard the attribution to Arne from Burney.<sup>6</sup> Several modern authors, however,

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of Odes on St. Cecilia's Day (London: Bell & Daldy, 1857), 78-79.

5. Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards (London, 1784; new ed., London, 1808) 1, 107, quoted in Wallace Cable Brown, "A Belated Augustan: Bonnell Thornton, Esq.," Philological Quarterly 34/3 (July 1955), 344.
6. The Great Dr. Burney: His Life, His Tra-

have doubted that such a performance ever took place.<sup>7</sup> McKillop, for example, writes: "the date appears here, I think, as part of a typical St. Cecilia title, not as a record of actual performance."<sup>8</sup> As we shall see below, it seems almost certain that Jones was mistaken about the performance in 1749 and probably also in believing that Arne ever set the Ode.

Before we leave Thornton's Ode, it should be mentioned that he quotes from it in his own Dru-ry-Lane Journal in February 1752:

For, as the Poet Fustian Sackbut sweetly  
says:

Buzzing twangs the Iron Lyre,  
Shrilly thrilling,  
Trembling, trilling,  
Whizzing with the wav-ring Wire.<sup>9</sup>

Whether or not the Ode was performed in 1749,

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vels, His Works, His Family, and His Friends, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1948) 1, 95, n.2.

7. The first such author was probably Husk (op. cit., 77). Scholes assumes that such a performance did take place and looks for a performing situation for which the work might have been written: "Thornton was a member of the 'Nonsense Club,' a weekly dining-club of nine [recte seven] Westminster School men, and it seems just possible that the club had some part in the project. . . . It would be quite in the club's vein to devise a parody of a solemn institution. Did it not in 1754 hold in Thornton's house in Bow Street an exhibition by 'The Society of Sign Painters,' in ridicule of the annual exhibitions of the Society of Arts. . .?" (Loc. cit., apparently

its instrumentation may have had some influence on the poet Christopher Smart (1722-71)--whose own St. Cecilia's Day ode of 1746 was mentioned by Thornton in his preface--or itself have been influenced by a burlesque tradition of which Smart was about to make use. In October 1750, Smart and his brother-in-law, the publisher John Newbery, started a magazine entitled The Midwife, or, The Old Woman's Magazine. Wallace Cable Brown has gathered evidence showing that Thornton collaborated with Smart in the writing of the magazine from soon after its inception, and began a close personal relationship with him.<sup>10</sup>

A year after the foundation of the magazine, on 3 December 1751, the Great Room of the Castle Tavern in Paternoster Row, London was host to a "Grand Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Musick, By several Eminent Hands," to which was added, gratis, "The Old Woman's Oratory; or, Henley in Petticoats . . . conducted by Mrs. Midnight, Author of the Midwife, and her Family."<sup>11</sup> The

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based on information from Dictionary of National Biography 19, 778.) But the Nonsense Club does not seem to have been founded until 1752 (see Maurice J. Quinlan, William Cowper: A Critical Life (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1953), 15-16) and the Sign-Painters Exhibition they held did not in fact take place until 1762 (see Charles Ryskamp, William Cowper of the Inner Temple, Esq.: A Study of His Life and Works to the Year 1768 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 86).

8. Loc. cit.

9. Quoted in Brown, loc. cit.

10. Ibid., 339-40.

11. Quoted in Arthur Sherbo, Christopher Smart:

device of a concert with additional free entertainment was used in order to avoid the strictures of the licensing act of 1737, which forbade entertainments other than concerts in unlicensed premises (in theory, everywhere except the two patent theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane). "Mrs. Midnight" (underworld slang for a midwife) was none other than Smart himself, the "author" of the magazine.

The tone of the performance can be grasped immediately from the advertised details:

There will be FOUR ORATIONS, After the First of which, Signor ANTONIO AMBROSIANO, from Naples, will perform A CONCERTO on the CREMONA STACCATO, Vulgarly called the SALT-BOX. After the Second, will be presented, A GREAT CREATURE, On a very Uncommon Instrument. After the Third, A Solo on the Viol d'Amore, and another Piece by the GREAT CREATURE. Then the Candles will be snuffed to soft Musick by Signior Claudio Molepitano [recte Moltepiano], for his Diversion, being the First Time of any Gentleman's appearing in that Character. And the whole will conclude with an Oration by OLD TIME in Favour of Matrimony; a solo on the Violin-cello by CUPID in propria persona; and a Song to the Tune of the Roast Beef of Old England, to which all the good Company are

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Scholar of the University (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 75. See also George Winchester Stone, Jr., ed., The London Stage 1660-1800, IV: 1747-1776, 3 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962) 1, 276-77.

desired to join in Chorus.<sup>12</sup>

The second performance was given on 27 December at the New (or Little) Theatre in the Haymarket.<sup>13</sup> Act I now included a "Declamatory Piece on Jew's Harp by a Casuist," and Act II an "Oratorio on the Salt-Box by a Rationalist."<sup>14</sup> As these religious appellations and the subtitle indicate, the entertainment was intended as a satire on the oratory of the Rev. John "Orator" Henley, the eccentric preacher of Clare Market. Henley, as Ainsworth and Noyes point out, was

a former curate who had broken with the church [and] had been giving regular lectures at an "oratory." . . . There, from a gold and velvet decorated pulpit ridiculed by Pope as "Henley's gilt tub," he poured forth on Sundays and Wednesdays a strange hodge-podge of primitive religion, pseudo-science, buffoonery and coarse wit. Although his charlatanry and his extravagant behaviour drew down on him much ridicule . . .

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12. Quoted in Edward G. Ainsworth & Charles E. Noyes, "Christopher Smart: A Biographical and Critical Study," The University of Missouri Studies 18/4 (1943), 59-60.

13. Stone, op. cit., 281.

14. Casuist: "a theologian (or other person) who studies and resolves cases of conscience or doubtful questions regarding duty and conflict"; rationalist: "an adherent of rationalism" ("the principle of regarding reason as the chief or only guide in matters of religion, or of employing ordinary reasoning to criticize and interpret religious doctrines") (Oxford English Dictionary).



. nevertheless his Oratory continued a highly profitable undertaking.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps not coincidentally, as McKillop notes, "The performance of butchers with marrow bones and cleavers was particularly associated with Clare Market and known as an 'English Concert'."<sup>16</sup> Besides satirizing Henley, of course, Smart's entertainment also served to promote his magazine. But shortly the tail was wagging the dog: Smart had to curtail the publication of the magazine because he was spending so much time on his stage entertainments.

The unusual instruments were by no means the only ones featured in the entertainments. Newbery advertised that

There was a most excellent Band of Musick, consisting of thirty Hands, among them were several Persons of Fortune and Distinction, on whose Account all the Performers were dressed in Masquerade, and it was universally acknowledged that there was more real casuistry in the Jew's Harp, and more Sterling Sense in the Salt Box, than ever came from the Tub, at the Slaughter House of Sense, Wit and Reason, near Clare Market.<sup>17</sup>

Eleven similar performances were given at both the Haymarket and the Castle Tavern during the next two months.<sup>18</sup> On 18 February 1752,

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15. Op. cit., 58. On Henley see also Dictionary of National Biography 9, 414-16.

16. Loc. cit.

17. Quoted in Sherbo, op. cit., 76.

18. Stone, op. cit., 282-84, 286-87, 289-93.

however,

Orders were sent from the Lord Mayor to the Managers of the Entertainment . . . exhibited at the Castle Tavern . . . to discontinue that part of it call'd The Old Woman's Oratory, the above being an unlicensed Place.<sup>19</sup>

There was in fact one more performance at the Castle Tavern on 7 March.<sup>20</sup> But thereafter performances, still featuring the "Declamatory Piece," were restricted to the Haymarket; they continued until the end of May, increasing in frequency to three times a week.<sup>21</sup>

The advertisement for the performance of 13 March gave the name of the Jew's harp player, humorously, as "Sig. Twangdilo, the Casuist."<sup>22</sup> That of 17 March, however, furnished his real name: into the "concert" were to be "introduc'd several new Tunes on the Jew's Harp, never performed before," and the entertainment was to be performed for the benefit of "Mr. Church, performer on the Jew's Harp."<sup>23</sup> (The benefit system of the day allowed actors and other employees of the theatres to sell the tickets for certain performances and retain some of any profits they might make.)

As we have seen, the details of Smart's entertainments varied. In the next entertainment was featured "a Solo, in a new Taste by Sig. Piantofugo, when the Jew's Harp and the

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19. Daily Advertiser, 19 February 1752, quoted ibid., 294.

20. Ibid., 298.

21. Ibid., 295-96, 299-99, 301-09, 311-15.

22. Quoted in Sherbo, op. cit., 79.

23. Stone, op. cit., 301.

Saltbox will be introduced."<sup>24</sup> Horace Walpole attended the performance of 5 May and wrote the following description of it in a letter to his friend George Montagu:

It appeared the lowest buffoonery in the world, even to me who am used to my uncle Horace. There is a bad oration to ridicule, what is too like, Orator Henley; all the rest is perverted music. There is a man [Joseph Woodbridge?]<sup>25</sup> who plays so nimbly on the kettle drums, that he has reduced that noisy instrument to be an object of sight; for if you don't see the tricks with his hands, it is no better than ordinary. Another plays on a violin and trumpet together; another mimics a bagpipe with a German [transverse] flute, and makes it full if disagreeable. There is an admired dulcimer, and a favourite saltbox and a really curious Jew's Harp. Two or three men intend to persuade you that they play on a broomstick, which is drolly brought in, carefully shrouded in a case, so as to be mistaken for a bassoon or bass viol, but they succeed in nothing but the action. The last fellow imitates farting and curtsying to a French horn. There are twenty medley overtures, and a man who speaks a prologue and epilogue, in which he counterfeits all the actors and singers upon

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24. Ibid., 302.  
25. See David Lasocki, Professional Recorder Players in England, 1540-1740, 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1983) 2, 961-62.

earth.<sup>26</sup>

The following season no fewer than 68 performances were given, among them a benefit for both Woodbridge, the kettle drummer, and "Church, performer on the Jew's Harp" on 29 March 1753.<sup>27</sup> Patrons were reassured that "The Oration on the Salt-Box, by a Rationalist, will be introduced as usual," and once more the Casuist played the Jew's Harp. The season after that, only a few performances were given.<sup>28</sup>

References to the music of the Oratory appear around this time in the magazine The Midwife:

But lest the manly Miss, or Female Beau,  
Shou'd think our Satire Nonsense, Stuff and Low;  
Shou'd 'gainst poor Salt-Box arm their critic  
Rage,  
And hiss the harmless Jew-Strump off the Stage,  
We between whiles ('tis hop'd without Offence)  
Shall introduce that honest Exile Sense.<sup>29</sup>

The magazine The Connoisseur, edited by Thornton and George Colman the Elder, also refers to this burlesque music:

Are those classic instruments the Doric Lute, the Syrinx, or the Fistula, to be compared to the melody of the Wooden

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26. The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence 9, ed. W. S. Lewis & Ralph S. Brown, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 131.

27. Stone, op. cit., 361.

28. Ibid., 413, 422.

29. The Midwife, or, The Old Woman's Magazine 3 (1753), 57-58, quoted in McKillop, op. cit., 323.

Spoons, the Jews-Harp, and Salt Box, at Mrs. Midnight's?<sup>30</sup>

And in the same magazine a husband describes his plan to cure his wife's passion for music:

I have some thoughts of holding weekly a burlesque Rorotorio, composed of mock-airs, with grand accompaniments of the Jew's Harp, Wooden Spoons, and Marrowbones and Cleavers, on the same day with my wife's concert; and have actually sent to two of Mrs. Midnight's hands to teach me the art and mystery of playing on the Broomstick and Hurdy-Gurdy, at the same time that my wife learns on the bass-viol.<sup>31</sup>

During the summer of 1754, Smart achieved more success on the stage with new pieces and new performers, including dancers from Piedmont and "a company of Lilliputians just arrived."<sup>32</sup> The music included "a New Concerto for the Tambour de Basque; accompanied with the Original Jews-Harp, the Hurdy Gurdy, &c." But Smart's performances petered out in October 1754, and I have found nothing further in contemporaneous advertisements about the use of the Jew's harp in other burlesque performances on the London stage.

I have also been unable to find out anything certain about Church, the Jew's harp player in Smart's performances. The Biographical

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30. Connoisseur No. 17 (23 May 1754), quoted in loc. cit.

31. Connoisseur No. 128 (8 July 1756), quoted in loc. cit.

32. Stone, op. cit., 431-33, 437-38, 442-44.

Dictionary remarks that "His name sounds actual enough but since those were antic productions . . . perhaps 'Church' was a pseudonym."<sup>33</sup> There was, however, a house servant of that name at the Drury Lane Theatre who was among several such servants to receive a benefit there on 22 May 1744.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, an actor/singer named Church-- perhaps the same man or a relative of his--appeared in two performances at the Haymarket in October 1770.<sup>35</sup>

Thornton's Ode turns up again a few years later. In 1763, he republished it under his own name as:

An Ode on Saint Caecilia's Day adapted to the antient British Musick, viz. the Salt-Box, the Jews Harp, the Marrow-Bones and Cleavers, the Hum-Strum or Hurdy-Gurdy, &c. as it was performed on June 10, at Ranelagh [House].<sup>36</sup>

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33. Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman H. Burnim & Edward A. Langhans, ed., A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800, 3 (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 210.
34. Arthur H. Scouten, ed., The London Stage 1660-1800, III: 1729-1747, 2 vols. (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961) 2, 1112.
35. 1 October 1770: "A Song, in which will be introduc'd a Variety of imitations--Church"; 29 October 1770: took over the part of Don Diego in The Padlock. Stone, op. cit., 3, 1501, 1507.
36. The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year

Information about the republication and the performance of the Ode is found in St. James's Chronicle, a journal written mostly by Thornton, who was its editor, and his associates, Colman and Garrick, to promote their interests.<sup>37</sup> Like the authors of St. Cecilia's Day odes, the writer stresses the power of music:

The Hearers, past Doubt, will be equally convinced with myself of the amazing Power that these divine Instruments are capable of exerting, and of their insinuating Effects on the human Passions, in Preference to all others.

The issue of 31 May announces the publication of the work that day. A letter in the issue of 2 June mentions the forthcoming performance at Ranelagh on 10 June and contains a sentence implying that the performance was to be the first ever:

The Ode itself was published by a Gentleman, then at Oxford, about ten or twelve [recte fourteen] Years ago; and being written on a true Plan for Music, it is astonishing, that no able Master in that Sister-Art thought of giving it the further Help of harmonious Sounds.

(The "divine" instruments in question were, it is worth reminding ourselves, the Jew's harp, salt-box, etc.) An advertisement in the issue

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1763, 6th ed. (London: J. Dodsley, 1810), 243-46.

37. Quoted in Charles Ryskamp, "Dr. Arne's Music for Thornton's Burlesque Ode," Notes and Queries 202/2 (February 1957), 72-73.

of 9 June states:

RANELAGH HOUSE. / Miss BRENT's N[i]ght.  
/ Tomorrow, the 10th of June, will be  
performed; / (Exclu[s]ive of t[h]e usual  
Entertainment) / A GRAND BURLESQUE ODE.  
/ Written by BONNEL THORNTON, Esq; / And  
set to Music by an eminent Master.

The Vocal Parts by proper Comic Per-  
formers in Masquerade Habits, accompa-  
nied by several Chorus Singers, and  
Burlesque Instruments, necessarily con-  
nected with the Ode.

Finally, the issue of 11 June contains a review  
of the performance, headed "Hurdy-gurdical, Mar-  
row-bonical, Jaws-harpical and Salt-boxical,  
Intelligence extraordinary":

RANELAGH never was honoured with more  
truly British Company than last Night,  
to hear the Performance on mock old  
British Instruments, the Jews-Harp,  
Salt-Box, Marrow-Bones and Cleavers, and  
the Hurdy-Gurdy, for Miss Brent's Bene-  
fit; and I was pleased to see, that,  
though it has been often said, the  
Engl[i]sh, who are allowed to possess  
more Humour than any other Nation, have  
not always, as happened at the first  
Appearance of the Beggars Opera, &c. &c.  
the quickest Discernment of it, the  
Audience in general discovered a true  
Relish for Yesterday's Exhibition. I  
will not take upon me to say, whether  
the Author or Composer had most  
Applause; but I think the Author will  
not complain that his excellent Humour  
suffered in the Hands of Dr. Arne; and  
our great English Genius for Music, will



confess his many Obligations to the Writer of the Ode.

The Hurdy-Gurdy had a wonderful Effect, but the Croud was so great, and there was such pressing on every Side, that I own I lost much of my Relish for Wind-Music, yet we all laught till we almost burst our own Bladders. The Criticks, who never like any Thing, confessed they saw much of the Sales in the Humour of the Salt-Box; and I believe these truely South-British Instruments, the Marrow-bones and Cleavers, had made every Person in the Room errant Rebels, if Mr. Wilkes, who was present, had not convinced them it would be a Breach of Privilege. We must lament, that poor Ten-toothy, who shewed such comical Execution on the Jaws-harp, has received such a Cold in his Eye-tooth, and its each Side-Neighbour that he has spent most of this Morning at M. Hemett's [Jacob Hemet was a well-known dentist], and is now laughing, for his Yesterday's Fun, on the wrong Side of his Mouth.

The writer of this review clearly gives the name of the composer as Dr. [Thomas] Arne. But two later editions of the Ode published after Thornton's death in May 1768--both of which also contain music said to be and actually by Arne--attribute the setting of the Ode only to "an Eminent Master."<sup>38</sup> Roger Lonsdale suggests that "it is not impossible that [the attribution to Arne] was ironic, considering Arne's reputa-

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38. Titles quoted in McKillop, op. cit., 323-34.

tion."<sup>39</sup> One composer who definitely did set the Ode was Charles Burney (not yet a Doctor of Music or the author of a history of music). We learn this from Burney himself, who wrote:

In 1769 I set for Smart and Newbery, Thornton's Burlesque Ode on St. Cecilia's Day. It was performed at Ranelagh in masks, to a very crowded audience, as I was told, for I then resided in Norfolk. Beard sang the Salt-box song, which was admirably accompanied on that instrument by Brent, the fencing master, and father of Miss Brent, the celebrated singer; Skeggs on the broomstick as bassoon, and a remarkable performer on the Jew's harp--"Buzzing twangs the iron lyre." Cleavers were cast in bell metal for this entertainment. All the performers of the Old Woman's Oratory, employed by Foote [recte Smart?],<sup>40</sup> were, I believe, employed at Ranelagh on this occasion.<sup>41</sup>

Scholes, noting that "the music of this great work is unfortunately lost," suggests that

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39. Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 489.

40. Samuel Foote, one of the most famous actors of the eighteenth century, also gave burlesque performances at the Haymarket Theatre, but he does not seem to have been associated with Smart. For details of Foote's life, see Simon Trefman, Sam. Foote, Comedian, 1720-1777 (New York: New York University Press, 1971).

41. James Boswell, Life of Johnson, 1853 ed., 2, 197n.

the principle of its orchestration was that [which] we are accustomed to in "Toy Symphonies" such as Haydn's, i.e. the orthodox instruments of the orchestra would carry on the continuous web of the music, the unorthodox being introduced into passages such as admitted of their taking part.<sup>42</sup>

The date Burney gave for his setting is almost certainly incorrect. For this reason, Husk tacitly changes "1769" to "1759,"<sup>43</sup> and Scholes--perhaps following Husk--remarks that 1769 "is clearly a misprint for 1759."<sup>44</sup> Sherbo avers that Arne was the composer of the setting performed in 1763 and accepts the 1769 date for Burney's setting as genuine.<sup>45</sup> The best informed and reasoned discussion of the date is by Lonsdale, who believes that Burney's date

must be rejected on several grounds, but the evidence on which a true date can be based is so slender and the various solutions to this small but puzzling topic are so numerous that discussion of it has been confined to an appendix. It seems likely, however, that Burney set Thornton's ode in 1760 or 1763.<sup>46</sup>

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42. Op. cit., 97.

43. Op. cit., 77.

44. Op. cit., 95.

45. Op. cit., 250. Sherbo is therefore forced to reason that "As John Newbery had died in 1767, the Newbery associated with Smart in Burney's account was probably Francis Newbery, John's son, inheritor of the publishing business, a scholar, a poet, and a lover of music with an interest in private theatricals."

In his appendix, Lonsdale discusses various pieces of inconclusive evidence that point to (a) 1751-53, (b) 1759 or 1760, or (c) 1763, finally remarking: "Apart from the fact that a performance of Thornton's Ode actually took place in 1763, there is little to choose between the three emendations which have been discussed and which have their own advantages and disadvantages."<sup>47</sup> My own feeling, however, is that Burney's is likely to have been the setting made in 1763, which was advertised as the first ever made, was performed at Ranelagh, and coincided with the republication of the Ode. The authors of the articles on Arne and Burney in The New Grove accept Lonsdale's arguments that the Ode was misattributed to Arne and give its date of composition by Burney as "?1760/1763."<sup>48</sup>

In 1772, George Alexander Stevens described a "Society of Choice Spirits" that had performed at Ranelagh--perhaps the performers who had taken part in the setting of Thornton's Ode --and went on to lament the decline of the "ancient British Musick":

Unparalleled were their performances, as first Fists upon the Salt-Box, and inimitable the variations they would twang upon the forte and piano Jews-Harp. Excellent was Howard in the Chin Concerto; whose Nose also supplied the melodious Tones of the Bagpipe.--Upon the Sticcado Matt. Skeggs remains still

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46. Ibid., 67-68.

47. Ibid., 490.

48. Julian Herbage & John A. Parkinson, "Arne, Thomas Augustine," The New Grove 1, 611; Percy A. Scholes & Watkins Shaw, "Burney, Charles," The New Grove 3, 491.

unrivalled.--And we cannot now boast of one real genius upon the genuine Hurdy Gurdy.

Alas! these Stars are all extinguished; and the remains of ancient British Harmony is now confined to the manly Music of Marrow-Bones and Cleavers.<sup>49</sup>

To sum up, Bonnell Thornton's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, written in 1749, featured the Jew's harp and other types of "ancient British Musick." During the 1750s, the Jew's harp was among the instruments used by "Mrs. Midnight" (Christopher Smart) in his popular burlesque entertainments at the Haymarket Theatre. The instrument often played a "Declamatory Piece," and also took part in several new tunes and a Solo with the salt-box and a New Concerto with the Tambour de Basque and hurdy-gurdy. The Performer on the Jew's harp was one Church, who remains to be fully identified. Thornton's Ode seems to have had to wait until 1763 for a musical setting, probably that known to have been made by Charles Burney. The "Comical Execution" of the Jew's harpist, "poor Ten-toothy," was praised in a review presumably written by Thornton himself. Within ten years, this burlesque musical tradition had come to an end.

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49. Songs, Comical and Satyrical (Oxford, 1772), 8, quoted in McKillop, op. cit., 324.